



NTAB

Association of National Trust Members & Supporters in Belgium

*Founded in 1997 to promote and prosper the work of the National Trust*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

Held on Friday, July 9, 2021 at Le Bouillon Blanc, Sensenruth-Bouillon

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### Agenda of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

1. Approval of the minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting
2. Committee members report
3. Treasurer's report and accounts as on December 31, 2020
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 recommendations for the donation of association funds to the National Trust in Britain
9. Any other business

Jan Grauls

Leo Nollet

Chairman

Secretary

**Present:** Gerda Bosschaert, André Ceulemans, Heather Charlton, , Marilou de Croock, Emile Debacker, Ton du Maine, Margaret du Maine-Simpson, Carole Ducastel, Nicholas Fern, Jan Grauls, Mia Grauls-Gordts, Susan Hudson, Rose-Anne Keyeux, John Kurtz, Zoe Kurtz, Freddy Meulenbrouck, Patricia Meulenbrouck, Janet Middleton, Tim Middleton, Brenda Puplett, Colin Puplett, Johan Vanbrabant , Ineke Van Driel-Crijns

1. The Chairman, Jan Grauls, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Bouillon Blanc garden's theatre. In the absence of the Association's Secretary, Leo Nollet, Carole Ducastel offered to take notes of the meeting. The Agenda and **Minutes of the 2020 AGM** had been made available on line prior to the 2021 AGM. Two members said they had not seen them. Johan Vanbrabant, the Association's webmaster, explained how they could alter the settings on their computers in order to receive mailings from MailChimp in their inboxes. The members were supplied with a paper copy of the documents. The Chairman reminded the assembly that the minutes of the previous, 2020 virtual AGM were approved by a written consultation. They were posted on the NTAB website on April 17, 2020 (see: homepage › [downloads](#))

2. The Chairman then proceeded to present the ***Committee's Report***:

2020 was an exceptional year as our association was unable to offer to its members a full programme of activities, such as visits to gardens or historic places of interest. Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic, which broke out early 2020, compelled us to cancel all our scheduled activities except one (the visit to the Textile Museum in Antwerp in February 2020), as restrictive measures came into place both here and in the UK.

As pre-payments had been made in view of the annual UK trip (we had decided to go to Cornwall), Carole Ducastel, our ever-enthusiastic UK trip organizer, and Johan spent a lot of time trying to retrieve the payments already made (hotels, transport companies, etc.). André Ceulemans and other Committee members did the same with regard to activities planned elsewhere, including the end of year event at Bozar in December. The Chairman was happy to say that most of their efforts were successful as almost all payments could be recovered (see our Treasurer's report and accounts, under agenda item 3.).

In the absence of outings or visits during the year 2020, it was decided to keep in touch with our membership through other means. A first decision was to increase the frequency of our NTAB Newsletter. In doing so, the Committee was able not only to keep the 'group spirit' alive, but also to inform the membership on a number of issues, such as the recovery of costs incurred as a result of the cancellation of the UK trip and other planned activities, the impact of Covid-19 on our finances and the perspectives for resuming our normal activities.

Another way to keep us all connected was the idea of offering to our members virtual tours. This resulted in 'tours' to the Isle of Iona (February), Northern Ireland (March) and Wales (May). These tours were well 'attended' and from reactions of our members we learned that they were appreciated as well, even if the three guides each adopted a different style.

Our renewed website deserves to be mentioned also. In the absence of physical activities, it became, even more than before the pandemic, a way of 'staying in touch' with the membership. As a result, our website opened a new blog section ([click here to open](#)) in which we all can henceforth post short reports and comments on our activities. It also allows our members to share travel experiences or to launch suggestions for future activities. Our hyper-innovative webmaster Johan Vanbrabant deserves a special word of thanks for devising these novelties. We are happy to note that our members turn more and more frequently to our website, particularly since the new features are available. The number of visits to our website is on the rise, albeit even more visitors would be welcome

And finally, the Chairman was happy to report that the absence of our traditional outings during the major part of 2020 didn't have a lasting impact on our membership: after a slight drop in 2020, it has now picked up again since the beginning of 2021. This shows that we have a loyal and committed membership.

Since our last AGM, the Committee has met four times in virtual mode. Some changes have taken place in its composition. Judith Collins asked to be discharged from her mandate as

Committee member, while indicating her willingness to continue to be in charge of the membership. On behalf of all our members, the Chairman repeated the high appreciation of all members for Judith Collins' continued commitment to the NTAB and for her perfect management of the membership subscriptions for many years. Furthermore, the Chairman informed the AGM that Roland Walckiers asked to be temporarily relieved of his duties as a Committee member for a short time during the year and for family reasons. (Roland has in the meantime resumed his responsibilities on the Committee).

**Comments and questions from the Floor:** Tim Middleton thanked the Committee for the online tours and in particular for the Northern Ireland one which he found most interesting. The chairman informed those present that the Committee is in touch with the guide for that tour and it is possible that we will make a trip to Northern Ireland in the future.

Zoe Kurtz asked if a brochure to be used for recruiting couldn't be produced. Johan pointed out that there is a recruitment poster and brochure that can be downloaded from the website, to be found at the bottom of the home page.

Nick Fern asked why there no Facebook page, to which Johan asked who would manage it. It was decided to have a second look at the earlier decision not to have one.

The Chairman asked people to think about joining the Committee. He also said that André Ceulemans, Programme Coordinator, would welcome more volunteers to organize events.

3. **The Treasurer's report and accounts as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020** were presented by the Treasurer, Margaret du Maine-Simpson:

#### ***Income & Expenditure***

*There is a slight fall in income from membership, which reflects the reduction in the number of members since last year. Membership has continued to hold up quite well, although the trend is slightly down over the last six years.*

*The membership at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 stood at 116 (2019:124). I am pleased to report that the figure for 2021 is already at the same level.*

*As only one of the planned events for 2020 could take place, there is practically no income from events this year.*

*Since we decided to communicate more of our news by means of e-mail and referring members to the website, mailing costs are significantly reduced.*

*Owing to wildly fluctuating exchange rates during the year, we have a sizeable loss on exchange compared with a surplus in the previous year.*

*As predicted, the costs of the website have now settled to a more acceptable level. We hope that it will remain relatively stable, but obviously any improvements to the site may result in an increase.*

*A significant item of expenditure, which has not featured in previous years, is the cost for Committee meetings. We have had the good fortune in the past to have access to rooms for free, but this is unfortunately no longer a possibility. If anyone knows of accommodation which we might be able to use – preferably in the area around Mechelen, as being central for all Committee members – we would be extremely grateful for an introduction!*

Margaret concluded by saying that no donations had been made to the National Trust for the year 2019 and there is some €1,000 to €1.500 that can be made available for 2020.

**Comment from the Floor:** Marilou de Croock offered the use of the Koetshuis, an old coach house at the bottom of her garden, if the Committee was prepared to meet in Gent. Marilou was thanked for the offer which will be considered by the Committee.

## Balance sheet

<b>NTAB</b>					
<b>Balance sheet as at 31 December 2020</b>					
<u>Assets</u>	<u>2019</u>		<u>Liabilities</u>	<u>2019</u>	
current account	18005.76	18273	proposed donation to NT England	0.00	0
£ account	102.00	3221	subs received in advance	695.00	285
planning expenses UK trip next year	0.00	4030	received for 2021 events	136.00	326
expenses other event next year	591.00		received for UK trip 2021	9000	
				<u>831.00</u>	<u>9611</u>
	<u>18698.76</u>	<u>25524</u>			
			retained end previous year	15913.48	9426
			result current year	1954.28	6487
			retained end this year	<u>17867.76</u>	<u>15913</u>
	<u>18698.76</u>	<u>25524</u>		<u>18698.76</u>	<u>25524</u>

<b>NTAB</b>					
<b>Income &amp; expenditure account 2020</b>					
<u>Income</u>	<u>2019</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2019</u>	
Membership	3117.00	3476	Administration & mailing	674.40	1099
Surplus on events	240.76	4017	Donations to NT England		
donations received	0.00	10	sundries (exchange differences)	183.28	
sundries (exchange difference)	0.00	382	website	175.45	300
			Committee meetings	370.35	
	<u>3357.76</u>	<u>7886</u>		<u>1403.48</u>	<u>1398</u>
			net income	1954.28	6487
	<u>3357.76</u>	<u>7886</u>		<u>3357.76</u>	<u>7886</u>

4. **Auditor's report**, presented by the Chairman in the absence of the Auditor, Henk Hoogstraten.

The auditor considers that the Income & Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet as on 31 December 2020 fairly represent the financial position of the Association on that date.

The full Auditor's report (pdf format) is in attachment, [click here](#)

The Chairman pointed out that, in fact, the UK Trip signed invoice and substantiating documentation had been received, but had been erroneously omitted from the documents passed to the Auditor.

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

The Chairman pointed out that the Committee consists of 4 officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and not less than 5 other members, elected at the AGM from among the Association's members.

With the exception of Judith Collins (see above under item 2.), all Committee members had agreed to remain in their functions. Roland Walckiers has in the meantime expressed his willingness to resume his duties as Committee member.

## **Officers**

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

## **Committee members**

Programme Coordinator	Mr. André Ceulemans	St-Genesius-Rode
Webmaster/Newsletter	Mr. Johan Vanbrabant	Waarschoot
Programme Committee	Mrs. Heather Charlton	Brussels
	Mr. Emile Debacker	Kampenhout
	Mr. Ludo Somers	Merksem
	Mr. Roland Walckiers	Sint-Niklaas

The assembly unanimously elected the above-mentioned members for the duration of one year.

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

The Committee proposed that the Assembly elected Mr. Henk Hoogstraten as the Association's external (i.e. independent of the Committee) auditor for the next year. Henk had agreed to restand for election and the Assembly unanimously elected him.

### **7. Approval of the annual subscriptions for members and non-members**

The Committee proposed that the 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

Non-members :

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

The Assembly unanimously approved this proposal.

### **8. Approval of the Committee's recommendation for a donation**

The Committee proposed three possibilities for the annual donation, fixed at €1,000. Firstly, to the general coffers of the Nation Trust; secondly, to the South East & London region on which we depend; and thirdly to Northern Ireland or where we visit in 2022. A comment from the Floor said the money would be lost in the vast machine of the National Trust if it was given to the general coffers and would not make a significant difference.

The majority of the Assembly thus approved the Committee's third recommendation, i.e. to Northern Ireland or where we visit in 2022.

#### **9. Any other business**

Johan Vanbrabant drew people's attention to the fact that photos can be downloaded from the Association's website.