



The Association of National Trust Members and Supporters
living in Belgium

Founded in 1997 to prosper the work of the National Trust

Annual General Meeting 2020

Scheduled for Saturday 25th April at 12.30pm in Liège

But cancelled due to legal restrictions on public gatherings following to the Covid-19 crisis.

As a result the Committee decided to resort to a 'virtual' AGM, meaning that NTAB members are invited

- to comment on the 2020 report, sent to all members on April 16th by electronic message.
- to approve the 2019 AGM report, which will be posted on the NTAB website

Agenda of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

1. Approval of the minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting
2. Committee Members' report
3. Treasurer's report and accounts as on December 31st, 2019
4. Auditor's report
5. Election of the Committee members and the Officers until the next AGM
6. Appointment of an auditor until the next AGM
7. Approval of the annual subscriptions for members and associate members
8. Approval of the Committee's recommendation for the donation of the surplus Association funds, raised during the preceding financial year, to the National Trust in Britain
9. Any other business

Jan Grauls
Chairman of the Association and of the AGM

Leo Nollet
Secretary of the Association

Before moving to the formal AGM agenda, he invites our members to pay their respects to Tony van der Straaten, Paul Massin, René Lock and Gin Lewy-Moulaert, who passed away since our last AGM. They were all at a certain point of time active and committed members of our association, each of them contributing with their own backgrounds, areas of interest and characters to the success and joviality of our activities.

The chairman expresses a special word of respect to René who belonged to the group of 'founding fathers' of our association and who had been a long-standing and respected member of the Committee and our first treasurer for many years (1997-2008).

1. Approval / Amendment of the minutes of the previous AGM in 2019

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting at 'Hof Ter Doest' restaurant, Ter Doeststraat 4, 8380 Lissewege, on Saturday 27th April 2019 were posted on the website on April 16th (see: homepage > downloads) for approval or possible amendment.

Then members of the Committee were invited to give their reports on the past year.

2. Committee members report presented by Jan Grauls, Chairman

Since our meeting last year in the beautiful surroundings of 'Hof Ter Doest' in Lissewege, when I reported on our activities during the previous year, the Committee has worked hard with a view to offering our members a variety of visits and events, all fully in line with the objectives of our association and faithful to the spirit of the National Trust.

While we were able to work during the largest part of the year in a predictable environment, this changed dramatically when early 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic broke out which compelled us to take a number of difficult, but inevitable decisions. I will come back to this later.

But first a word on the easier part of the previous year.

Sound management and offering an interesting programme of events and visits were the centre piece of the Committee's endeavours. I am convinced that over the past year the association has been successful in doing so. Not only were activities generally well attended, it has to be noted that some 'innovative' activities added a special flavour to our most recent programme.

The two-day visit to the Ostkantonen (German-speaking part of Belgium) in September was truly a great success as participants discovered a little-known, but fascinating part of the country.

The attendance of the Brussels Ommegang in June was another much-appreciated highlight.

The list of other events organized during the previous year is as follows:

Zeebrugge and Lissewege, where our last AGM took place (April), city and citadel of Namur (May), the Averbode Abbey and the de Merode Castle in Westerloo (October), Binche (November), the Africa Museum where our end-of-year reception took place (December), and Antwerp with visits to the Red Star and Huts Textile Museums (February).

Our programme co-ordinator André Ceulemens deserves a special word of thanks for the perfect roll-out of this programme. On behalf of us all, 'thank you', André. Of course, our thanks go also to those in charge of organizing all these events.

I want to mention especially the UK trip to Essex and Suffolk, which proved to be once more a great success. Here, I would like to thank wholeheartedly Carole Ducastel who proved to be once more the perfect organiser and travel guide during this annual UK trip. Many thanks to you too, Carole.

Amongst the noverties of the previous year, I would like to mention also our revamped website. Many thanks here to our always enthusiastic webmaster, Johan Vanbrabant, for ensuring it remains up to date and dynamic. As a result, more and more members and non-members now use our website to keep abreast of NTAB activities and/or register as members. This is a welcome development.

I would like to add that we also managed to strike a new, but welcome balance between the content of our Newsletter (which is now shorter, mentions the main events and refers to our new website for further details) and our website.

Since the previous meeting in April last year, the Committee has met four times. As to the composition of our Committee, I would like to mention that Carole Ducastel took over the role of vice-chair from Nick Fern and that Leo Nollet kindly accepted to become the Committee's secretary. Many thanks to both of them for having taken up these new roles with great dedication and commitment.

Margaret du Maine-Simpson and Judith Collins have been dedicated and unshakeable Committee members, dealing with our finances, including the registrations for our events, in Margaret's case and with our membership subscriptions in Judith's case. Our heartfelt thanks go to them too.

Let me now turn to more recent events which had a major impact on our association and on the programme of excursions we had presented to you.

We all have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in our personal and professional life. NTAB didn't escape from the consequences this major crisis is having on us all. Because of the restrictions our governments imposed on our personal life as well as on public gatherings, the Committee had no other option than to cancel -be it reluctantly- the three events in Belgium scheduled before the 2020 summer break -Liège (April), Dinant (May) and the Zwin (June)-. Even more regrettably, the traditional UK trip to Devon and Cornwall had to be cancelled as well. As in previous years, Carole had been working very hard in recent months putting together an extraordinary attractive programme.

And our planned September London trip became the latest casualty of corona.

The Committee will try to offer the same, now cancelled events in next year's programme.

Let me draw your attention to an important consequence of these cancellations:

- *as to the three cancelled events in Belgium and the cancelled long weekend in London, those of you who registered will have received by now a full refund of their deposit.*

We are able to do so because the payments already made by NTAB to restaurants or travel operators will be paid back in full to NTAB. This means that there will be, for these events at least, no financial consequences either for our members or for our association.

- *When it comes to the cancelled June UK trip, the situation is quite different as the prepayments to the hotel, restaurants and other operators are refundable to NTAB only partially. For the moment there is still no clarity about the biggest prepayment to our travel agent for the air tickets, whereas we expect other prepayments too to be only partially refunded.*

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, our NTAB liquidities will suffer considerably, despite all the efforts that have been undertaken, particularly by Carole, to recover prepayments in full or in part with regard to the UK trip. In this respect contacts are ongoing and we do hope that some refunds may follow.

For all these reasons, we didn't have any other option than to suggest, in the letter announcing the cancellation of the UK trip to those of you who had already registered, a 'sharing of sadness' between our association and the registered members at not being refunded entirely.

As an organization with limited financial reserves, we are grateful for their understanding. Evidently, we will keep you posted on the results of our ongoing efforts to recover deposits as much as possible. Depending on the result of these efforts, a second refund may be considered.

3. Treasurer's report and accounts as at December 31st, 2019 **presented by Margaret du Maine -Simpson, Treasurer**

The **receipts and expenditure** account shows a large surplus of €6487.

Usually the Association tries to keep the surplus close to break even, taking into account a substantial donation to the National Trust.

Because of the inherent uncertainties of the current situation as a result of the Covid-19 virus, we have decided not to budget for our usual donation to the National Trust in the UK (which would otherwise probably have been approximately €6,000).

We had to cancel the annual UK trip in June and we are still trying to work out the final cost of this decision (and for the cancellation of other outings as mentioned above).

You will see that there are other major differences in both income and expenditure between 2019 and 2018. The surplus on events is considerably less. No individual event made a loss, but two just broke even.

The other, more encouraging difference is in the cost of the website, which has been reduced thanks to a new maintenance contract with the providers.

The **balance sheet** requires some explanation.

The two large balances for the UK trip are a significant item here.

As you see, we had already incurred costs of over €4,000, which we are still endeavouring to recover as much as possible. In the meantime, we are in the process of refunding at least part of the amounts received from those members who had booked to join us.

By the time this report reaches you, most of the net balance of approximately €5,000 will have disappeared from the balance sheet, but as the exact situation is still unclear, we have made no alterations as yet.

The other €326 shown as received for 2020 events will also be repaid as soon as possible (most has already been refunded).

When all these actions are completed, there should be more clarity. The accounts for 2020 will be fairly meagre, as we have had to cancel up to half of the planned events, including the UK trip which is one of the major contributors to the result.

Membership Situation

At the end of 2019 we had 133 members – 84 full (38 single, 23 double) and 49 associate (17 and 16).

Membership remains more or less stable, resignations equating roughly to new joiners.

At the time of the AGM 2020 there are 137 members not all of whom have yet paid. The paid status of members is not usually resolved until about July. A third (and last) reminder goes out in April 2020. Of the 137, five joined in 2019 and four have joined in 2020.

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2019

<i>Assets</i>	<u>2018</u>		<i>Liabilities</i>	<u>2018</u>	
<i>current account</i>	18273.44	14092	<i>proposed donation to NT England</i>	0.00	7000
<i>£ account</i>	3220.61	3214	<i>subs received in advance</i>	285.00	150
<i>planning expenses UK trip next year</i>	4030.43	1000	<i>received for 2020 events</i>	326.00	1729
			<i>received for UK trip 2020</i>	9000.00	
				<hr/>	<hr/>
				9611.00	8879
	<hr/>	<hr/>			
	25524.48	18306			
			<i>retained end previous year</i>	9426.33	9236
			<i>result current year</i>	6487.15	191
			<i>retained end this year</i>	<hr/>	<hr/>
				15913.48	9427
				<hr/>	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>		25524.48	18306
	<hr/>	<hr/>		<hr/>	<hr/>
	25524.48	18306		25524.48	18306

Income & expenditure account 2019

<i>Income</i>	<u>2018</u>		<i>Expenditure</i>	<u>2018</u>	
<i>Membership</i>	3476.00	3590	<i>Administration & mailing</i>	1098.59	1242
<i>Surplus on events</i>	4017.32	7688	<i>Donations to NT England</i>		7006
<i>donations received</i>	10.00	60	<i>sundries</i>		116
<i>sundries (exchange difference)</i>	382.32		<i>website</i>	299.90	2783
	<hr/>	<hr/>		<hr/>	<hr/>
	7885.64	11338		1398.49	11147
			<i>net income</i>	6487.15	191
	<hr/>	<hr/>		<hr/>	<hr/>
	7885.64	11338		7885.64	11338
	<hr/>	<hr/>		<hr/>	<hr/>

4. Auditor's report ***presented by Henk Hoogstraten, auditor***

To the Chairman, Committee Members and all Association of National Trust Members in Belgium

The AGM 2018 decided that the function of auditor for the year 2019 should be performed by Henk Hoogstraten. It is in this capacity that I audited the accounts of the Association of National Trust Members in Belgium for the year 2019.

The Treasurer, Margaret du Maine, provided me with the Income & Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet as on 31 December 2019.

To have, at a glance, more information about the figures mentioned in the Income & Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet 2019, I made several sheets which provide further clarification. While doing so, Margaret was a big help. All my questions were answered quickly and in detail. The accounts were very well kept and the supporting documents were found to be in order.

The following is a representation of my remarks and concerns.

Donation NT England

It was decided not to make a donation to the NT England in 2019, although the result achieved in the year 2019 gives cause to do so.

The reason is an expected low positive result in 2020, caused by the cancelling of events in connection with the coronavirus and by the decision to partly pay back the deposits.

This means that the balance of the result of events 2020 leaves no or very little room for a donation in 2020. This however does not affect the decision to make a donation for the year 2019.

The result achieved in 2019 is, in my opinion, being unnecessarily withheld from the NT England for one year. *It would be better to skip the donation for the year 2020.*

The London Trip 2020 is cancelled, the result of this cancelling is not yet known.

Provision UK-trip 2020

In the run-up to the AGM 2020 it is foreseeable that the result concerning the UK-trip 2020, will only be EURO 258,51.

As things stood on 3 April, 2020, the Committee decided to pay back EURO 4.050,- for deposits received (42 x EURO 75,- en 4 x EURO 225,-). A total refund will not be possible, but contacts with several partners are ongoing. The Committee especially tries to get a refund for the air tickets. *As an auditor I see no need for a provision if a partial refund has the approval of the AGM.*

Membership list

After the chairman made inquiries to find out if there are objections giving the auditor access to a membership list, which resulted in the statement that there is not any objection to this, chairman and treasurer promised the auditor a membership list as at 31 December 2018 and as at 31 December 2019. Unfortunately this promise was not fulfilled. *I could, therefore, not perform the audit the way I think I should.*

Lack of insurance

The NTAB is not insured against the consequences of cancellation of planned events. This poses primarily a risk for the UK-events. *My advice is to inform the participants in the future clearly that their travel and cancellation insurance does not cover the risk of cancellation of a trip by the NTAB and that the NTAB is not insured against the consequences of its decision to cancel a trip.*

I consider that the accompanying Income & Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet as on 31 December 2019 fairly represent the financial position of the Association on that date.

I will with pleasure answer any question.

Henk Hoogstraten
Auditor NTAB
Poppel , 14 April 2020

5. **Election of the Committee members and the Officers until the next AGM**

According to our constitution, the committee consists of 4 officers – i.e. Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer – and not less than 5 other members, elected at the AGM among Association members.

Carole Ducastel accepted to continue as our vice-chair and Leo Nollet joined the Committee as secretary.

With the exception of Marc Servotte, all the committee members agreed to remain in their functions.

Officers

Chairman	Mr Jan Grauls	Kraainem
Vice-Chairman	Mrs Carole Ducastel	Overijse
Secretary	Mr. Leo Nollet	Gent
Treasurer	Mrs Margaret du Maine-Simpson	Brasschaat

Committee Members

Programme Coordinator	Mr André Ceulemans	Sint-Genesius Rode
Membership Secretary	Mrs Judith Collins	Brussels
Webmaster & Newsletter	Mr Johan Vanbrabant	Waarschoot
Organiser UK trip	Mrs Carole Ducastel	Overijse
Programme committee	Mrs Heather Charlton	Brussels
Programme committee	Mr Emile Debaecker	Kampenhout
Programme committee	Mr Ludo Somers	Merksem
Programme committee	Mr Roland Walckiers	Sint-Niklaas

The AGM is invited to elect the members mentioned in the list above for duration of one year.

6. **Appointment of an auditor until the next AGM**

The committee proposes that the AGM elect Mr Henk Hoogstraten as our external () auditor.*

() 'External' meaning 'independent of the committee'.*

7. **Approval of annual subscriptions for members and associate members**

The committee proposes that annual subscriptions remain unchanged, as defined at the previous AGM:

Members:

- *Annual fee of €25 for the first family member and*
- *€20 for any subsequent member at the same address.*

Associate members:

- *Annual fee of €35 for the first family member and*
- *€25 for any subsequent associate member at the same address.*

The AGM is invited to approve this proposal

8. **Approval of the Committee's recommendation for the donation of the surplus Association funds, raised during the preceding financial year, to the National Trust in Britain**

Sadly, because of the financial situation of our Association at the current time, it is proposed that no donation to NT properties will be made in 2020.

The AGM is invited to approve the Committee's recommendation.

9. **Any Other Business**