

## **British Deaf Association Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

**9:45am, Saturday, 28 January 2017**

**Priory Street Centre, York**

### **1. Welcome and Opening Announcements**

The Chair formally welcomed all to the AGM.

A minute of silence was held for those who passed away in the past year, including Robert Benson, Jean Collier, William Cooper, Richard Magill, Christopher Marsh, Bob McCullough, David Pilkington, Arnold Rundle, Roy Taylor, Ian Stillman and Andrea Taffurelli. The Chair apologised if any names were missed.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from: John Denerley, Ian Depledge, John Hay MBE, Shirley Hay, Asif Iqbal MBE, Thomas McWhinney, Alan Murray MBE, Tessa Padden, Janet Richards and Linda Richards.

### **3. Minutes of the last AGM, held on 20 February 2016 in London**

The minutes were made available to all members and the Chair welcomed comments from those present.

**The minutes of the AGM held on 20 February 2016 in London were unanimously approved by the members. Proposer: Gillian Stringer, Seconder: Ben Thomson.**

### **4. BDA Review of the Year**

The Review was presented via PowerPoint and the presenting duties shared amongst BDA staff and the Board of Trustees. The Chair reminded all present that the information is for 2015-16 and members were offered the opportunity to ask questions. The Chair also displayed the Chair Chain Badge which includes the names of previous Chairs as it is important to preserve history.

Business Development Manager for Northern Ireland Majella McAteer summarised the hard work taking place in Northern Ireland in the Deaf Advocacy and Deaf Access & Inclusion projects which is making a real difference in the Deaf community. BSL/ISL recognition is an ongoing process and consultation is taking place. (Scotland and Northern Ireland are following different processes: Scotland – Bill/Act and National Advisory Group, Northern Ireland – Road Map.)

Business Development Manager for England and Wales Paul Redfern summarised the Deaf Advocacy and Deaf Access & Inclusion project work taking place in England and Wales, including the hate crime project. Most advocacy work is taking place in Midlands and East London, with Wales to follow, and limited funding makes it difficult to go national. It was also made clear that

evidence is vital to ensure work and funding can continue. 36 BSL Charters have been signed, and the number one pledge is now consultation with the Deaf community.

Community Development Manager Scotland Avril Hepner summarised BDA's work in Scotland where BDA continues to engage with the Deaf community via Deaf Access & Inclusion projects and the Deaf Health Challenge. The BSL (Scotland) Act is positive news that has come as a result of long term efforts and team work. There is more work to be done, and members expressed concerns that education was not included in the bill. This was removed to ensure the Bill could pass, and will be included in future consultations.

Deaf Roots and Pride Manager UK Sue Barry summarised the successful work of Deaf Roots and Pride Projects in Northern Ireland and Wales, and the expansion into other areas of the UK. This project is in its fourth year and provides deaf youth – the future leaders of the community – with positive role models who are trained mentors.

Trustee Sylvia Simmonds summarised BDA's Deaf Heritage work, including the success of Power In Our Hands and its showing in cinemas UK-wide, plus Share: The Deaf Visual Archive which has attracted worldwide interest.

Trustee Ashley Kendall summarised the work of BDA Youth during 2015-16 which focused on social, political and cultural events, including EUDY, WFDYS and IUK camps and Youth Fest.

Trustee Trudi Collier summarised BDA's BSL Media including media presence via the website and increased likes and number of Facebook and Twitter followers.

Trustee Robert Adam summarised BDA's Membership, including 28% increase in membership figures, member newsletter, Access to Work campaigns, BSL charters and local community involvement. BDA membership is free and the more members that BDA has, the more lobbying power it has so the Chair encouraged all members to help increase BDA's membership base.

Chair Terry Riley summarised BDA's role in Policy and Campaigns, including General Election Hustling where Deaf people were able to question politicians on a variety of Deaf and wider society issues.

Vice Chair Linda Day summarised BDA's international activities, including attending the WFD Congress in Turkey 2015 and the Chair's WFD board activities. EUD is celebrating 30 years and it is important to remember that BDA set this organisation up. There are also two Deaf MEPs in European Parliament which is progress. Brexit is a hot topic that will be discussed later.

Members were then invited to ask questions and this included:

Request for names to be added to the PowerPoint for each presenter. Concerns re BDA website not being user-friendly. Feeling that Bristol has been overlooked amongst BDA's hard work – suggestion that BDA use experienced deaf volunteers in the area to help BDA's work. Suggested open forum in Bristol to be organised. One member advised that when visiting Deaf Clubs, some people say "BDA membership what for?" Several members expressed their concern that the BDN

has ceased publication and is now purely online, and there was a failure to consult with the Deaf community (as per BDA constitution) before this decision was made. It was acknowledged that it cost too much and there were a low number subscribers – could less issues or pages be printed? It is difficult to please everyone, and this will be passed on to the Board to discuss.

Several members expressed concerns that motions were no longer possible at the AGM and felt that this meant that members had little say in deciding targets and priorities. Motions can be submitted prior to the AGM. Changes to this process will require change to constitution and an EGM.

What happened after the Deaf Perceptions Report? This was followed by further community consultation and influenced BDA strategy moving forward. Need to ensure that community can access this. BDA presence in schools could increase membership. BDA has presence in schools linked to Deaf Roots and Pride Project, and it can be tricky to get an invite to those schools not project-based. The community is changing and need to ensure partnerships with deaf organisations to reach all and meet community needs. Can Development Officers instead of advocates be brought back? Unfortunately funding has run out. Need to ensure existing resources (eg. BSL Forum) are used and passed on. Consider using volunteers when project funding ceases?

The Chair thanked all for their questions and discussion and this would be discussed at the Board Away Day.

## **5. Treasurer's Report (for year ended 31 March 2016)**

The Treasurer Michael Kyriakides has been Treasurer since May 2016 and presented the accounts ending 31 March 2016. He presented a PowerPoint with graphs comparing 2014-15 to 2015-16 finances. During 2015-16, income has increased 25% (to a total of £1,932,000) and expenditure has increased 42% (to a total of £2,250,000). The Treasurer also provided a pie chart showing a breakdown of expenditure.

There is a reliance upon legacies, and the summarised income and expenditure showed a deficit. This demonstrates BDA investing in the community, however it is not possible to operate with a deficit every year. The summarised balance sheet showed 15% less funds than 2014-15, however this is partly due to BDA spending restricted funds in order to be appealing to funders. The Treasurer also highlighted the Designated Fund put aside for Pension Trust payments and advised members that the 10 year timeline has now changed to a 12.5 year liability. This has been influenced by changes in shares and inflation, and he stressed that the remaining money owed is only an estimate and still subject to change.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and this included:

An appreciation for an honest presentation about BDA's finances. An assumption that project income and expenditure would break even in the budget. Need for planning to ensure not relying on legacies as a source of income. BDA's ideal cash reserves are six months of operating costs, however it currently only covers 10-12 days which is alarming. The current economic climate is

tricky and there needs to be long term planning – many charities are in a similar position to BDA. There is no legal requirement for a minimum number months operating costs for cash reserves: the Charity Commission makes this the responsibility of the Board. BDA could use designated funds to cover BDA costs, however this will have a knock on effect for Pensions Trust payments.

Request for further breakdown of expenditure – this is available in the full financial statement which will be made available to members, but was summarised for those present. There was some concern that accounts couldn't be approved without this information. The Chair explained that the accounts are not approved at the AGM – they are only accepted – as the legal responsibility rests with the board and the accounts have been finalised and completed already. Why don't income and expenditure figures match? Income and expenditure are received and spent at different times and sometimes in different financial years. Also important that all project grants are fully spent so that further grants can be applied for. Transparency and financial responsibility are important, need to see economic diversification for increased income – is there a plan for this? Board and staff are working hard – not possible to change reliance on legacies overnight. Belt is being tightened and some redundancies. Need more fundraising which will hopefully yield results. Continue designated fund for Pension, and want Full Cost Recovery for projects – legacies are then a “bonus”.

Chair praised staff for their efforts, and made it clear to members that the Board wants to be open and honest about BDA's financial situation.

## **6. Resolution One**

Members were asked to accept the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2016.

**Unanimously accepted.**

## **7. World Federation of the Deaf Update**

Chair Terry Riley provided an update on WFD, which reaches 70 million deaf people worldwide. This included New Zealand Sign Language Week, North Korea (where WFD is the only NGO permitted entrance) and Nepal (where BDA funds assisted in the creation of posters to help deaf people and the wider community in the wake of earthquakes).

There was a question about who covers the cost of Terry's Riley's involvement in WFD. Costs for WFD Board members are covered by individuals or OMs (under governance costs). The Chair also made it clear that he did not represent BDA when acting as a WFD Board Member, however BDA does have an influence and impact on WFD via membership in various expert groups etc. It was suggested the BDA host the Congress, however it is currently cost-prohibitive and all previous hosts had a significant deficit.

## **8. European Union of the Deaf Update**

A brief update was delivered, including the EUD AGM and European Parliament Sign Language Conference which took place in September 2016, attended by over 1000 people from 33 countries. The impact of Brexit on EUD membership remains unknown. The EUD website has been transformed and is a frontrunner for access.

## 9. 2016 Highlights

Due to time constraints, members were invited to approach Trustees and staff for more information if they wished during the break. A short video reflecting on BDA's 125 Year celebrations was shown.

## 10. Changing Constitution

The Company Secretary presented the proposed constitutional changes and confirmed that all members had their voting cards. Members had been informed of four proposed changes to the constitution prior to the AGM, and were informed that the first was withdrawn. There was confusion about how and why this occurred and the impact this has for future elections. After a lengthy discussion, it was made clear that the board has the legal right to put forward motions and withdraw them and members don't vote on this. (The reason that it was included in the AGM was for transparency purposes as members had already been advised of the proposed change.) Members are able to make a proposal to change the constitution by formally contacting the company secretary. The members also have the power to call an EGM for any constitutional change and not vote at the AGM today.

**A vote was taken and 2/3 majority confirmed their desire to vote at the AGM and not call an EGM.**

The members also discussed the other motions. The constitution states that each term is three years long. Lowering the minimum requirement for AGMs from 40 to 20 members was based on member feedback of the AGM being a formal proceeding. Historically, BDA has only failed to meet quorum once, and members were concerned that reducing the number could lead to a lack of motivation for members to attend. All members have equal status.

Result of vote:

1. A third of trustees to be elected every year – **WITHDRAWN**
2. Reverting from three to two fixed terms for The Chair (as agreed at the BDA Members AGM in Derby in 2013) – **UNANIMOUSLY PASSED**
3. Reduce the minimum requirement from 40 to 20 members for the AGM – **REJECTED**
4. Other small changes to the draft M&A – **PASSED WITH A MAJORITY OF 2/3**

## 11. Date and Venue of Next Annual General Meeting

In order to recognise 15 years of sign language recognition, a BSL Pride March is proposed for a Sunday in March 2018 in London. (The exact date cannot be confirmed until six months prior.)

It proposed that the AGM be held the day before, which will be a Saturday in March 2018 in London.

**Agreed in principle.**

## **12. Special Announcement**

### **BDA Certificate of Merit:**

Agnes Dyab was absent from the AGM on 20 February 2016 to receive her Award, and the Chair presented it to her for her long standing involvement in the Deaf community, teaching and the BDA Board. Agnes thanked BDA, spoke of the commitment required to become a Trustee and asked that the Board prioritise education.

### **A Letter of Intent between BDA and VLP:**

A letter of intent was signed by Chair Terry Riley on behalf of British Deaf Association (BDA) and Vice President Dave Wycherley on behalf of Visual Language Professionals (VLP). This is a commitment to work together to ensure the continued improvement of quality of life for deaf people.

### **BDA Sign Language Week 2017:**

A short video promotional video was shown, and members were encouraged to upload their own clips on how they “dream big” for Sign Language Week 13 – 18 March 2017.

## **13. Vote of thanks**

The Chair concluded the AGM by thanking members for their input, and some suggestions are actually already in action. It is important to protect the Deaf community’s future and continued member involvement is needed to achieve this. All members were invited to join in the BDA Members Forum workshops.

**The meeting ended at 2:30pm.**