

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR AVICULTURE

Minutes of the National Council for Aviculture Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 6th April 2024 at the Fieldhead Hotel, Markfield Lane, Markfield, Leics. LE67 9PS.

1. **Chairman's welcome.** The Chairman, Barry Mills, opened the meeting at 2.15 pm by welcoming and thanking those attending and hoped that the meeting would be positive and asked the 14 attending to introduce themselves.

2. **Attendees.** The following were in attendance:

Chairman: Barry Mills

British Bird Council: Robb Brown

Budgerigar Society: Ghalib Al-Nasser, John Cosby, Chris Snell

Canary Council: Saviour Camilleri, Keith Ferry, Chris Smith

Affiliated Societies: Rob Braddock (CCBA), Huw Evans (LCA), John Gaskin (Newark CBS), Brian Hamilton (Grantham CBS), Dave Paine (Gainsborough CBS), Derrick Smith (YBBM Club)

Apologies Received From:

MC: Nigel Hewston, Adam Roper, Terry Tuxford, Bernard Williams

3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 1st April 2023.** The minutes of the 2023 AGM were checked for accuracy, and approved on a motion by John Cosby, seconded by Dave Paine and approved by those who were present at the last AGM. The AGM minutes are always uploaded on the NCA website.

4. **Matters Arising.** The Secretary, Ghalib Al-Nasser, informed the meeting that the NCA wrote to the 7 societies (Aviculture Society, International Turaco Society, Foreign Bird League, Northumberland & Durham FBS, National Bengalese Fanciers Association, Zebra Finch Society & Australian Finch Society) that made up the old defunct FBF last April inviting them to affiliate directly to the NCA at a nominal fee of £20 per annum. Unfortunately, only 2 societies took up the offer and affiliated to the NCA (AS & ITS). The FBF eventually closed their bank account and transferred their funds of £1,222.99 to the NCA last October. The donation was made without restriction but with the recommendation that, if the opportunity arises and at the discretion of the NCA Management Committee, all or some of the funds might be used to support the formation of a new FBF or other parent body for the foreign bird fancy

The Secretary also informed the meeting that he recently received an application for insurance from a newly formed National Cockatiel Association and wondered if it would be a good opportunity to invite them to affiliate to the NCA as the above 2 societies did.

It was proposed by Robb Brown, seconded by Chris Smith and passed that we accept them as an affiliate society and be part of the NCA M.C. if they wish to. Ghalib to write to them and invite them to affiliate.

5. **Chairman's Report.** The Chairman, Barry Mills, read out his written report as follows:

“Firstly, I wish to extend thanks to our Secretary and Treasurer, Ghalib, who has worked tirelessly this year, not always in the best of health and with his wife, Janice, also unwell at times. He has grappled, successfully in the end, with the nightmare of securing PLI cover for all our members in 2024. He will explain all in his report later. Secondly, I would like to thank Chris Smith who, although withdrawing for health reasons from a number of key positions over the past year, remains an invaluable sounding-board and wise counsellor to myself and Ghalib as we cope with life’s challenges.

As I look back over the past year from my point of view the main tasks were:

1. Another successful National Exhibition thanks to Chris, his team, all the attending clubs and to the NCA for supporting the award of prizes without which the show would not be the same. The Management Committee will consider this aspect again in their meeting later.

2. The DEFRA Consultation on Bird Keeper Registration - As you will have seen in the 6th and 13th March 2024 issues of C&AB confusion reigns over the new guidelines. Clearly the objections to bird keeper registration raised by the NCA and CC through written submission in the consultation process and by many other responders have been rejected in order to establish a database of ALL birdkeepers (of poultry and all captive birds of Cage & Aviary types) through which to pass information regarding Avian Flu' and preventative measures during outbreaks, mainly for the protection of the national poultry flock and also for human health.

3. Proposed Regulations - Regulations have been published on the DEFRA website with no formal announcement nor notification to all those who responded to the consultation. Formal parliamentary approval for the regulations was planned for the end of February but has been delayed to some future date, as yet unknown. There are different guidelines for each UK nation and people will need to consult on-line the relevant documents for Scotland, Wales, and England. Northern Ireland already has an established bird registration system.

In England a stud of up to 49 birds (of any kind) is subject to **voluntary registration** and one of 50 birds or over to **compulsory registration**. Many breeders will of course, have less than 50 before the breeding season and over fifty afterwards until they dispose of surplus stock. Apparently, such changes in numbers beyond 50 must be reported to APHA so, in practice, registration becomes necessary for those breeders too. The February 2024 version of the General Licence for England states: “The licensee of any fair, market, show or exhibition must provide biosecurity advice in advance of such an event” including “**a recommendation** that the keeper of any birds attending a gathering should be registered with the APHA”. I have since been in touch with APHA to clarify whether “as a bird keeper with a closed bird room without access to the outdoors” and therefore, according to latest information, not obliged to register, would I nevertheless have to register if I attended a bird gathering without poultry. They couldn’t answer and said they would get back to me. In England all bird gatherings require a "bird expert" to be present to check on health of birds with a vet on call if needed.

In Scotland and Wales guidelines are stricter in that ALL bird breeders must register whether with 50 birds or not and all attending a bird gathering with birds must be registered. All bird gatherings require a vet to be present.[**This requirement has been since been reduced to ‘a named person who knows how to identify and report signs of notifiable avian disease’ and ‘a vet to be available to attend at short notice’.**].

Clearly the general direction of movement is towards registration of all bird breeders eventually.

4. Reaction - The NCA and CC have made their views known through the consultation and been largely ignored. We have no direct Government contact beyond official DEFRA and APHA channels of communication. But we do have a representative, Jim Collins, on the CITES talks and access to shared information of several interested and concerned bird organisations being co-ordinated

originally by Rob Innes, editor of Cage and Aviary Birds magazine. Jim Collins, our CITES representative, has tasked his colleague Charles Thompson of REPTA to liaise with other companion animal sectors to make representations to Government and MPs prior to the forthcoming General Election.

Our contribution will be to say that through our organised clubs we have approximately 1k British Bird and Foreign Bird members, 2k Budgerigar members and 2k Canary members unhappy with the situation. According to the UK Pet Food Association's 2024 survey indoor birds are the third largest pet group in the UK involving 3% of households and with 1.5 million birds. The fourth largest group of pets are Domestic Fowl owned by 1.6% of households with 1.3m birds. That's an awful lot of voters many of whom are currently concerned about the Government's proposed legislation regarding companion animals. We hope this joint action will cause DEFRA to rethink.

If we are unsuccessful again: The registration process in England requires application for a County Parish Holding number (familiar to farmers and keepers of other livestock but new to most bird keepers) with which to then proceed to application for bird keeper registration. All can be done on-line or via telephone if necessary. Details are on the DEFRA website.

The situation remains unclear and raises all sorts of concerns for bird keepers. Advice is keep reading Cage Birds for updates".

The Chairman's report created a lively discussion with particular reference to the presence of a vet at shows and how DEFRA can implement their rules with staff shortage.

The final message was to be careful with the anti-bird keeping lobby and small birds need to be closed rung for traceability.

- 6. Treasurers Report and Approval of the Appended Balance Sheet.** The Treasurer, Ghalib Al-Nasser, presented the Balance Sheet, which showed a higher loss (£3,976.26) than the profit in 2022 (£2,161.92). This loss was due to the fact that we gave free insurance coverage to our affiliated societies after buying it for £4,256.

Getting an insurance policy for this year proved to be a big headache and the cost after finding an insurance company was £5,768 for 80 societies which is an increase of £1,512 from last year. Over the years the policy per society has increased from £47 to £50 to £53 last year and now to over £72. Adding the cost of rosettes and postage which amount to £8 shows that the total cost is in excess of £80 per society and we are charging them only £60 this year.

The Balance Sheet is still strong, and it was approved unanimously following a motion by Chris Smith, seconded by Rob Braddock.

- 7. Secretary's Report.** Ghalib Al-Nasser read out his report as follows:

"It has not been a good year for aviculture as after the appeal last year to write to our local MPs with regard to DEFRA's consultation regarding the **registration of all bird keepers**, our chairman Barry constructed a very good letter which I used to send to my local M.P. The Honourable James Cleverly, to my disappointment I never got an acknowledgement or a reply and of course now this will soon become law. You would have read all about it in Cage & Aviary Birds. The guidelines are confusing and both the NCA and Canary Council have submitted objections but sadly that failed. In England

we have to register our stud of over 50 birds but in Scotland and Wales you have to register regardless of number.

The NCA has made its views known through the consultation. We have a representative on the CITES talks and access to shared information of several interested and concerned bird organisations being co-ordinated by Rob Innes, editor of Cage and Aviary Birds magazine. We have no direct Government contact beyond official DEFRA and APHA channels of communication.

As if that was not enough, then I/we were faced with a bigger headache towards the end of last year with regard to the Public Liability Insurance that we supply to our affiliated societies. Normally I / NCA buy the insurance from our Broker **MEAD** in late December / early January and pay the fee for 80 societies. I then pay for any extra societies on 3 monthly terms if we exceed the 80 societies.

To my surprise and shock I was informed by MEAD in early January that our past insurance provider **AXAXL** stopped MEAD as a broker and moved them to another agency. This caused a long delay for MEAD to find an alternative provider and, in the meantime, I too approached 3 providers without any success.

I was much relieved that MEAD was eventually able to find us a new insurance provider (**MGAM**) in early March and eventually sent the certificates to all the societies who were waiting patiently.

However, I need to explain the cost to you please. The NCA offer two schemes: Affiliation only at £20 and affiliation + insurance at £60. This insurance form is always uploaded on the NCA website (www.nca.uk.net) in late December for the following year.

Last year we bought the insurance at a cost of £4,256 for the 80 societies making the cost per society £53.20. Adding the cost of the 4 rosettes + postage that we send out to the affiliated societies at about £8 cost that does not cover the initial £60 which last year we gave for **FREE** as a gesture of Good Will.

This year with the problems that MEAD faced in finding an insurance provider MGAM charged us £5,768 for the 80 societies making a total increase of £1,512 and making the cost per society **£72.10**. The mathematics speaks for itself but, once again, the NCA has decided to cover this increase as a gesture of good will as we did last year when we offered the free insurance to all our affiliated societies for 2023. Therefore, this year's cost will remain at £60.

We need to review our charges as the insurance will no doubt go up next year and also our thoughts about the rosettes with the postage cost increasing every year.

Unfortunately, I was unable to go to the COM World Show held in Spain this year as I was not allowed to fly after an operation and my wife Janice was very ill during that period and ended up in hospital for a week towards the end of January. I was very pleased to hear that 3 out of the 4 candidates from England who took the OMJ Judges' Test passed so I offer my warmest congratulations to Rob Braddock, Joe Coakley & Andy Early who passed the test and have now qualified as COM-OMJ judges".

A discussion took place whether should or should not post the rosettes this year with the high total cost amounting to £80+ and the laborious work involved to post to all those affiliated societies.

It was proposed by Robb Brown, seconded by John Cosby and passed unanimously that we should send the rosettes out.

It was further proposed by John Cosby, seconded by Brian Hamilton and passed unanimously that we increase the cost from £60 to £100 in anticipation of further increases by the insurance company and Royal Mail and also to delete the “Affiliation only” box from the form.

The suggestion was made that the rosette manufacturer can post the rosettes at a cost. Ghalib said that societies apply for the insurance at different times of the year and some are only a week before the show.

- 8. President for 2024** – The Chairman informed the meeting that we agreed previously to change the Rules to allow the President to serve 2 terms and hence Ghalib will serve another year (2024) as our President.
- 9. President-Elect** – Robb Brown of the British Bird Council was elected last year to this position.
- 10. To Appoint Honorary Life Vice-Presidents.** This position will be filled in by Ghalib next year as the immediate past President.
- 11. To Receive the Names of the Management Committee.** The following names were put forward:

BBC: Robb Brown, Bernard Williams, Chris Williams
BS: Ghalib Al-Nasser, John Cosby, Maurice Roberts, Chris Snell.
CC: Saviour Camilleri, Huw Evans, Keith Ferry, Adam Roper.
- 12. To Elect the Auditors.** Paul Tiller FCCA was again elected to be auditor for the NCA.
- 13. To Determine the Rate of Subscription for 2025.** It was agreed that subscriptions would remain the same as for 2024.
- 14. To Consider any Resolution in Accordance with Rule 14x.** None.
- 15. To Consider any Matter Referred to the AGM by the Management Committee.** None.
- 16. To Consider any other Relevant Business notified to the Secretary at least 14 days Before the Meeting.** None.
- 17. Date and Venue of the 2025 Annual General Meeting.** It was proposed to hold the 2025 AGM on **Saturday 5th April 2025** at the Fieldhead Hotel in the afternoon.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.10 pm