

Biodynamic Agricultural Association

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2023 / 70th AGM Event

Held on 14th October 2023 Venue: The Wool Barn, Field Centre, Nr Nailworth, Glos GL6 0QE
Attendance was in person and on Zoom (only for the Life Time Achievement Award and the AGM Business meeting)

Present:

Ann Smith, Ali Mayes, Ben Monks, Berni Courts, Brian Snellgrove, Carla Lucia, Chiara Borrelli Paker, Daphne Odilia Kirst, David Parry, Natalie Alcock, Douglas Davidson, Eva Dry, Chris Dry, Françoise Sauze, Gabriel Kaye, Gemma Day, Julia Day, Hans - Gunther Kern, Hans Steenbergen,

Heather Rainbow, Henning Koester, Ian Bailey, Jason Warland, Jenni Rosenbrock, Jennifer Ruge, Jeremy Stephens, Mrs Stephens, Jessica Standing, Jo Bradley, Mel Bradley, Joanna Gore, Joe Wilkin, Julian Pyzer, Manuela Murray, Margi Henderson, Mark Moodie, Neil Ravenscroft, Melanie Bradley, Nicholas Kellner, Peter Brinch, Peter Brown, Peter van vliet, Rhys Moore, Richard Thornton Smith, Rose Moore, Simon Reakes, Tess Rigby, Vivian Griffiths, Wendy Brown, Chris Stockdale, Alistair Clarke, Dan Powell, Mari - Lis Nukis, Michael Luxford, Oliver Chenery, David Parry, Julian Pyzer.

Apologies: Jeremy Kent, Ruth Chadwick, Dave Kelly, Kate Urry, Tom Petherick, Elspeth Murray, Kim & Gareth Goode, Elly Austin, Deborah Leah, Jill Rushbrooke, Rosemary Usselman, Tom Raines, Spencer Christy, Joanna May, Liz Findlay, Wendy Cook,

Welcome to the day

Oliver Cheney, Head of Ruskin Mill College, welcomed everyone to the AGM event and to the Wool Barn. He went on to explain what Ruskin Mill does and how beneficial the biodynamic approach to farming and gardening is for the students.

Gabriel Kaye (Executive Director of the BDA) expressed heartfelt thanks for all the incredible support given by Ruskin Mill to the Biodynamic Association and went on to introduce the BDA Trustees and outline the day.

Introduction to the Genius Personae Research

Gabriel gave an overview and introduction to the Genius Personae research project which the BDA has been undertaking for the past 3 years (see PowerPoint Slides)

People then split into 3 groups and experienced the 3 workshops offered on this theme up until lunchtime.

Afternoon session

The Flourish Biodynamic Calendar: Ali Mayes spoke about The Flourish Biodynamic Calendar and her motivation to create it with Hans – Gunther Kern. Through attending Hans-Gunter’s online Biodynamic Gardening Course she became aware of The Maria Thun Biodynamic Planting Calendar and felt that it was often a quite a lot for “newbies” to biodynamics to take on and understand. The Flourish Calendar arose as a “first step” into biodynamics and planting by the moon presented in an easy to access format and style. Ali showed the draft printouts for the first three months of this new calendar and

highlighted some aspects such as the feel / intention for each month and the useful info it contained such as suggestions as to when spray the biodynamic preparations etc. The Calendar will be available to purchase in November 2023

Life Time Achievement Award - Jo Bradley

Vivian Griffiths presented the award and spoke about Jo's lifetime commitment to farming, growing, teaching, being the heart of the Experimental Circle and at Agricultural Section Gatherings. A wonderful slide show accompanied Vivian's talk, showing key stages in Jo's life and his farming work at Hungary Lane Farm over many decades.

14.30 Biodynamic Association AGM Business

Remembering those who have crossed the threshold this year:

A moment was taken to remember the following people:

BD Members Simon Cowen and Elaine Povey

Gretal Spuhler - a great supporter of biodynamic farming

Welcome – Gabriel Kaye

Gabriel welcomed everyone present and online to the AGM Business Meeting part of the day and read out the apologies.

- Minutes from 2022 (meeting was held in Jan 2023) were accepted and signed
Proposed by Jo Bradley, Seconded by Joanna Gore
- Trustees Report of activity 2022/3 - Jenni Rosenbrock (Chair)
Jenni noted that it has not been that long since the Association's last delayed AGM that was held back in Jan 2023 so the report this time is on a relatively short and quiet time. Jenni then looked at the main achievements of the BDA in relation to its 5 Key Strategy Points - (see AGM PowerPoint Slides) and concluded with warm thanks to RMT for all the input and support with the Genius Personae Process. She expressed further thanks to: other organisations that support the BDA, corporate members, regular donors, the BDA staff and the BDA Trustees. Staff changes were also mentioned; since the last AGM Annie Crook has left our Certification Team and Ben Monks has been taken on as our 100th Anniversary Project Manager.
- BDA's participation in Biodynamic Federation Demeter International (BFDI)
(see PowerPoint slides)
The background and history to BFDI was explained along with who the current key members of staff and the structure of the organisation. The UK is represented by the following people:
Alysoun Bolger - Executive Board
Julia Wright – Advisory, Research & Training Committee
Stuart Cragg – Accreditation Council
Richard Swann – Standards Committee
Delegate Member for the BDA UK - Lillie Bellamy
Each year there is a Members Assembly which is held in different parts of the world and has a different theme each time.

- The Agriculture Section International
Based at the Goetheanum, Switzerland, it is part of the Spiritual School activity.
Current leaders are Ueli Hurter and Jean Marie Florin.
The UK Agriculture section has monthly gatherings mostly held by Zoom to facilitate attendance. Gabriel Kaye is the UK Co-ordinator.
- Finance Report April 22 to March 23 - Jeremy Stephens
Based on the accounts prepared by Andoran - see Powerpoint Slides
Key points:
 - The end of financial year for the BDA has been changed so that it will run from Jan to Dec in line with Certification.
 - Overall there is a small surplus which means the Association can now look to recruiting for a part – time Certification Manager which is currently being advertised.
 - Numbers of licensees have increased which is very good.
 - The 100th Anniversary will aim to get more people interested and engaged with biodynamics and bring in more licensees.
 - The Seed Co-op has sadly gone into Administration. The BDA has £75K invested with the seed co-op and it is not known whether we will get this back.

Vote on acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Hans Steenbergen and seconded by Peter Brown. Carried.

Vote on Reappointment of Accountants - Andorran. Carried.

- Trustees Elections -see PowerPoint Slide for list of current trustees

Jeremy Stephens (co-opted) would like to stand for election: Carried by show of hands
Jenni Rosenbrock - Carried by show of hands.

- Update and Future of the Seed Coop - see PowerPoint slides
The Seed Coop was a very important part of the BD Family and is a great loss. It went into Administration on 4th Aug 2023 and has left a big gap. Regarding the future, a small group has formed to look at how the biodynamic seed work can happen again in the UK. If anyone is interested in being involved then they can email whatsnextforukseed.co.uk
The people in this new group are: Chris Stockdale, a former member of the Seed Co-op who hopes that the site at Gosberton, the stock and the machinery etc can all be purchased and a new seed initiative could happen in connection with Esk Vally Camphill.
- Questions
 - * What is the BDA's position on 5G as more antennas are being erected?
Gabriel replied saying " it is an important issue, alongside similar challenges such as Electromagnetic Frequency and Genetic Modification and something that the BDA could spend time a lot of time on. So far we are joining in with GM organisations and support them – also - we are here to promote BD not take up campaigning political causes - these can be taken up by members as individuals"
 - * Why is the BDA talking about Climate Change and linking BD to it as much of the information put out about Climate Change are lies?

Gabriel replies “ we need to be careful not to fall into the trap of embracing the industrial thinking paradigm - it’s about the life of the planet - let’s not become reductionist in our thinking . Yes we do need to get our facts and messages right.”

- 100 Years of Biodynamics - Gabriel Kaye and Ben Monks

See PowerPoint slides.

Gabriel expressed how she wanted to celebrate and deepen the biodynamic work and offer the potential for a better future through agriculture. Biodynamics is seen as a method suitable for the next 100 years and the intention is to increase its visibility, increase membership, etc. BFDI have been working on this special biodynamic anniversary and have created an international 100-year logo and other resources. Gabriel then introduced Ben Monks, the new 100th Anniversary Project Manager who will work 12 hours a week for the next 18 months.

The vision is to create a programme of events, carry out fund raising, connect with the international impetus and key events for 2024 see spreadsheet slide.

Highlights so far: The Feb Agricultural Conference at the Goetheanum will be a key international celebratory event, followed up by the Members Assembly in Poland.

Ruskin Mill will be bringing Ueli Hurter over to the UK and the hope is to offer a workshop or event every month eg on Prep making, prep spraying, farm finances, elemental beings, CPD for biodynamic licensees, Open farm days and more.

Ben expressed that from now to 2024, he will be working on communications and fund raising as the current 100th Budget is around £70K ; £20K has been raised so a further £50K is needed. Members were warmly encouraged to let Ben know if they are offering any events locally or have suggestions or questions and he can be contacted via the BDA Office.

A discussion about the 100th Anniversary then took place.

Summary of the conversations / suggestions:

- * Contact Patrick Holden and ask what he can do. Gabriel reported that she has been in contact with him and he was suggesting a combined SFT /BDA Event
- * We need volunteers for events – contact the BDA Office if you can help.
- * Connect with National Allotment Society
- * Create a better strapline that explains biodynamics more clearly.
- * Engage with children more – pupils at Waldorf Schools have a connection to BD but their parents often don’t know about it. These school communities are vast and committed to this form of education but don’t know about food. Why not start with this network especially as there is a definite upsurge in interest in food, health, seed saving, gardening and food security?

15.54 The AGM Event concluded