



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2009

Message from the Trust President, The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry

The despatch of this edition of the magazine takes place shortly after the Trust's Annual General Meeting, which was held at Murrayfield Stadium on Saturday 26 September, and it seems sensible to keep all our members in touch with the important issues that were discussed there.

Kate Mavor, the Chief Executive, has been in post since March so this was her first AGM. As it turns out she was present for what was one of the most important gatherings in the Trust's history. She gives her impressions and her responses to some of the issues raised below.

I was honoured to be re-elected by those at the meeting and look forward to serving a further term as President during a year which I believe will be of huge significance for the Trust's future strategy and direction.

The AGM heard that a major review of the Trust's governance and operation is to be undertaken. The Trust Council and I are in discussion with the Rt Hon George Reid, formerly Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, with a view to his leading the review. Mr Reid has extensive experience of governance reviews, both from his work for several years with the International Red Cross and more recently having undertaken a review for the new Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

The review will look at the immediate governance issues that have become apparent over the last six months, in particular regarding the relative responsibilities of Council and the Board, and the role of Chairman. It will however be more fundamental, exploring the role of the Trust in the future in the altered economic and social climate in which it finds itself. As I explained to the meeting, the reductions in staff and the changes proposed for a number of properties may have necessarily steadied the ship. However, serious questions are now raised about our capacity to meet the challenges of the future both in terms of conservation and our ambitions for the opportunities for education and enjoyment associated with our 130 properties. Mr Reid's review will need to look at these issues in the broader context of the management of Scotland's heritage in public, charitable and private hands.

There is further discussion to be had but it is hoped that a mandate will be agreed at the Council meeting on 30 October and that work will get underway immediately, with the aim of reporting six to eight months thereafter. Mr Reid has made clear that any review undertaken would be independent, that it would be transparent with regular feedback to members and all involved, and that it would canvass opinion on the widest possible basis. The intention is to bring proposals which may involve seeking legislative change to the AGM next year.

The Murrayfield meeting heard from the Trust Chairman, Shonaig Macpherson, in what she said would be her final report to an AGM after four years. A few weeks ago she asked me to initiate the process for finding her successor. The Trust's Nominations Committee has already met and will do so again this month, and when it has made an appointment Shonaig will stand down. I reminded the meeting that Shonaig was one of the many volunteers upon whom the Trust relies and that her commitment in terms of time and passion had been extraordinary.

Members will know from the papers that accompanied the last issue of the magazine that two Motions critical of the management of the Trust's affairs had been tabled for debate. One of these called for votes of no confidence in, successively, the Chairman, the Board and Council. Two days before the AGM the proposer informed me that he had decided to withdraw the Motion. My decision that it could not then be reinstated caused dismay for a considerable number of those attending and for a significant time the meeting was delayed while procedural issues were strongly debated. However, in a vote overseen by the Electoral Reform Society a clear majority of those present supported the decision that had been made.

The first Motion, proposed by Miss Mackenzie, did however provide the platform for a wide-ranging discussion from all shades of opinion. Kate Mavor will reflect on some of the issues raised below. I will simply say that the Trust is hugely fortunate to have such a body of informed and committed members. We must however now look forward to debate the way in which our organisation needs to reinvent itself if it is to meet the challenges of the decades ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ronald Buccleuch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'R'.

The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KBE FRSE DL

Message from the Trust Chief Executive, Kate Mavor

First of all, may I say how delighted I was to welcome so many members to the meeting. Although bookings for the event at Murrayfield Stadium were in the region of 300, on the day over 600 members attended the event. For some, this large attendance led to a delay in registering for admission and I apologise to those who had to queue for some time.

In my first address to a Trust AGM, I expressed my regret that so many people had only felt moved to attend out of frustration about the redundancies, the closure of properties and about the way we have communicated all the recent changes. It was good to be able finally to account for the past year face-to-face with so many people. After highlighting some of our key achievements, I stressed some of the main areas on which we will focus in the coming months – engagement, partnership and harnessing new technology. A presentation was given by Lesley Watt, our Finance Director, who explained the Trust's financial position and gave a clear insight into a hugely complex situation. Questions on our finances covered whether a valuation should be given to heritage assets, our procedure for internal auditing, the growth of membership, and the fundraising work required for the development of the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum. From the feedback I have received, people were reassured by the presentations around the Trust's finances and the reasons for the recent actions taken. The annual accounts were adopted.

In advance of the first members' Motion to be put forward for the AGM, the President invited presentations from three of the specialist committees, and the meeting heard from Frank Hitchman, chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee; Dame Barbara Kelly, chair of the Nominations Committee and Professor Michael Moss, on behalf of the Conservation Committee. We were reminded how many distinguished and expert people support us on our most important committees.

For many members, the biggest disappointment about the meeting was a significant loss of debating time, but a number of issues were raised and I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond to all members on these. I have summarised the major points as follows:

1. The decision to sell Wemyss House and relocate the Trust's central office was questioned. We are currently in negotiation over this and further news will be communicated when a conclusion has been reached. I know that many members will regret this decision but I feel strongly that it is the correct one for a number of reasons, in particular our aim to reduce our administrative running costs to enable more to be invested in protecting our 130 visited properties. In addition, the internal layout of the building currently impedes good internal communication and prevents us making the best use of available technology to support our staff. Wemyss House is a beautiful historic building. We moved our administrative function there in 1999, at a time when Charlotte Square was lined with To Let signs. We have played a key role in restoring the square and the building will be sold with a Conservation Agreement. The Trust also owns numbers 5-7 Charlotte Square and The Georgian House (no 7) will continue to offer public access and act as a showcase for the Trust.
2. Understandably, the closure of three historic properties this year was questioned and I can reassure all members that we are making every effort to secure access to these properties in the future. We have been very pleased with the positive reaction and help from many partner organisations, local groups and local authorities who stepped in to help with the funding of a number of properties earlier this year and hope this generosity will be replicated.

3. The proposed rise of £1 in the subscription for 'ordinary' members was debated and was agreed. While some members felt that this was very low given our financial situation, it was pointed out that only 6% of members count as 'ordinary members' and that other membership prices are calculated after careful analysis of consumer trends. While £1 seems very little to some people, in seeking a broader membership we need to be aware of competing demands on those with smaller incomes.
4. Other detailed points were raised about the future strategy and direction of the organisation, our processes for communication and consultation, the need to focus on marketing and income generation, the importance of attracting younger members, the validity of life membership, how we decide our opening times at properties, and the need to work with people more effectively. I am grateful to all who raised these points, which will all feed into our future planning processes.

The remainder of the meeting undertook some of the more routine matters of an AGM, including the re-election of the President and Vice-Presidents.

New members to Council were elected as follows:

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| David MacLehose | Keith Michael Griffiths |
| Robin Kent | Rebecca Bailey (McKaig) |
| Angus Macdonald | Alan Warner |
| Jean Gowans | Michael Goodwin |
| Margaret Cameron | Fiona Plumtree |
| Sir Malcolm Ross | William McDermott |
| Hamish A N McKenzie | Fiona Mitchell |
| Lindsay Crofts | Maurice Michael Grantham |
| Ann Packard | |

The George Waterston Award was presented to volunteer Robert Dey, who has been a conservation volunteer for over 20 years; the Colin Donald Environmental Law Prize went to Avril Connacher.

Members at the meeting made some helpful proposals and raised a number of concerns, which we will address. I will be seeking to improve communication with all our stakeholders as a priority.

On a practical note, those who were unable to take lunch and would like to be reimbursed, please write to the Governance Administrator at Wemyss House, including the lunch voucher. I know that many of you think it appropriate to use this money as an additional donation instead and I am grateful for that help.

In his concluding remarks, the President said that this was 'a meeting which we would not forget'. Of that there is no doubt, but I am equally convinced that, as a result, the Trust will emerge as a stronger, more focused and more responsive organisation, determined to play its full part in conserving Scotland's wonderful heritage for future generations to enjoy.



Kate Mavor, Chief Executive