

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR AVICULTURE

Minutes of the National Council for Aviculture Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 18th April 2026 by TEAMS.

- 1. Chairman's welcome.** The Chairman, Barry Mills, opened the meeting at 11.00 hrs by welcoming and thanking those attending for their support and especially Steve Edmond representing the Yorkshire CC. Barry further explained the protocol should one wish to speak.
- 2. Attendees.** The following were in attendance:
Chairman: Barry Mills
British Bird Council: Robb Brown, Bernard Williams
Budgerigar Society: Ghalib Al-Nasser, Maurice Roberts, Chris Snell
Canary Section: Keith Ferry (MNC), Andy Early (LFCC), Steve Edmond (YCC), Barry McGuire (FFF), Andy Williamson (MLCA/EALCA)
Foreign Bird Section: Dave Harris (AFS)
Chris Smith (HLVP), Colin Rowe (LM)

Apologies Received From:

Dennis Webster (HLVP), Chris Williams (BBC), Phil White (AS) & Nigel Hewston (ITS).

- 3. Chairman's Report.** The Chairman, Barry Mills, read out his written report as follows:
“The year 2025 -2026 will be remembered as one of the busiest and most significant for the NCA in years. It started well enough with the NCA continuing financial support for the National Shows of England, Scotland and Wales and increasing its contribution to the Sustainable Users Network (SUN) which represents us on CITES negotiations with DEFRA and whose key worker for us is Jim Collin who proved his worth again with relevant advice during our legal campaign against DEFRA's draconian Licencing procedures introduced unannounced in late December 2025.

Less positive was the demise in 2025 of the Canary Council, the second of our four parent bodies to succumb to lack of support at national level. This has forced us to revisit and restructure our constitution at the management committee meeting held in November 2025. The amended constitution is up for adoption today under item 12 on the agenda.

One other innovative proposition at last year's AGM was our President's plan for a Development Fund which would use some of the NCA's accumulated monies to promote schemes across the fancy to encourage progress, interest and collaboration across the hobby. A sum of £5000 was allocated for the first year with clubs being invited to present their own ideas for positive development within their club, district or between clubs.

Unfortunately, this promising innovation was hardly out of the traps when Avian Flu' returned to Britain and DEFRA, in its efforts to preserve the national poultry flock and human health from the spread of this disease, introduced without consultation rigorous licencing guidelines which made shows and sales nigh on impossible to arrange. There was an outcry across the hobby as people realized that bird keeping was facing annihilation through overzealous legislation.

The NCA aided by the Parrot Society and the I.O.A. set up a campaign group soon to be joined by many other avian organisations who opened a Joint Legal Fund for everyone in the fancy to contribute to. We engaged the London Legal Firm Fieldfisher, who had experience of legal challenges to DEFRA, to advise us on how to proceed. We could have gone to Judicial Review had we raised up to £150K but there was a narrow window of 3 months from the imposition of the new guidelines in which to make our case. Fieldfisher agreed to prepare the legal case via Junior Counsel for a capped sum of £20K plus VAT. We set ourselves an initial target of £25K and with help from Cage and Aviary Birds and fanciers on social media spreading the word we amassed that sum and more. We also compiled three documents of evidence and argument to present to DEFRA.

On the 9th February 2026 we had an initial Teams meeting with DEFRA's Exotic Disease Policy Team attended by over thirty-five representatives of avian organisations from all parts of the hobby lobbying for some common sense to prevail. The result was a fairly blunt presentation of DEFRA's case without much indication of movement on their part. But they invited us to a second meeting on 25th February when they said they would answer the many questions we had raised if we sent a smaller group to enable discussion. They followed this up with a written response delivered a week or so before the second meeting which indicated very little movement in their position.

By that time Fieldfisher had prepared an 8-page legal letter challenging DEFRA's procedures and imposed measures which were judged to be in part unreasonable, disproportionate, unworkable and even unlawful. Potentially grounds for a Judicial Review if we decided to pursue it. Our basic demand was for Passerines to be returned under the General Licence and for consideration of further amendments to the guidelines which were proving unworkable. This was sent to them by the NCA two days before the second Teams meeting held with DEFRA's Exotic Disease Policy Team on 25th February with a smaller group of six representatives from the main sponsors of the Joint Legal Fund plus our own legal expert and scientific expert. This was ten days before the window closed for a judicial review which was not a pleasant prospect for DEFRA. It was clear at that meeting that the officials were less certain of their position and were prepared to listen rather more carefully to our case than before. No promises were made but indications were implied that changes might occur and a willingness shown to continue consultation with us.

Two or three days after that it was announced via the DEFRA website that due to the decline in levels of avian flu' in the environment restrictions would be lifted, passerines returned under the General Licence and an end to Specific licences.

Many people in the Fancy have assumed that that was "battle won" but that is not so. The General Licence, though not as draconian as the Specific Licence, still contains elements we consider challenging to deliver if not unworkable and, in some cases, close to unlawful. So, our Action Group of about 12 people continues to meet near enough weekly to thrash out a revised version of the General Licence which we consider is deliverable at shows and sales both large and small. This will be put to DEFRA in the not too distant future with a request for a meeting or meetings to argue our case.

On Thursday of this past week, as agreed at our last Teams meeting of the Action Group, I wrote a "holding letter" to the Exotic Disease Policy Unit explaining our current position and proposition for the way forward and looked forward to working with them to find solutions to the issues which still present difficulties.

As you may gather, this process has taken up an enormous amount of time and effort by volunteers throughout the fancy but, in particular the Action Group which has done much of the donkey work in

researching and producing documents and arguments to make our case. Our President has been indefatigable in acting as Convener, Secretary & Minute-Taker for all our meetings. I am very grateful to him, also to Chris Smith, former NCA Chairman and more recently Parrot Society representative, and Ghalib our Treasurer, and others for their support throughout this demanding process which, as I say, is not yet complete. The campaign has to go on if our hobby is to survive.

One great effect of this campaign, which I hope will not be lost, has been the unity that it has brought to the hobby; the willingness of a whole variety of clubs and societies to come together to defend a hobby that is dear to us and under very severe threat.

I myself have found the process interesting, even intriguing, certainly enlightening but also exhausting. The pace has not eased up since the very first day we started to organise the campaign and, I must admit, that over that time it has had a marked effect on my health and peace of mind. So, I decided some weeks ago that as from this AGM I would need to step down from the responsibility I have held as Chairman for the past, I think, 5 years. I have done what I could do but it is time now for someone with more energy, resilience and perhaps more modern skills of communication to carry on the job of Chairman and I wish that person every success in this important role as leader of the NCA. Thank you all for your support over the years”.

The President, Robb Brown, commented on the outstanding work that Barry has done and the work in leading the Action Group. Robb further said that he never thought that when signing to be President to face all these problems with DEFRA. Barry touched on the fact that this problem has brought the fancy together and the NCA needs to lead. Robb then resumed to chair the meeting.

4. Treasurers Report and Approval of the Appended Balance Sheet. The Treasurer, Ghalib Al-Nasser, read out his report combining it with agenda item 5 (Secretary’s report) and item 10 (COM-UK report):

“I have been a member of the NCA Management Committee for more years that I care to remember. Initially from 1992 to 1997 and again from 2007 to the present day as one of the representatives from the Budgerigar Society. I have also been the secretary & treasurer since 1st January 2012 but yet this is the first time I am unable to produce a Balance Sheet for you to approve. This is mainly due to a discrepancy in the May bank statement and my laziness for not spotting it earlier to action the error.

When I started doing the balance sheet last month I discovered that there has been one payment in of £640 contribution from the Canary Council and two payments out of that amount. After spending 45 minutes on the telephone to the HSBC Business branch I had no joy. Then a visit to the nearest branch (19 miles each way) who were also unable to help then they assisted me in drawing up a written complaint. A week passed before I got a phone call from the Complaints Department who explained the situation and the issue was resolved. They appreciated the grievance that I had gone through and decided to award us £100 compensation. For this reason, I am not in a position to issue a balance sheet but will do so in the future after it has been audited. What I can say is that at the 31st December 2025 the balance was as follows:

HSBC Community A/C	£16,684.37
Santander Current A/C	£466.86
<u>Cambridge Bank Bond</u>	<u>£31,400.94</u>
TOTAL	£48,552.17

We are, without a doubt, in a very healthy financial position, considering that our saving in the Cambridge Bond started with £25,000 in 2016 has brought a profit of £6,400 within those 10 years.

The registration of all bird keepers last year with DEFRA / APHA caused no problem when the show season started as for the budgerigars all exhibitors were quoting their CPH number without any problem. Sadly, a few events were cancelled during the latter part of the year due to the Bird Flu and I think that we will be facing this problem every year during the winter months.

The Public Liability Insurance from MGAM, through our Broker MEAD, has gone up again this year to £7,280. This has been an annual increase since 2023 from £4,256 to £5,768 then to £6,932 last year. So far, 77 societies have applied for the insurance and more to come.

I feel that the new recent regulations imposed by DEFRA have united the fancy under the leadership of the NCA. The team across the fancy who formed the Action Group need to be congratulated for their great efforts of which three are from our Management Committee consisting of our chairman Barry, our president Robb, our past chairman Chris and the others. Their effort and appeal for funds under the slogan "NCA Fighting Fund" generated an income of over £28,000 of which £24,000 had to be paid recently for legal fees enabling the threat towards our exhibition hobby to be lifted for the time being.

The fancy was very generous in their contribution from as little as £10 to the £5000 by the major bodies like the NCA, IOA, Parrot Society and the British Bird Council. More donations are promised and, on their way, but I do hope that we will not be facing that threat again and hope that DEFRA have realised how united the fancy is when faced with such a threat.

I attended the COM World Show in Belgium in January and just hope that one day we can be able to exhibit there again. It is a fantastic event but despite the threat of the Bird Flu in many countries the entry was still 18,443 birds by 1934 exhibitors from 19 countries. I met with many fanciers from the U.K. and manned the COM-UK stand with Simon Tammam.

Two further U.K. candidates, Adam Kendall (Posture Canaries E1) and Jason Green (Posture Canaries E1) took the OMJ Judges Test and passed making us, COM-UK, 15 judges strong now after the retirement of Ian Wright.

The COM Congress was well attended and the Gala Dinner was great and entertaining with 500 guests in attendance. Next year's show will be in Spain.

We had our COM-UK annual meeting last month and Robb and I attended on behalf of the NCA. We need to be strongly represented on that committee who expressed their gratitude to the NCA for the work that we have done recently fighting the new DEFRA regulations.

My final appeal is to support the new amendments to the Constitution opening the door for more national Canary and Foreign Bird specialist societies to affiliate to the Management Committee and bring unity back to the fancy under the NCA umbrella".

- 6. To Appoint Honorary Life Vice-Presidents.** This position will be filled by Robb Brown as the immediate past President at the next AGM.
- 7. To Receive the Names of the Management Committee.** The following names were put forward (subject to changes in the future):
- BBC:** Robb Brown, Bernard Williams, Chris Williams.
BS: John Cosby, Maurice Roberts, Chris Snell.
Canary Section: Keith Ferry (MNC), Andy Early (LFCC), Steve Edmond (YCC), Barry McGuire (FFF), Andy Williamson (MLC/EALCA).
Foreign Section: Lawrence Broome-Young (AS), Nigel Hewston (ITC), Daniel Lane (NCA), Dave Harris (AFS).
- 8. To Elect the Auditors.** Paul Tiller FCCA was again elected to be auditor for the NCA.
- 9. To Determine the Rate of Subscription for 2026.** It was proposed by Keith Ferry, seconded by Chris Smith and approved unanimously that the recommended rates as submitted in the new Constitution be adopted.
- 10. COM-UK** - reported earlier under item 4. The elected 3 delegates will be Ghalib Al-Nasser, Robb Brown & Keith Ferry.
- 11. DEFRA Update** – reported earlier under item 3.
- 12. Amendments to the 2022 Constitution** – The new proposed Constitution was tabled and Bernard Williams proposed its acceptance, seconded by Barry Mills and passed unanimously.
- 13. To Consider any other Relevant Business notified to the Secretary at least 14 days Before the Meeting.** None.
- 14. Any Other Business & Date and Venue of the 2027 AGM.** It was proposed to hold the 2027 AGM on **Saturday 3rd April 2027**. Although next year's AGM will be the hand over of the Presidential Chain but Barry Mills suggested that due to travel cost and the short duration of the AGM we should conduct the AGM by TEAMS as of today and gather more members attending and leave the handover of the Presidential Chain to a more suitable event attracting more crowds, like the National Exhibition or something similar. Members agreed to this suggestion.

Chris Smith suggested that we re-join C.A.S.C. (Companion Animal Sector Council) at an annual cost of £200. The organisation provides guidelines for shows and is a very useful organisation to join.

Ghalib Al-Nasser proposed, seconded by Barry Mills and passed unanimously. Andy Williamson was elected as the representative with Robb Brown reserve.

It was agreed to arrange for a Management Committee meeting to be held soon to elect a Chairman and various Officers.

The President then thanked the outgoing Chairman Barry Mills for all his past work and steering the meetings, and all the delegates for attending and closed the meeting at 12.10 pm.