



AGM agenda

Wednesday 9 October 2013

4.30pm Registration and tea

4.45pm AGM introduced by Monty Don

Agenda items *see 'Notes to agenda items'

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| 1 | The meeting will open with half a minute's silence | year ending 31 March 2013 and Treasurer's report* |
| 2 | Appointment of the Chairperson for the meeting | 7 Resolution: To re-appoint Baker Tilly, for the year 2013/14* |
| 3 | Apologies for absence | 8 Annual report on Soil Association matters |
| 4 | Minutes of the 66th AGM held on 1 November 2012 | 9 Address by Soil Association President |
| 5 | Results of the election of Trustees 2013* | 10 Any other business |
| 6 | Resolution: To adopt the annual accounts for the | 11 Close of AGM |

Notes to agenda items

Agenda item 5

Particulars of candidates are given on pages 34 to 36. Voting information is available on the ballot paper enclosed with *Living Earth* or at www.soilassociation.org/councilvote

Agenda item 6

A summary statement of financial activities and the Treasurer's report for the year to 31 March 2013 are detailed on pages 37 to 39. Full copies of the report and consolidated financial statements for Soil Association Limited will be available for inspection at the AGM or may be obtained on request from the General Secretary.

Agenda item 7

It is recommended that Baker Tilly be re-appointed as the Soil Association auditors for 2013/14.

Agenda items 6 and 7

If you are not attending the AGM in person you may vote on the resolutions in agenda items 6 and 7 by proxy. Please use the form enclosed with *Living Earth* for this.

Summary minutes of the 66th AGM

Held on Wednesday 1 November 2012 at Rudolf Steiner House, London

1. Opening of the AGM

There being a quorum of more than 20 members present, Orna NiChionna, Chair of the Soil Association, declared the 66th AGM open.

2. Appointment of the Chairperson for the meeting

Monty Don tendered his apologies and Orna NiChionna took the chair and welcomed members present.

3. Apologies for absence

Phil Haughton, Sue Horton, Linda Plummer, Dennis Overton.

4. Minutes of the 65th AGM

It was proposed by Orna NiChionna and seconded by Neil Canetty-Clarke that the minutes be approved. Carried with two abstentions.

5. Election of Councillors

Elections had been held for six 'general members of Council' places and one place as the 'devolved nations' member of Council for Scotland.

Declared elected:

Annabel Allott (725 votes), Joanna Blythman (662 votes), Geetie Singh (659 votes), Pat Thomas (594 votes), Andrew Whitley (720 votes), Nigel Woodhouse (586 votes). Dennis Overton was elected unopposed as the 'devolved nations' member of Council for Scotland.

Not elected:

Michael Bailey and Anna-Louise Batchelor.

6. Resolution

To adopt the annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2012 and the Treasurer's report. Neil reported that there had been a slight overall reduction in turnover to around £10 million due to the Food for Life programme becoming slighter smaller during the year as it came to the end of the first-stage funding. Certification formed a large part of the unrestricted income, which indicated its importance to the Soil Association. The overall funds and reserves were healthy at approximately £4 million with only a small change in year-on-year numbers in unrestricted income. Legacy income which tended to be sporadic was down this year as



Summary minutes of the 65th AGM *cont...*

was major-donor income, partly as a result of the general economic downturn. There had also been a slight downward trend in membership, which the team was working hard to rectify. The year finished with a small surplus and a healthy cash position.

Responding to a question about future major expenditure, Neil replied that apart from normal expenditure there was none anticipated. Some investment in membership was likely but this would have to be approved by Council.

In response to a question regarding the sale of property, Neil explained that this had been the sale of a bungalow held in the Land Trust which was not considered to be part of the estate.

Regarding grant income, in answer to a question, Neil responded that it came from many sources and was mainly connected to projects. Answering a further question regarding any conditions applying to grants, Roger Mortlock, Deputy Director, responded that different grants had different conditions, e.g. some were reporting criteria, some were about outcomes. The number of funders was dwindling and the Soil Association was looking at other possible areas, e.g. health funders and social cohesion, which had not been approached in the past.

Anthony Stole requested that next year's presentation showed percentages.

Neil Canetty-Clarke proposed and Bill Starling seconded the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012 and the Treasurer's report be adopted. Motion carried – 570 in favour, 2 against and 4 abstentions, including proxies.

7. Resolution

To appoint Baker Tilly, 2 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3ST as the Soil Association's auditors for the year 2012/2013.

Proposed Bill Starling seconded Neil Canetty-Clarke that Baker Tilly be appointed as the Soil Association's auditors for the year 2012/2013. Motion carried – 565 in favour, 5 against, 7 abstentions, including proxies.

8. Special Resolution

To amend the Memorandum and Articles of Association as described in the AGM papers.

Copies initialled by the General Secretary were available for perusal.

Proposed Anne seconded Annabel Allott that the special resolution be adopted. Motion carried – 543 in favour, 12 against and 21 abstentions, including proxies.

Before handing over to Helen Browning, Chief Executive, Orna commented that contrary to the pervading feeling of gloom and the small drop in income and membership, the Soil Association was in a better place than it had been. It was run by a professional team and was in good health financially. She said the Soil Association was reaching out to far more people in far more meaningful ways to impact on everyday lives than before, and our strategy enables us to have a greater influence beyond that of our supporters.

9. Annual report

Helen Browning opened by saying that the new strategy which had been unveiled at the 2011 AGM had been launched in February 2012. She explained that although it had been a long process it had been critical to get the thinking behind the strategy right; to have clear goals and be clear how outcomes would be measured. The starting point had been the urgency of the work; that the issues being faced were international; to ensure relevance to everybody and give an easy way to start the journey; and to combat misconceptions about the Soil Association; the formation of partnerships and working well with colleagues in other NGOs to maximise the impact of our message.

Reporting specifically on the 'Building our Organisation' strand of the strategy, Helen said there had been a slight drop in membership during the past year and a target of 20,000 members by 2020 had been set. Helen urged those present to encourage their friends to join as it was only through the unrestricted income generated by members and supporters that work could be done which was not funding dependent. The supporter base was growing and there were 100,000 people who visit our website and follow us on social media. Producer licensee numbers had also dropped which was a real concern and work would be done in the forthcoming year to try to reverse the trend. She said that the organisation worked very hard to keep spending to a minimum in administrative areas. There were new programmes, sustainable food cities which Roger would talk about, as well as new funding from Duchy Originals, which Tom would discuss.

Helen spoke about her personal highlights for her

first 12 months in office:

- The Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) programme which continued to grow with over 4,040 schools enrolled
- The cotton campaign which was an exciting initiative and which Peter Melchett would be talking about later
- The bee campaign which Emma Hockridge would discuss later
- The growth in our supporter base through social media.

Tom MacMillan then spoke on the 'Facing the Future' strand of our strategy and work. This is about:

- Spreading organic approaches and improving them in all areas of our work such as farming, food production, textiles and timber
- Having more and better organic systems
- Strengthening our standards and helping more people to meet them.

It was also trying to bring the whole of food and farming in line with organic principles by reaching out to other producers and through campaigns. While evidence shows organic systems can feed the world and are less harmful to the environment, they do not get a fair hearing. The Soil Association was trying to be more scientific in the world of organic systems and also trying to make the world of science more organic. For example, it had teamed up with Bristol University and the RSPCA in a project called AssureWel to define ways farmers and inspectors could reliably measure animal welfare. This would highlight areas of improvement which would in turn strengthen our standards. It was not just about doing the right thing but about achieving the right results.

Tom also highlighted the field laboratories we have been running, which bring together small groups of farmers to innovate ways to farm organically. To date over 600 farmers have been involved in the project with a target of 1,000 by April 2013. This work was being carried out by the Duchy Originals Future Farming programme funded by the Prince's Charitable Foundation.

Roger Mortlock spoke on our 'Good Food for All' activity. This concept had its roots in the FFLP programme which aimed to give access to everyone to food which was good for them and the planet. FFLP was now normal in 20% of schools in the UK where it was being practically applied to the curriculum. It was also changing the attitudes of school caterers and demonstrated



how food could be an influence for change and schools were reporting improvement in behaviour. It extended into communities, bringing parents into the schools often for the first time. He said FFLP was not just a lunchtime initiative; 43% of parents changed their habits as a result of the programme. The FFLP approach also benefited producers, enabling them to engage with schools through the school farmers' markets. With the end of the FFLP grant, new ways of funding this programme were being explored with the NHS and local authorities. Another example of the importance of this programme was the recent partnership with Leon on the School Food Review. Roger said there would also be a Hospital Food Review in the near future. Roger went on to mention the success of the Plymouth Sustainable City charter as an example of the extension of the work into the wider community.

James Twine then spoke on our 'Enabling Change' strategic work. He explained that the remit covered four areas:

- Organic and sustainable certification, which was the basic work done in Soil Association Certification
- Building new markets to increase the demand for organic and ethically certified products
- Supporting the supply chain – this focused on giving businesses the tools and opportunities to develop effective organic and other ethical supply chains
- Promoting new schemes to help extend the charitable activities of the Soil Association.

James said that the organic market in the UK had contracted with a concomitant effect on income. There were however three areas of significant growth:

- Export
- Online sales, particularly amongst the younger age group
- Prêt à Manger had recently made a significant investment in organic products.

He said that there had been an 8% increase in organic sales leading up to Christmas and the Food for Life Catering Mark had been a great success with over 600,000 meals a day being served to this mark. Soil Association Certification is also well known in forestry certification and this year added Fairtrade certification to its portfolio, conducting inspections and certification.

Orna thanked those making presentations and asked for questions from the floor.

Bill Starling asked what the position was regarding the new headquarters.

Roger Mortlock replied that planning permission had been granted and that various options for development were being explored.

Philip Conford asked whether given the link with Fairtrade, British farmers were likely to ask for it.

James replied that the partnership was to carry out Fairtrade audits in the UK and that the Soil Association still had its own Ethical Trade certification mark.

Carol Stepton asked what percentage of secondary schools were involved in the FFLP programme.

Roger responded that about 15% of those involved were secondary schools. He explained it was much tougher in that environment although the gains were also bigger.

In response to a question regarding GM and the Soil Association's involvement, it was explained there was a lot of lobbying in the political arena and that the issue was being carefully watched. A global view was needed on the way this was developing.

Jane Hallé commented that more school dinner ladies and school caterers should be brought on board.

Following the questions, Emma Hockridge showed the film of *Silent Spring* and explained how pesticides once considered safe were now banned, citing the first issue of *Mother Earth* in 1946, which warned against the potential harmful impact of pesticides. Emma drew a link between the work of Rachel Carson and the current threat now to our bees and insect pollinators and introduced the Soil Association's 'Keep Britain buzzing' campaign to ban the use of neonicotinoids. Emma said that in Italy where neonicotinoids were banned, winter deaths of honey bees had fallen by 50%. There were wider issues involved in why governments and chemical companies were so determined to reject scientific evidence, as it could throw into disarray the validity of pesticide 'safety' testing. Licensing toxic chemicals for use in farming had depended on the theory that tiny levels do not have any effect on wildlife or people. This was an assumption which many scientists had questioned. The campaign was having some success and the Soil Association has been asked to give oral evidence to the Environment Select Committee.

Peter Melchett then introduced our 'Organic Cotton Campaign'. Peter said this work took the Soil Association into key areas globally; the picture was a positive one with global sales increasing. Work was being done to educate businesses, consumers and fashion designers on the benefits of using organic cotton. The campaign would stress the complicated global supply chain and the significance of independent inspection and accreditation. Organic cotton has five main advantages:

- It does not involve GM seeds
- It gives control to the farmers, not the GM companies, by excluding GM seeds
- It helps farmers to feed themselves and their families
- Less water is used in the organic process
- Less energy is needed, it avoids the use of fossil-fuel-based fertilisers, and healthy organic soil stores more carbon.

The campaign would be launched in the spring of 2013.

Orna thanked Emma and Peter for their presentations and asked for questions from the floor.

Nicola Tippler asked what the Soil Association was doing about environmental awareness given that the nutritional value of healthy food was what consumers seemed to appreciate.

Helen responded that it was a complex issue and the cotton debate was an opportunity to educate consumers on a wide scale. Peter added that research over the last 10 years had not changed; people buy organic food for their own well-being, which was why education work was so important. He said that it was hoped to work with the Environment Agency to raise awareness of the wider implications of buying and investing in organic goods.

Joe Harvey commented that the FFLP programme encourages children to be curious and engaged them in an educative and informative way about the environmental impact of the food they ate.

Another member commented on the importance of single-issue campaigns, citing the Bee campaign.

Orna NiChionna remarked that there was a widespread assumption that if something was on the market it was safe; an attitude which must be dispelled. She thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed.