

Botanic Gardens Education Network

Annual General Meeting 2019

Minutes from the bgen AGM 2019 held on Wednesday 13th November 2019, 4.30pm at Museum No.1, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.

bgen Directors present: Ledy Leyssen (Chair), Chris Meakin, Catherine Addison, Gail Bromley, Susie Kelpie, Felicity Gaffney, Jane Challenor, Jill Baker.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Ledy Leyssen and Chris Meakin welcomed the 52 bgen members present at the AGM and thanked all the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew staff for their warm welcome and excellent hosting of the bgen 30th Anniversary Conference. Ledy also thanked the RBGE team for curating the 30th anniversary documents that were available to read and to Amanda le Poer Trench for creating the amazing 30th anniversary celebration cake.

Apologies were received from bgen Director Asimina Vergou and Cath Weeks.

2. Minutes of the 2018 AGM

The Minutes of the 2018 AGM held on 7th November 2018 at the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge were both circulated in advance and available at the meeting and accepted as a true record of the meeting. No amendments were required.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Annual Report from the Board

Ledy Leyssen explained that the bgen Board makes progress through focussed 'workstreams' and the Leads of each workstream reported on what has been achieved over the past 12 months

- 4.1 Training:** Jill Baker reported on the training held over the last 12 months since the last AGM and asked that delegates share ideas for future training in the online survey for this Conference.

Date	Topic	Venue	Number of delegates	Total participants (incl speakers)
12th March 2019	Handling Artefacts as a Gateway to Learning and Engagement	Horniman Museum and Gardens	10	14
29th March 2019	Evaluation Made Easy	Chelsea Physic Garden	24	30
21st May 2019	Bigger, Better Fundraising	Natural History Museum	23	29
19th July 2019	Networking Event: All About Trees	Hyde Park	33	36
26th September 2019	Invigorating Interpretation (cancelled)	Paignton Zoo Environment Park	0	0

Jill also thanked the host venues and staff, and those delivering workshops, for supporting bgen’s training programme and giving their time and input for free – without this support bgen wouldn’t be able to build and run such a full and varied training programme.

4.2 Annual Conference: Chris Meakin reported on the success of the 2018 Conference at Cambridge University Botanic Garden and the Sainsbury Laboratory and thanked the CUBG team for their immense efforts.

Date	Topic	Venue	Number of delegates	Total participants (incl speakers)
7-9 November 2018	Talking Plants Conference	Cambridge University Botanic Garden	69	99

From hearing from scientists about their fascinating plant research, engaging interactive workshops, behind the scenes tours and the performance of the ‘Ensonglopedia of Plants’ during the meal, this Conference immersed us in communicating plant science and research with a wide range of audiences. BGCI kindly provided bursaries for the Learn to Engage multiplier session, and feedback from delegates shows how enjoyable and valuable the conference was.

“By the end of the first morning I had learned so much and can't wait to read more, learn more, find online training to improve my etc. Very rewarding and inspiring”

“This has been the best BGEN Conference to date. It was a great opportunity to explore and further develop plant science knowledge and skills.”

“Great conference with lots of super content and attention to detail from CUBG”

“It was stimulating to hear so much current science research and the workshops showcasing the science education going on in different organisations were particularly helpful.”

“It was fascinating hearing about all the work that is being done in gardens across the UK. I came back with lots of new thoughts and ideas. People were very keen and willing to discuss and share ideas.”

“I picked up lots of ideas that I can adapt and apply to my work context”

“It was great to have so much input from outside the botanic garden world and then to think about ways of bringing it inside our work”

Participants at the 2018 Conference

Chris thanked Flis Plent and the CUBG team, all who delivered sessions, Sue and the conference workstream for all their hard work planning and organising the conference and everyone who supported by attending.

4.3 Board meetings:

Ledy outlined the Board meetings that have been taken place over the past year and thanked RBGK and The Royal Parks for hosting these meetings.

- December 5th 2018 at Kew – reviewing 2018 training and looking ahead to 2019 / 20 training events
- February 12th 2019 at BGCI – reviewing 2018 conference and initial planning for 2019 conference, changing treasury / financial reporting
- May 8th 2019 at Kew – strategy planning for the future, membership, communication, and website
- September 18th 2019 at Hyde Park – governance updates, policy review, board membership
- November 11th 2019 at Kew – final preparations for conference

4.4 Reference and administrative information

Chris Meakin confirmed that the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew is still the registered office for bgen and thanked them for this support. The current information held for bgen:

- Charity name: Botanic Gardens Education Network (bgen)
- Charity Registration Number: 1103482
- Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England and Wales Number: 5002731
- Registered Office: 47 Kew Green, Richmond upon Thames, Surrey TW9 3AB

4.5 bgen Board: Chris reported that several bgen Board Members are stepping down:

- Felicity Plent – lead for conference workstream, organising last year’s conference, inputting into creative future planning for organisation
- Gill Owen – lead on training workstream, building engaging programme
- Liliana Derewnicka – conference workstream, coordinating conferences and bringing innovative ideas for training and evaluation
- Cath Weeks – helped us improve the website and promote our activities and lead on communication workstream
- Kate Measures – former Chair and helped us have a clear direction, focus and strategy for the future.

Chris thanked everyone for their work and support and asked the members present to show their appreciation with a round of applause.

Ledy introduced the remaining bgen Board members and the workstreams they are involved in.

- Catherine Addison, Paignton Zoo -Membership Lead
- Jill Baker, RHS Garden Hyde Hall -Training Workstream
- Gail Bromley, BGCI – Treasurer and Fundraising and Sponsorship Lead
- Jane Challenor, RBG, Kew – Conference lead
- Felicity Gaffney, Glasnevin Botanic Garden – Conference Workstream
- Susie Kelpie, RBG, Edinburgh - Training Workstream
- Asimina Vergou, Fundraising and Sponsorship Workstream
- Chris Meakin, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum – Governance Workstream
- Ledy Leyssen, Royal Parks, Governance Lead.

Ledy also thanked Rachel Godfrey who has been co-opted to the bgen Board this year, Kirstin Corrie for supporting the Conference and Sue Dampney for her support as Coordinator. Sarah Dixon (website) and Sandy Openshaw (bookkeeper) have also been giving technical support

4.6 bgen membership

Chris Meakin confirmed that bgen currently has 339 members. This includes members from 31 Organisations and 23 individual members.

Bgen provides:

- Networking for members
- Promotion for members’ events, training and job / volunteering opportunities
- Reciprocal membership across participants
- Training events across the UK
- An annual conference to reflect on current sector trends and themes

5. Report from the Treasurer

Gail Bromley outlined the key points from the Treasurer Report that was circulated to members in advance and was also available at the meeting:

- A funding bid was submitted to Fore but was unsuccessful. However, as a result the bgen Board have been developing a strategy to better reassert and communicate the focus of bgen and priorities for the future.
- Due to delays in the conversion to CIO, bgen were unable to change accountancy services to those provided by a bookkeeper. We retained instead the accountancy services of Cheesemans, who had worked on the previous year's accounts and were familiar with bgen activities
- Bgen income is generated through a number of strands as set out in the Report and bgen expenditure is on administration and management of membership systems, training day speaker and T&S costs, conference catering and speaker costs, website management and maintenance, insurance and accountancy. The balance is now registering a surplus of £2,888, the Board accepted the draft accounts for 2018/19 financial year at their September 2019 meeting and their adoption by the membership is now recommended.
- The current financial year (19/20), stands at £29,464. The conference bookings are going well and we were fortunate indeed this year to receive sponsorship from RHS.

6. Approval of Accounts for financial year 2018/19

The accounts were circulated in advance and available at the meeting. Proposal to adopt accounts by Susie Kelpie, seconded by Jill Baker, no objections received.

7. Resolution - Adopting a revised constitution.

Chris Meakin explained that the application to change the Constitution and status of bgen to a CIO was rejected by the Charity Commission, primarily because the organisation hadn't formally adopted the name 'bgen' and issues of Constitution version control.

Chris outlined the changes to the Constitution that have been made by the bgen Board and a record of these were circulated in advance and were available at the meeting.

Chris asked members to vote on the Resolution to adopt the revised Constitution, the vote to adopt the new Constitution was unanimous.

8. Election and Re-election of Board members

Ledy Leyssen was pleased to announce that several members have put themselves forward for re-election and election:

Re-election: Jill Baker, RHS Garden Hyde Hall Jill has been with the bgen Board since 2007 and continues to be a strong member of the board.

Election: Rachel Godfrey, RHS Unfortunately, Rachel couldn't attend the AGM but she sent through a short note to confirm her interest in joining the bgen Board:

'I have been attending both bgen board and workstream meetings (training) as a co-opted member for a year, to see whether this was something I wanted to be involved with and that I had suitable skills to be of use to the team'.

In my role of *Schools and Groups Content Coordinator* for the RHS Campaign for School Gardening I write courses and have frequent involvement in the logistical organisation of national CPD training. Through successful project management I have ensured the training of community groups/teachers with an external stakeholder (The Wellcome Trust) for the past 3 years, with over 200 attendees.

The knowledge and skills necessary for my job have been very transferable for bgen, where I have been able to make recommendations to the board on numerous occasions with the development of the training programme.

As an active member of bgen, whilst working for the RHS (initially as an Education Officer), I fully understand the importance of nurturing networks and relationships between organisations who share the same educational purpose. In the past year I attended training days both as a member and as a bgen representative to aid the smooth running of a day. My time management and attention to detail were fully utilised.

I believe that I would be a beneficial member of the bgen board and have the full support of my organisation to offer my time and experience in doing so.'

Election: Helen Miller, BGCI

Helen is Head of Education and Vocational Training at BGCI and leads on BGCI's education projects including BigPicnic and LearnToEngage. Helen has a degree in Zoology and an MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation and has over 13 years working in the conservation sector managing conservation projects and developing training for a range of audiences.

Helen's relevant skills include conference / training organisation, budgeting and fundraising, and network support. She wants to continue the role BGCI has played on the bgen board, providing support and input where relevant.

Chris Meakin explained that there are still opportunities to join the Board and urged anyone interested to discuss with any of the Board members after the AGM.



9. Any Other Business

There was no further business.