British Deaf Association (BDA) - Annual General Meeting
2.30pm, Saturday 5 October 2013
Derby University Enterprise Centre, Derby

NOTES

1. Welcome and Opening Announcements

BDA Chair confirmed that 47 members had registered for the AGM. Therefore the quorum of 40 had been exceeded so the AGM could continue. Members and staff who have passed away recently were remembered by holding a minute’s silence in remembrance of Hal Draper; Margaret Lawrie; John McGlip; Dorothy Nabarro; Stephen Pink and the former BDA General Secretary, Arthur Verney.

2. Apologies

John Denerley, Jo Gardiner, Arthur Groom, Jeff McWhinney, Francis Murphy, Phillip Oram, Alan Murray MBE, Tessa Padden, Sylvia Simmonds

3. Minutes of the AGM, held in Edinburgh on 5 November 2012

It was confirmed that the minutes had been posted to the web for a number of weeks and could be requested from the Head Office. There were no questions arising from the minutes or matters arising.

The minutes of the AGM meeting in Edinburgh on 5 November 2012 were unanimously approved by the members: Proposer: John Brownlie, Seconder: Austin Reeves

4. Chair’s Report

The Chair reported that the members had already seen presentations from the BDA managers about the Empowerment and Campaigns work. This has included 172 visits to deaf community groups in 58 towns and cities. The BSL Charter had also been promoted to 27 local authorities and more work has been done in London through the London community development project. It was also reported that the BDA had worked with children, youth and families. An example of this was the work with DEFFO in Wales, where we supported the launch of a video programme. Support has also been provided to set up a new Youth Committee, which has five new members. There has also been a lot of community advocacy work, with over 200 deaf people being supported, through one to one support and community forums.

This year has also seen the launch of the Deaf Heritage Project. The development phase of this project is now complete and the BDA is waiting to hear from the Heritage Lottery Fund whether they will fund the three year delivery phase. We should know the outcome of this at the end of November. There have been some local screenings. During one screening a deaf lady was
thrilled to recognise her father in one of the films. The hope is that more of the old films can be converted into a digital format so they can be shared with a wider audience and more people can appreciate their history and heritage.

The advance level BSL curriculum has now been finished and printed. This is the end of a 5 year project. The BSL Charter Toolkit, which supports the BSL Charter document, has also been completed. This will help local authorities to put the Charter pledges into practice.

The BDA has also been working on the website to make it more accessible. Much of the content is now available in BSL and in the near future it is hoped translated copies of the BDA reports will be available through BSL on the website. There are over 12 reports currently available.

The Chair continued by explaining that this year was the 10th anniversary of the recognition of BSL. Therefore a celebratory event was held at the House of Commons in March. 122 MPs signed an early day motion to show their support for the recognition of BSL. During this year we have seen the introduction of changes to DLA into PIP. As a result of this we have been involved in the Health in your Hands campaign, which has provided important evidence in the area of health and health services.

The Chair concluded by looking forward to next year with a pledge to communicate better. He acknowledged the BDA can sometimes be slow at getting information out to the members. This is being tackled at the moment and should improve in the future.

Members were then given for a question and answer session. Issues discussed included: Where is the voice of the deaf community? The Chair reiterated that 172 visits had been done in deaf communities, there had been many consultations and much of the BDA work is community based. However, there was acknowledgement that the BDA cannot do everything and has to prioritise its work. Also it was suggested that reports should be in BSL first and then translated into English second? It was explained that reports are often commissioned by local authorities, government departments, so we have to respond to them first. Finally there was a comment from the floor that there needs to be more passion from the membership and to be more proactive.

5. Treasurer’s Report

The Treasurer explained that the annual report had been signed for the website for the first time this year to ensure the information was accessible to the members. He reported that 2012/13 had been a good year financially, supporting a lot of activity. Also there has been an increase in the percentage of project funding which is positive for the BDA.

The Treasurer then went through the accounts. He explained that income had increased compared to the previous year: 2011/12 - £946,216, 2012/13 - £1,208,974 and expenditure had decreased: 2011/12 – 1,269,699, 2012/13 - £1,131,841. Therefore the deficit had decreased from £315,266 in 2011/12 to £200,132 in 2012/13.
The Treasurer then examined the balance sheet which provides the important information. People may consider the BDA rich because the balance sheet shows an increase in BDA funds of £1,712,626 in 2012/13 compared to £1,512,495 in 2011/12. However, the BDA are now responsible for the pension fund debt. The BDA has a pension fund of £400,000 which will cover three year’s worth of Pension Trust additional payments.

Then followed some questions from the floor including: Clarification about ADA funds, which can be found of the last page of the Annual Accounts; Clarification about the Pension Trust payments for 10 years and whether this will repay the Pension Trust debt. It was explained that the repayments are fixed for 10 years but this may not clear the deficit. The Treasurer then explained the second element of the debt, the orphan debt due to the pension fund being a multiemployer scheme, so as one employer leaves the scheme the other employers have to absorb their debt. The Treasurer then reassured the membership that the Board had sought legal advice and for now they would continue to pay the debt repayments. The law on pensions may change in the future. Members were reassured that the schemes in deficit are now closed to new members.

There was also a question about large expenditure compared to income on the British Deaf News. This was acknowledged and is being considered. It maybe the BDN will need to change although it is an effective way of communicating with the membership. Members also queried the benefit of international work. The Treasurer explained the budget covered membership of WFD, EUD, WFDY and EUDY and travel to WFD board meetings, giving the benefit of being part of a global response to issues such as the legal recognition of BSL.

The Chair then thanked the membership for their participation.

6. **Resolution One**

Following the Treasurer’s Report the members were asked to receive the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2013.

**Proposer: Dawn Marshall, Seconder: Unanimously accepted**

7. **Resolution Two:**

It was explained that the membership is being asked to reduce the quorum from 40 to 10 members. Following questions from the membership it was confirmed that the reason for this is that the membership and deaf community has changed for a number of reasons and less and less people are attending meetings like AGMs. This is a trend amongst many organisations. Membership were concerned that: the deaf community views are represented; diminishes the membership decision making; the decrease in number is too great; maybe there should be a proxy vote. It was then explained that 2/3 of the membership have to support the resolution for it to be carried.

**For: 4, Against: 24, Abstain: 6 – Resolution not carried**
8. **Resolution Three**

The Chair left the room during this part of the AGM. It was explained that the reason for asking the membership to change the clause to allow a Chair to serve for a third term is due to the current pension issue, to allow for more consistency at this difficult time. It was confirmed that a charity law expert recommended three terms as good practice. The membership asked for clarification and it was confirmed that the current chair would still have to go through an election process next year when his current tenure expires. It was also confirmed that should a Chair not be voted in then there would need to be another election, as only the membership can elect the Chair, not the Board.

**For: 29, Against: 4, Abstain: 3 – Resolution carried**

9. **WFD and EUD**

The Chair reported on the WFD, explaining that they represent 72 million deaf people. They are a strong influence around the world and have a massive impact. The WFD represents different cultures and covers different issues, especially tackling discrimination. The Chair explained that as a board member he has to attend two board meetings a year and various associated meetings, he is also the chair of the legal commission and media commissions. There is more information on the WFD website, including information about becoming a member for $25.

The Chair acknowledged the achievement of Craig Crowley who helped secure the Deaflympics in Sofia. Team GB did well, winning 2 silver and 3 bronze. This is a real achievement considering how little funding they receive compared to other countries. The Chair confirmed that a letter had been sent to the GB Team congratulating them on their success.

The Chair also commented on the EUD. The BDA, led by the late Arthur Verney was instrumental in setting up the ECRS, whose first president was Jock Young. The ECRS then became the EUD which has gone from strength to strength. Due to the work of the EUD sign language is now mentioned in the legislation of 33 European countries. The BDA is well respected amongst the EUD community and a lot of countries are envious of what the UK has.

10. **BDA Future Plans**

**BSL Day:** The Chair reported that there will be another BSL “symposium” in 2014 on 18 March 2014, which will form part of the BDA’s Sign Language Week. There will be more information on this through social media and the BDN.

**International Week:** We had a very successful International Week this year with various activities going on throughout the UK. We will repeat this next year, in September 2014.
The Chair also explained that the BDA had been thinking about the short, medium and long term goals and that it needs to be more proactive rather than reactive. He explained there will be more consultation with deaf people.

11. **Francis Maginn Awards 2013**: The Chair then presented awards to **Francis Murphy** for his work with deaf youth, as a trustee and chair of the BDA Board of Trustees, working tirelessly and having a heart for the deaf community, which was accepted on his behalf by his brother Ian; and to **Gerry Hughes** to mark his amazing achievement, sailing around the world.

12. **Date and Venue of Next AGM**

   It was confirmed that the AGM for 2014 would be held in Manchester in November. The date would be confirmed in due course.

13. **Vote of Thanks**

   The meeting was closed with a vote of thanks for the membership’s participation and enthusiasm. Members were encouraged to look at the improved website and to encourage more youth to get involved in the work of the BDA.

**The meeting ended at 4.45pm**