1. Welcome

Chair Agnes Dyab formally welcomed all to the AGM and confirmed that quorum has been met. **72 Members / 25 non members** She is delighted to see an increase in members present as this is optimistic for the BDA moving forward.

2. Opening Announcements

A silent moment was held in honour of BDA members who passed away in the past year including Gladys Bailey, Peter Smith, John Naughton, Richard Williams, Isobel Clingan, Susan Bloomfield, Barrie Curtis, Iris Sharpe, Carol Harris, Deepak Agrawal and Simon Fisher.

Also honoured Francis Boison (Ghanan WFD Board Member), Lara-Wikstrom (Sweden WFD Board Member), Armando Giuranna (Italy WFD Board member) and Eddie Montague (See Hear Producer).

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Harold Nicolson, Donald Goodhew, Sylvia Mackenzie, Lima Laville, Alan Murray MBE and Austin Reeves, Sylvia Simmonds, Joanna Gardiner, Lucy Gardner, Barbara Barker and Paul Barker.

Chair thanked members who gave notice they were unable to attend.

4. Minutes of the last AGM, held on 14 April 2018 in Manchester

The Chair confirmed that the minutes were made available to all members via the BDA website. The Chair asked for members present at Manchester to propose and second the minutes as an accurate record.

The minutes of the AGM held on 14 April 2018 in Manchester were approved by the members. Proposer: Samba Coker, Seconder: Paul Winterhalter.

5. Organisational Review of 2017/18

Vice Chair Dr Robert Adam provided a brief overview of BDA’s activities for 2017/18, which is also included in the Annual Report. This included: WFDYS Camp in Australia in April 2017, Wolverhampton Council moving on to BSL Charter Pledge 2, Big Lottery Funding for Access & Inclusion Wales, Deaf Dementia projects in Scotland and Northern Ireland, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities meeting in Geneva, WFD Full Inclusion with Sign Language, Westminster Debate on Deafness, first ever International Day of Sign Language and Sign Language Week 2018 – Scottish Government BSL National Plan.
Chair thanked the Vice Chair and invited members to approach Trustees and staff directly if they have any questions, plus can visit stalls during break times.

6. Treasurer’s Report

The Treasurer Michael Kyriakides presented the audited accounts ending 31 March 2018. He reminded members that this information is also available in the Annual Report, that the accounts have been checked by the auditor and questions are welcome after.

The Treasurer presented a PowerPoint with graphs comparing 2016/17 to 2017/18. During 2017/18 income dropped 5% to £1.57 million and expenditure dropped 13% to £1.66 million. The Treasurer also provided a pie chart breakdown of where income has come from and expenditure is being spent.

This financial year had a difficult funding environment with increased competition and cuts and thus project income is down – this is the situation for many other organisations, not just BDA. Legacies have increased, and whilst they are invaluable, they still remain unreliable and unpredictable. BDA continue to monitor the financial situation, ensuring plans are in place, however it does mean that there are less activities being provided at times. It is a difficult balance to ensure savings are made whilst also ensuring services and projects are delivered to the community.

A summarised income and expenditure table was provided and 2017/18 had a known budget deficit of £87,906. The plan for 2018/19 budget is to break even, with future budgets beyond this generating a surplus. There was no pension evaluation during 2017/18 and this is why it is £0 on the table. (The next pension re-evaluation will be in 2018/19 and those accounts will show any changes.) A summarised balance sheet was also provided. The Treasurer explained that new auditor rules mean that the pension liability must now be declared in audited accounts.

The Treasurer provided an update on the Pension Trust using a diagram to show payments made to date (£604,790), what has been saved and put aside for future payments in BDA’s designated Pension Fund (£352,000) and what still needs to be raised (£700,811). It will be difficult, plus always dependent on the changing financial markets, however BDA are well prepared for this. BDA has been making regular payments and Pensions Trust are happy with this.

The Chair welcomed any finance questions from members and this included:

Currently pension payments are required until 2025 – any guarantee that this is the definite end of the liability and payments? No guarantee as it depends on financial markets, re-evaluation etc. If got lucky with a £700,000 cheque, can pay off Pensions Debt? No – as the “buy out” cost is much higher than making repayments. BDA has sought legal advice previously about pension, including exploring option of closing BDA and setting up another company to avoid the debt, however wouldn’t be able to receive legacies that way which are a necessary source of income. 1,500 other organisations are in the same position as BDA with the pension liability, and where an organisation is unable to meet their obligations and folds, this becomes an orphan debt that BDA and all other
remaining organisations must bear. The recommendation was to continue making regular payments until pension liability is cleared which is what BDA are doing.

BDA has £190,000 cash in bank – how many months reserves does this equate to? The Treasurer provided a breakdown of different designated, restricted and general funds, plus how the declared pension liability is the total sum owed across several years (not just one financial year) – difficult to answer how many months as it depends on a number of factors however admitted that the cash in bank is not a lot. Notice that income is decreasing every year which is a concern – how can this be resolved? Important question – with decline in income, also reducing expenditure with aim of breaking even, and then working toward a surplus (don’t want to continue with deficit). Legacies are invaluable, but can’t rely on them or plan for the future as they are unknown. BDA needs to be successful with applying for projects – BDA are applying for grants (along with many other organisations) in a tough fundraising environment as there is only a limited amount of money available. What’s the attitude of grant funders toward the pension debt? Pension debt is a legal obligation to pay, plus respecting ex-BDA staff and their right to a pension. Project funds can only be spent on projects – very strict rules. If it’s a donation with no restrictions, then more freedom in how to spend this and could allocate to the pension fund.

Will there be any financial gain from Huwaei and Story Sign partnership? Expecting financial gain, but exact amount is not yet known. BDA has agreed to restrict any donations from this to children only. Can get income from members – bring back membership fee? If don’t pay membership fee, members feel can’t ask for what want? Could be membership fee or donation? Concern that majority of expenditure is on projects – why such a low percentage spent on members and policy and campaigns? Too many designated specific project focuses, when BDA should be focusing on supporting all, not just a few? Very little of core costs are covered by project funds – funds are restricted only to projects – which is also a challenge.

7. WFD and EDU Update

Chair advised that that this information is also available online and will provide a brief overview today.

Chair attended EUD General Assembly with BDA Staff Member Robin Ash. Event focused on accessibility and including sharing information about BSL Charter. Biggest question was what is the Brexit impact on EUD membership for BDA? A motion was put forward previously at Malta, however this has been put on hold until Brexit is finalised. Is hoped that as a founding member, BDA will be granted ongoing membership (similar to other non-EU countries). Their next meeting will be in May so will know more then. Chair asked members to let Trustees know how they want to access information about EUD.

Trustee Abigail Gorman attended EUD Deaf Women European Forum in Valencia Spain with BDA member Sarla Meisuria where 33 women representing 18 countries discussed violence, women’s health and equality, before attending conference covering a variety of topics. Valencia Declaration for Women and Girls was created, and Abigail asked members to get in touch if they would like to view this.
WFD Board Member Terry Riley asked members if they viewed WFD as important or not? WFD has a lot of influence on matters impacting the future plus sign language. UN recognised first ever Sign Language Recognition Day. Colin Allen’s role with WFD and IDA has had a huge influence for high profile presence of sign language as well. WFD has a role in Conventions – some of which UK government is fighting. WFD General Assembly and Congress will be held in Paris this July and Terry encouraged members to attend. Happy to be approached for any questions.

Chair thanked Abigail and Terry.

8. Special Announcements

Francis Maginn Award:

On the 100th anniversary of Francis Maginn’s death, Trustee Ashley Kendall presented the Francis Maginn Award to David Buxton for his hard work and efforts over the years. David shares the same determination and vision as Francis Maginn: he has campaigned on local, national and international levels, written numerous reports and been involved in gathering vital evidence for work with the government. Focusing on both deaf and disabled, he’s involved in politics, a founding member of the Liberal Democrats Disability Association, had many roles in the BDA over the years and puts the Deaf Community as his first priority. David Buxton thanked those present and accepted the award for himself plus the whole Deaf community. He reinforced that the government can’t divide the community and important to stay united and keep the “deaf heart”. Francis Maginn’s passions were sign language and education, and David wants to see a Sign Language Act achieved in this generation to ensure a better future for deaf children.

Chair’s Award:

The Chair, with complete agreement of the Board of Trustees, presented the Chair’s Award to Frances Elton. Just like Francis Maginn, her passion is BSL and education and the importance of preserving and protecting sign language. Over 35 years Frances has been an influential figure in sign linguistics, as well as being involved in BSL teaching, the BSL Dictionary, and devising an appropriate assessment tool for deaf children’s receptive and productive skills. The Chair thanked Frances for all her work and hopes that her legacy will continue through future generations. A proud and honoured Frances was unable to attend the BDA AGM, however provided a short thank you video. The Chair will also visit Frances to present her with the Chair’s Award and will share this with the members.

9. Opportunity for Questions

During the Treasurer’s Report, Terry Riley questioned if members will also have the opportunity to ask non-finance related questions as is a member right. Whilst this wasn’t part of the programme as the afternoon workshops will provide opportunity for member input, the Chair discussed the request with the Board of Trustees and agreed to allow members to ask questions. This included:

Query why Treasurer’s Report has not been adopted as per usual procedure? Update on BDA constitution changes? Irish Deaf Society (IDS) situation – can BDA provide moral support in some
way? New Board vision? Access to Work, Education, BSL Act, work with government – is this still the focus? Want to see more information shared and better communication with members. How can find balance between what members want and what BDA can afford? Gibraltar Disability Access – does BDA have a policy on work with overseas territories? General concerns re communication with members – where are promised regular updates? Ensure work also focuses on elderly (especially as people are now living longer), plus 40-50 age group – BDA is for all members of the Deaf community, not just a few. Why not AGM in the afternoon (instead of morning) to allow plenty of time for members to arrive, plus provide opportunity for discussion pre-AGM? Afternoon workshop numbers limited – how can members be fully involved, still valued and needed if can’t access? Can separate AGM matters (which relate to previous financial year) from Awards, Members Conference etc so that there’s a clear past and present divide? Review of AGM structure? Limited member input and opportunities? Want to see more time for members and events.

Chair advised that these questions have been noted, that some will be addressed in afternoon workshops, and happy to have 1:1 discussions.

Murray Holmes questioned the approval of auditor? Executive Director Company Secretary? advised that the Board has approved the current auditor HW Fisher (who have provided a good service to date and understand the pension liability) and typically the members would adopt this decision. Executive Director apologised that this wasn’t included in the AGM programme.

**Members agreed to adopt HW Fisher as BDA auditor.**

10. **Provisional Date of next AGM**

Trustee Sarah Lawrence revealed that the next AGM/130th Congress will be held in January April 2020 in Wales. Confirmed details will be shared via BDA website in BSL and English.

11. **Vote of thanks**

The Chair thanked all members for their continued support, thanked staff for their efforts as well as the new Board, particularly Alexy Dury alongside the Head Office Manager for her hard work coordinating the AGM and Members Conference, including the Park Run and afternoon workshops.

Trustee Dawn Marshall invited members to remain to watch Paddy Ladd’s Mission: Reboot presentation.

**The Chair formally closed the AGM at 1:00pm.**