

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

held online at 19:00 on 10 November 2021

Present: Sir John Beddington (President)  
Sir Jim Smith (Secretary)  
Richard Sykes (Treasurer)  
The Council  
128 Fellows of the Society

Attending: ZSL's Director General and Executive Committee

**1. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME**

The President welcomed the Fellows of the Society to the 192<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

The President introduced the Treasurer, Richard Sykes; the Director General, Dominic Jerney; and the Chief Financial Officer, Jo Keaney. It was noted that members of the Council and the Executive Committee were in attendance.

The President introduced Jim Smith, who had been appointed as Secretary following Geoff Boxshall's retirement in September 2021. The President noted Council's gratitude, as well as the gratitude of the Executive and of staff to Geoff Boxshall for his tenure as secretary.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Fellows who were unable to attend the meeting and had sent their apologies in advance.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17 November 2020 were approved.

**4. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S HIGHLIGHTS**

The 2020/21 Annual Report captured the scale of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ZSL, with London and Whipsnade Zoos being closed to the public for a total of 25 weeks and four days, equivalent to over £17m in lost income. Nevertheless, ZSL had emerged robustly from the pandemic thanks to successful fundraising campaigns, effective business decision making, and the enormous effort and dedication of all ZSL's staff and supporters.

The Director General reiterated the Society's gratitude to the Fellows for their ongoing support through the pandemic.

Despite the challenges in 2020/21, ZSL had continued to deliver on its mission, and the Director General highlighted some of ZSL's key achievements and activities during the year. ZSL had:

- Contributed to success in Kenya with the first year free of rhino poaching since 1999.
- Supported the creation of 300 community banks in seven countries, helping 9,816 people save for and set up sustainable businesses.
- Developed software that could recognise elephants and alert communities and response teams in real time, using thermal imaging cameras and images of Whipsnade's Asian elephant herd.
- Provided expert input for hundreds of news articles and documentaries.
- Advised the G7 inter-governmental forum and the UK Parliament on the prevention of zoonotic disease pandemics and advocated for nature-based-solutions to climate change at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).
- Developed biosecurity guidelines for wildlife rehabilitation workers and bat researchers to limit the spread of the COVID-19 and continued to research the drivers of zoonotic disease.
- Provided evidence and research vital to the UK Government's U-turn on badger culling.
- Secured a further ten years of funding from the UK Government for the ZSL-led UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP).
- Launched a Diversity Statement, endorsed by Council, led by the Executive team, and produced in collaboration with employee equality groups.

To close, the Director General advised the Fellows of the Society that he would be leaving ZSL in 2022, noting that he was honoured to have been a part of the organisation and was confident that ZSL had the leadership, vision, and plans in place to continue to deliver meaningful conservation impact well into the future.

## **5. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

David Jones, Council lead for diversity and inclusion (D&I), gave an overview of ZSL's D&I strategy and the progress made during the year. The key points were:

- D&I had been a regular agenda item at Council meetings in 2021.
- ZSL's Diversity Statement set out ZSL's position with respect to D&I and had been developed collaboratively, to ensure that the views and ideas of volunteers and employees were represented. The statement and resulting action plans had been developed to ensure meaningful progress.
- Several Fellows had raised concerns about the 2020 elections, in which all the candidates were the same gender. The Nominations Committee had been formally convened in 2021 to oversee the election process and act as a point of contact for prospective candidates, resulting in a more diverse range of candidates in 2021, with a wide breadth of experience. The Committee would continue to work towards a more diverse and inclusive ZSL.

## **6. THE ACCOUNTS OF THE SOCIETY AND INDEPENDENT AUDITORS REPORT**

### TREASURER'S INTRODUCTION

The Treasurer noted that the meeting was his second Annual General Meeting and was pleased to report that the Society had ended the financial year in a much better financial position than had been forecast. This was the result of better than budgeted for visitor numbers, a successful emergency fundraising appeal, and a successful programme of cost reduction.

The Treasurer noted the Society's gratitude to Amanda Smith, who had stepped down as Chief Financial Officer and Managing Director of Business Services in April 2021 and welcomed Jo Keaney who had joined ZSL as Chief Financial Officer in July 2021.

The Treasurer confirmed that the Council had signed-off the annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 April 2021. ZSL had received a clean audit report and remained a going concern.

### THE ACCOUNTS OF THE SOCIETY

The Chief Financial Officer provided an overview of the accounts.

#### **Summary Operating Performance**

ZSL's total income received in the 2020/21 financial year was £58.8m. Total expenditure was £58.1m resulting in an operating surplus (before adjustment) of £0.7m. This contrasted with a deficit of (£4m) in 2018/19 and a deficit of (£4.2m) in 2019/20. Statutory adjustments included gain on investment and actuarial loss from ZSL 1988 Pension Scheme. After adjustment, ZSL's operating deficit for 2020/21 was (£1.4m).

#### **Income and Expenditure**

ZSL's total income of £58.8m comprised of £15.1m of zoo admissions, £13.8m of grants, £6.6m of trading, £7.7m of zoo memberships, £11.6m of donations and legacies (including £6.8m raised through the emergency appeal), and £4m of other income including investments and furlough payments.

Zoo admissions were £7.2m below income for 2019/20, and trading was £5.8m below 2019/20 income, reflecting the fact that both London and Whipsnade Zoos were closed for 25 weeks of the year. Membership income had increased by £0.7m.

The Executive Committee, supported by Council, had focused on reducing ZSL's cost base as much as possible and as a result 2020/21 total expenditure of £58.1m was £13m less than total expenditure of £71.1m in 2019/20. The Chief Financial Officer noted that the cost reductions had been difficult.

Specific to ZSL's Conservation and Policy area, there had been a £2.5m reduction in grant activity and further £2.7m reduction in expenditure, largely due to the impact of the pandemic on ZSL's ability to

deliver in-situ projects and field work. Other statutory adjustments to expenditure included gifts-in-kind relating to advertising of ZSL's emergency fundraising appeal.

During 2020/21 ZSL had spent £2.6m on fixed assets, including £1m at London, £0.7m at Whipsnade, £0.5m on maintenance, and £0.4m on the Snowdon restoration project. In the coming year a significant increase in capital expenditure was planned, to deliver a new reptile house and new Galapagos Tortoise exhibit at London, a new Macaque exhibit at Whipsnade, and to complete Snowdon.

### **Cashflow**

ZSL's opening cash balance in 2020/21 was £16.2m. Positive working capital movement of £3.8m included an increase in deferred income from future ticket bookings at the year end. Other operating cash movements of £3.2m included movements for depreciation and cash received from investment and interest. Combined with net income of £1.3m and capital expenditure of (£2.6m) this brought ZSL's closing cash balance in 2020/21 to £21.9m, split between general (£12.5m) and restricted (£9.4m).

### **Reserves**

Net unrestricted reserves reduced from £15.1m in 2019/20 to £12m in 2020/21, a change driven by the valuation of the ZSL 1988 Pension Scheme. Designated reserves reduced from £47.1m in 2019/20 to £45.3m in 2020/21 due to the depreciation of fixed assets and capital expenditure. Restricted reserves increased from £9.2m in 2019/20 to £12.6m in 2020/21 due to grant funded projects put on hold during the pandemic.

## **7. MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL: RETIREMENTS AND ELECTIONS**

The changes to Council following the 2021 Council elections were reported by the Secretary as follows:

### **i. Retirements**

In accordance with Byelaw 22 (d), the following Fellows retired as members of the Council:

Lynne Abbess

Ray Heaton

Bob Wingate

The Secretary thanked the retiring members for their significant contribution.

### **ii. Elections**

In accordance with Byelaw 22 (d), the following Fellows had been elected to serve on the Council for a period of 4 years:

Richard Kimblin

Athena Markides

## 8. SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2021

The Secretary introduced the following proposed subscriptions on behalf of the Council, to take effect from 1 January 2022. The Secretary noted that the rates increased annually by a maximum amount of RPI plus 3%, which was agreed by the Fellowship at the Annual General Meeting in 2001.

Fellowship type	2021 rate	Proposed rate 2022
Fellow	£152	£159
Fellow (optional concession rate)	£137	£143
Pre-2018 Concession Fellow	£86	£96
Overseas Fellow	£78	£80
Graduate Fellow	£78	£78
Student Fellow	£48	£52
Non-visiting Fellow	£48	£48

The proposed subscriptions were approved by the meeting.

## 9. DATE OF AGM 2022

The 193<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 24 November 2022.

## 10. EXECUTIVE UPDATES

### LONDON ZOO

Kathryn England, Chief Operating Officer of London Zoo, gave an update on activities at London Zoo, incorporating questions from Fellows submitted in advance of the meeting. Despite multiple challenges including Covid, Brexit, and Avian Flu, there had been significant works on site including:

- An upgrade to the giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) and zebra (*Equus guagga burchelli*) paddocks to improve the substrate and ground conditions.
- A new coral reef exhibit containing 40 coral and 17 fish species, many critically endangered.
- Improvements to the squirrel monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis boliviensis*) climbing equipment.
- Improvements to three island pond with the addition of bubblers and improved vegetation.
- The new Galapagos Tortoise (*Chelonoidis*) house.
- Progress on the Snowdon aviary which was being renovated to provide an improved enclosure for London's troop of colobus (*Colobus guereza kikuyuensis*). Snowdon was on track to open in 2022 under the new name Monkey Valley.

Species-specific highlights from London included:

- The addition of sengi (*Macroscelides proboscideus*), naked mole rats (*Heterocephalus glaber*), and golden-headed tamarins (*Leontopithecus chrysomelas*) to the rainforest exhibit, as well as breeding successes with the two-toed sloth (*Choloepus didactylus*) and tamandua (*Tamandua tetradactyla*).
- Successful introductions of a new female Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*) and a new female Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*), to form breeding pairs with the existing male big cats.
- Successful breeding of extinct in the wild Socorro doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) and critically endangered blue-throated macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*).

Looking forward, London Zoo had received a breeding recommendation for a new western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*), and in the short-term pygmy slow loris (*Xanthonycticebus pygmaeus*), and armadillo (*Chaetophractus villosus*) would be added to the collection. Kathryn England noted that Brexit had added additional bureaucracy and challenges which were continuing to make animal moves difficult.

#### WHIPSNADE ZOO

Owen Craft, Chief Operating Officer of Whipsnade Zoo, gave an update on activities at Whipsnade Zoo incorporating questions from Fellows submitted in advance of the meeting:

- Despite the pandemic and associated challenges, Whipsnade's visitor numbers for 2020/21 had been excellent, highlighting the value of access to large outdoor space for people. The summer dinosaur event had been very popular and had received lots of positive feedback.
- Project Indonesia, the development of a mixed exhibit of Sulawesi crested macaque (*Macaca nigra*), anoa (*Bubalus*) and smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), was a key focus.
- Another new mixed exhibit including meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*) and porcupine (*Hystrix africaeaustralis*) was planned for 2022 in the Africa area. Other plans for 2022 included expanding the basecamp indoor experience with reptiles and amphibians, enhancing bird experiences and free flying demonstrations, and investment into the play area.
- Breeding successes during the year included Whipsnade's first southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) calf for 12 years, a Grevy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*) foal, a critically endangered Przewalski's wild horse (*Equus caballus przewalskii*) foal, and lots of success in the freshwater aquarium breeding critically endangered and extinct in the wild species.

#### CONSERVATION

Andrew Terry, Director of Conservation and Policy, gave an update on ZSL's conservation programmes and highlighted some of the key achievements and challenges of the year, incorporating questions from Fellows submitted in advance of the meeting. The key points were:

- ZSL were currently at COP26 to promote the integration of climate change and biodiversity loss and nature-based solutions as a core strategy for addressing these related challenges.

- 2020/21 had been a challenging year for ZSL's conservation delivery programmes, due to ZSL's uncertain financial position and the challenges the COVID pandemic presented to field work.
- There had been major changes to ZSL's field programmes during the year, with the aim of increasing ZSL's impact and to ensure the financial sustainability that would allow ZSL to continue to deliver impact into the future. These changes included the conclusion of projects in Indonesia and in Russia, and the start of the transition of ZSL's programme in Mongolia to a stand-alone organisation.
- Successes maintaining wildlife populations in Kenya had been supported by ZSL's work with protected areas, improving management and protection. ZSL was a founding member of the universal ranger support alliance which worked to improve ranger effectiveness internationally.
- ZSL's flagship EDGE of Existence programme had moved to deliver all its training and outreach online during the year. EDGE continued to be very successful and had trained over 114 EDGE fellows working in conservation and championing underrepresented species.
- Human wildlife coexistence continued to be an area of focus. ZSL worked with communities to implement protections from negative wildlife interactions and support the development of sustainable and resilient livelihoods, such as through UK Aid projects in Kenya and Nepal.
- The development of sustainable futures also included ecosystem restoration such as the launch of the wild oysters project off the coast of the UK. ZSL was providing habitat for species recovery, and once restored the ecosystem would act as a carbon lock as well as providing a sustainable resource for future fishing communities. ZSL continued to work extensively with private sector companies to reduce the negative environmental impact of their supply chains.
- ZSL had planned to launch its strategic Conservation plan during the year, which would set out plans for species recovery, ecosystem restoration, and the role of the zoo community, however with the continuing impact of COVID this had been deferred and would be launching in the future.

## SCIENCE

Sarah Durant, Acting Director of Science, gave an update on the Institute of Zoology and ZSL's science, incorporating questions from Fellows submitted in advance of the meeting:

- ZSL's science was more relevant and important than ever in the face of COVID, climate change and biodiversity loss and the contribution of world leading research from the Institute of Zoology, based within a conservation charity, made ZSL unique.
- ZSL's Institute of Zoology (IoZ) continued to build a positive relationship with its core funder, Research England, and during the year had developed a business plan including key performance indicators covering scientific contribution, conservation impact, and public engagement.
- During the year the IoZ had published 166 peer-reviewed papers, supported 83 PhD students and 74 Master's degree students, collaborated with 190 institutions, and supported over 100 species.

ZSL's journals continued to have high impact factors, including the new journal on remote sensing for ecology and conservation.

- It had been a successful year of fundraising, including the £10m grant for the ZSL-led UK CSIP mentioned by the Director General, a \$5m over five years grant from the Howard Buffett Foundation for cheetah conservation, and substantial funding to support island bird recovery.
- Much of the IoZ's public engagement had moved online during the pandemic with the benefit of talks and conferences being accessible to more people including an international audience.
- During the year ZSL made a joint submission with University College London (UCL) and Birkbeck to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF), including five impact case studies, where one or two case studies would be expected for a research institution of a comparable size.
- Also in collaboration with UCL, ZSL's wildlife health services had initiated a new study looking at space use by the animals in ZSL's zoos, and in the upcoming year a new joint Master's degree programme in biodiversity and global change was planned.
- ZSL's Library and Archive team were supporting a research project looking at ZSL's history with the aim of uncovering hidden voices and unacknowledged people who had contributed to ZSL's science in the past. Sarah Durant advised that ZSL's Library was currently open by appointment only from 10:30am to 5pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

## **11. FELLOWS' QUESTIONS**

In response to a question about an apparent reduction of the living collection and of the accessibility of ZSL's species planning tool, Kathryn England advised that the species planning tool was a strategic tool to plan the living collection in an evidence based and objective way, ensuring the collection was aligned with ZSL's conservation impact and that every species was there for a reason, whether that was for public engagement, or to support a breeding programme. The living collection at London Zoo had been reduced consciously in line with these aims, by choosing to exit species that had little conservation impact or species that London was unable to provide the appropriate conditions for. This was aligned with longer term thinking as ZSL developed a masterplan to consider the whole site, including the historical buildings that were not consistent with modern zoo practice. For species retained within the collection there had been significant breeding successes which had increased numbers during the year, including 78 bird species, 21 reptile species and 839 amphibian species.

## **12. CLOSING ITEMS**

The President reflected on the extraordinary year and noted that ZSL had emerged strongly due to the efforts of staff, the Council, the Fellowship, and ZSL's many other supporters. There being no further business, the President closed the meeting.