

**The Royal Horticultural Society**  
**Minutes of the 217<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting – 25 June 2021**

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**Minutes of the 217th Annual General Meeting  
of the Royal Horticultural Society**

**held at 11:30am on Friday 25 June 2021  
RHS Garden Wisley, Hilltop**

**Approved by Members at the 2022 AGM**

**Members of Council present:**

Keith Weed (President)  
Matthew Lindsey-Clark (Treasurer)  
Prof Mick Crawley  
Nick Dunn  
Sarah Eberle  
Dennis Espley

Neil Lucas  
Lorna Parker  
Mark Porter  
David Rae  
Lady Xa Tollemache  
Ruth Willmott

**Also present:**

Mr Wesley Kerr (Council member elect)  
Mrs Pamela Maynard (Council member elect)  
Prof Nicola Spence (Council member elect)  
Sue Biggs , Director General  
Carole Goldsmith, Director of People  
Dr Alistair Griffiths, Director of Science and Collections  
Hayley Monckton, Director of Communications  
Jan Nix, Director of Risk and Governance  
Mark Norman , Director of Finance and Estates

Martine Parnell , Director of Members, Marketing and Digital  
Helena Pettit , Director of Gardens and Shows  
Jon Simpson, Director of IT  
Dr Tim Upton, Director of Horticulture, Education and Communities  
  
Stacey Bailey (Company Secretary, minutes)

A total of 100 members were present.

**Welcome**

The President welcomed members to the 217th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Royal Horticultural Society at the new Wisley Hilltop, The Home of Gardening Science, and thanked them for attending.

The President noted that the quorum for the AGM was 100 members. As 100 members were present, the AGM would start.

The President gave apologies for absence from the following members of the Society:

*Presidents Emeritus*  
Elizabeth Banks

*Vice Presidents*  
Raymond Evison and Jim Gardiner

*Council Members*

James Alexander-Sinclair, Kate Lampard, Sarah Raven, Janet Walker, Jon Wheatley

**1. President's Report**

- 1.1 The President looked back on the previous year to provide an insight into the main achievements of the Society.
- 1.2 The President highlighted that just over one year ago, work started at the Hilltop, For so many people, the past year has been very difficult and challenging. Last year, the Society's AGM was a closed, socially distanced meeting and at that stage we were unable to engage with members with the AGM recorded and loaded onto our website. We are therefore delighted that we are able to hold an open meeting today. Last year's AGM typified a lot of the year with many virtual meetings and a very challenging year for the society and many other organisations. Charities seem to have had it tougher with less resources than many commercial organisations.
- 1.3 When lockdown hit in March last year the RHS had to close all our gardens. We also had a challenging year with RHS Shows with the cancellation of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and all shows for the remainder of the year.
- 1.4 The President continued that although it was a challenging year, on the other side it was also a magical year for gardening. We saw gardening boom and it caught the imagination of people around the country. The RHS had more and more people engaging with gardening as a physical activity and also nurturing nature and gardening to boost wellbeing. This was a meaningful moment for many people and we saw 10% more gardeners appearing in the UK resulting in another 3 million gardeners.
- 1.5 This increased interest had an immediate impact on the RHS in the first six weeks of the first lockdown when the Society got virtually as many enquiries on our website for advice as for the whole of the previous year. In 2020/21 the Society had over 30 million engagements on our website with people asking for advice, looking for videos and finding ways to engage and buy plants.
- 1.6 The President continued that he was pleased to say that after successfully lobbying the government as part of the Ornamental Horticulture Round Table Group the RHS gardens and garden centres were able to open in June last year. The RHS was also able to hold a successful Glow event across the Christmas period and the President encouraged members to attend this year as it's truly lovely to see the garden lit up after dark.
- 1.7 Although all shows were cancelled last year the RHS switched to a virtual Chelsea Flower Show. In around seven weeks the Shows Team built what turned out to be a fabulous success engaging people at scale.
- 1.8 The President reported that in and out of lockdown when able, he visited the gardens and spent a lot of time on Zoom speaking to Council members and Vice Presidents. This year the President outlined that he had been able to enjoy more visits to the gardens and charting these on Instagram.

- 1.9 Whilst we saw a boom in gardening we also saw people and communities engaging around gardening and horticulture, whether that be through the RHS, Britain in Bloom or the It's Your Neighbourhood initiatives which has helped many isolated people and those feeling lonely and is a positive outcome from a challenging and negative year. The President concluded that we are now in the completed Hilltop building with three laboratories and three wonderful gardens as well.

## **2. Treasurer's Report**

- 2.1 The Treasurer presented a summary of the RHS Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements 2020/21 which would be put before Members for formal approval later in the meeting.
- 2.2 The Treasurer continued that as the President had explained, every area of the Society's activities has been profoundly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past 16 months, which is certainly evident in the financial results for 2020/21. However, despite all of the challenges, the outturn for the year was far better than had been feared at this time last year. This is down to a number of factors: including the welcome support of the Government furlough and VAT relief schemes, the commitment, determination and hard work of our employees, the decisiveness and creativity of the leadership team and, vitally, the loyalty, patience and generosity of our members and donors.
- 2.3 The Treasurer highlighted that the past financial year may not have been a year in which we set many records, but it is nonetheless gratifying to be able to report that the Society did manage to achieve a small surplus. While our income from regular operations decreased by 35% to £60.7m, mainly because of the cancellation of the shows, net operating expenses before depreciation were reduced by some 33% to £56.1m. After depreciation there was a small deficit from our regular operations but this was transformed into a surplus of £571,000 after taking into account the donations and project expenditure relating to the Strategic Investment Programme.
- 2.4 One of the Society's greatest strengths during this period has been the support we have enjoyed from our members. Despite all of the upheaval, membership of the Society declined only slightly last year, ending the year at 521,132, a decrease of 0.8%. While retention remained in line with prior years, acquisition of new members was lower, impacted by the cancellation of the Shows, the closure of the Gardens during the popular Spring season and the restriction on visitor numbers thereafter. However, this was offset by the growth in new members joining online. Since the beginning of the current year, membership has grown strongly and at the end of last week stood at 548,631, an increase of 27,499, partly driven by the strong membership take up at RHS Garden Bridgewater since opening.
- 2.5 Garden visitors declined to 1.7m, 624k lower than last year. Over 80% of this decline resulted from the closure of the Gardens in the Spring. Despite the limits on capacity and the timed entry system in operation since reopening, visitor demand remained strong throughout the period, which was reflected in record attendance of over 160k at the Glow evenings across the Gardens. As for the current year, visitor levels were somewhat muted in February and March during the stay at home and stay local

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phases of lockdown, but have picked up strongly over the course of Spring. By the end of May visitor numbers had reached 670k, nearly double over the same period last year and just 16% lower than 2019, even though entry restrictions remain in force. So far in June, visitor numbers in all the gardens are actually higher than in 2019.

- 2.6 A number of areas of trading income were severely impacted by the pandemic. Around two thirds of the total decline in the Society's income is accounted for by the almost complete elimination of income from Shows, a swing of £22.8m. Income from the Gardens fell by 39% to £3.3m and Trading Income, which includes income from retail, advertising and venue hire, fell by 31% to £17m. However that disguises the fact that Retail actually performed very well once the Gardens reopened, notably here at Wisley, and our online sales grew by 56% benefiting from the overall change in consumer behaviour as a result of Covid-19 and the booming interest in gardening under lockdown.
- 2.7 The Treasurer continued that on a further positive note, income from the Members and Communication division was 8% higher at £26m, and Donations, Legacies and Grants increased by 4% to £17.5m. The Society has been so fortunate to have such stalwart support from members and donors over the past 16 months. Also included in the results of these areas are the monies received from the Government in respect of the VAT and furlough schemes respectively.
- 2.8 Expenses were closely controlled throughout the year, notably in the Shows division, where decisive action by the team ensured that our losses were kept within acceptable bounds. While the impracticality of running a number of our programmes under the limitations of lockdown meant that our charitable expenditure was inevitably curtailed last year, investing more in these activities is a high priority as we emerge from lockdown.
- 2.9 Turning to our capital expenditure, last year was the third year of our peak investment phase under the Strategic Investment Programme (SIP). Capital expenditure on the SIP in the year under review amounted to £25.5m, bringing the total expenditure over that three year period to over £100m. Most of last year's expenditure was in relation to the SIP projects at RHS Garden Bridgewater and here on the Hilltop at Wisley, on this marvellous new building and the three exceptional new gardens in which it is set. With the completion of these two large scale projects, the focus of the programme will turn to a series of smaller-scale but important renovations: to the Laboratory here at Wisley, to the Harrogate Arms up at Harlow Carr and, less tangibly but just as important, the overhaul of a core element of our IT systems with the implementation of a much needed new Customer Relationship Management system or CRM.
- 2.10 Even with the continuing high levels of capital expenditure, the Society's reserves of cash and investments remain healthy, standing at £35.8m at the year end, down from £60.8m. Our investment portfolio performed well despite the stock market volatility during the year due to the defensive overall asset allocation, although investment income fell as a result of the continuing low interest rates and our lower average balances.
- 2.11 Among the many lessons of the last 15 months has been the danger of making confident predictions of the future. While official guidance around

the lifting of remaining restrictions is encouraging, the effects of the pandemic will linger and, in terms of our financial performance in the current year, much will hinge on our ability successfully to stage our shows at Hampton Court, Tatton Park and Chelsea over the coming three months. Enormous efforts have been devoted to ensuring that these events can be run safely in line with Government guidance: the safety of our visitors and exhibitors has been and will continue to be our greatest priority and we will make no compromises, regardless of the financial cost.

- 2.12 The Treasurer concluded that while the Society may not be fully out of the woods, there is much to be excited about. Our membership proposition is clearly more attractive than ever and the steadily growing income stream it brings will enable us to fund important new charitable programmes. This building will provide a superb base for our scientific work as well as providing yet another in a series of highlights for visitors to our flagship garden. Our new garden at Bridgewater has opened to great acclaim and will surely provide inspiration and a gardening education to visitors from near and far for decades to come.
- 2.13 After such a testing period, perhaps we should be satisfied if this year is one in which we merely consolidate our position and start the process of rebuilding reserves. But our ambitions remain undimmed and, provided things stay on track over the course of the summer, we will aim to achieve much more.

### **3. Director General's Report**

- 3.1 The Director General highlighted that the opening of Bridgewater in May was a huge success with Carol Klein cutting the ribbon. The last year has been truly terrible and challenging and the Director General expressed sincere gratitude and thanks to the members for their continued support. Without this support the Hilltop building would not have been completed and the society could not have continued its work as the world's leading horticultural society.
- 3.2 The Director General paid tribute to the amazing staff at the RHS for their dedication and passion and thanks to the Leadership Team who have worked amazingly throughout the pandemic.
- 3.3 Looking forward, the Director General highlighted that there is so much to be cheerful about with all the Gardens now open and the biggest elements of the Strategic Investment Programme complete with the rest of the program on track. The Programme is due to be completed by January 2024 but could likely be delivered one year early.
- 3.4 Membership has now reached 550,000. This is a huge achievement and testament to the work of the RHS and the continued contribution of members. Going forward the Society will be measuring charitable Key Performance Indicators to ensure the balance is kept as we need both commercial and charitable aspects to be successful. The Society's Sustainability Strategy will be launched before Chelsea this year and the RHS will do all it can to move this agenda forward.
- 3.5 The Director General continued that although there is much to be cheerful about there are also many challenges ahead. The road out of Covid is not

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guaranteed and Brexit is having an impact on plant supplies and increasing costs. With regard to the A3/M25 scheme, the Society has successfully lobbied to save the trees but there is still a risk of environmental damage and the Society will continue to lobby against this.

- 3.6 The Society is looking forward to the Hampton Court Garden Festival and Tatton Flower Show at the end of July and the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in September. With the Strategic Investment Programme almost finished the Society is focusing on sustainability and diversity to ensure a broader base and a new digital strategy will be launched to make sure that the Society is as relevant online as it can be. Community outreach work will also be increased. There is also much work to do to promote horticulture and gardening as a career to be proud of. The talent, experience and years of training required is something to be proud of and we should all encourage our children and grandchildren to take up a career in horticulture.
- 3.7 With regard to fundraising, the Annual Report stated that there is £6 million left to raise for the SIP, this has now reduced to £5 million after a very generous donation in the last month. The next project in the Programme will be the Harrogate Arms at Harlow Carr that will be renovated into a café and offices with an event space.
- 3.8 The Director General highlighted the power of plants, the power of gardening and the power of RHS research. There is now only 10 years left for us to take action and do something about the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis and we know as gardeners we have a big part to play in looking after our planet. We all need to act now for the future generations behind us and the Hilltop building is devoted to us finding solutions to this crisis.
- 3.9 The Director General concluded by thanking the Society's Patron, Her Majesty the Queen, and all of the Fellows, members, and volunteers who support the work of the RHS.

#### 4. Annual General Meeting 2021

##### a) Minutes of the 216<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

- 4.1 The meeting voted, by show of hands, to **APPROVE** the minutes of the AGM held on 31 July 2020, which would be signed as an accurate record of proceedings by the President.
- ##### b) Annual Report & Consolidated Financial Statements 2020/21
- 4.2 The Treasurer proposed that the meeting should approve the RHS Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements 2020/21. The proposal was seconded by Dennis Espley.
- 4.3 Members were provided with an opportunity to ask questions about the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements 2020/21.
- 4.4 The meeting then voted, by show of hands, to **APPROVE** the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

##### c) Election of President and Treasurer

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- 4.5 There being no other candidates standing for the position, the Chairman of the Nominations, Appointments and Governance Committee declared Mr Keith Weed elected unopposed as President for 2021/22. Keith Weed was appointed President at the 2020 AGM.
- 4.6 There being no other candidates standing for the position, the Chairman of the Nominations, Appointments and Governance Committee declared Matthew Lindsey-Clark elected unopposed as Treasurer for 2021/22. Matthew was appointed to Council in 2016. He also sits on the Audit & Risk, Investments and People & Remuneration Committees.
- 4.7 The President expressed thanks for the opportunity to serve a further one-year term of office.

**d) Election of Ordinary Members to Council**

- 4.8 The President noted that every year, as part of the democratic running of the Society, at least three Ordinary Members of Council retire and the resulting vacancies are filled by election at the AGM.
- 4.9 James Alexander-Sinclair, Dennis Espley and Sarah Raven retire from office at the AGM and the President thanked them for their long standing support and contribution to the achievement of the Society's aims. These three vacancies would therefore be filled by election of candidates for a term of five years.
- 4.10 Wesley Kerr, Pamela Maynard and Nicola Spence had put themselves forward for election for the three vacancies.
- 4.11 There were therefore, three validly nominated candidates for three vacancies. Accordingly, Wesley Kerr, Pamela Maynard and Nicola Spence were elected unopposed as members of Council until the end of the 2026 AGM.
- 4.12 The full list of Council Members for 2021/22 is:

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| • Keith Weed (President)            | • Pamela Maynard |
| • Matthew Lindsey-Clark (Treasurer) | • Lorna Parker   |
| • Mick Crawley                      | • Mark Porter    |
| • Nick Dunn                         | • David Rae      |
| • Sarah Eberle                      | • Nicola Spence  |
| • Wesley Kerr                       | • Xa Tollemache  |
| • Kate Lampard                      | • Janet Walker   |
| • Neil Lucas                        | • Jon Wheatley   |
|                                     | • Ruth Willmott  |

**e) Appointment of Auditors**

- 4.13 The Treasurer proposed, and Mark Porter seconded, that the meeting should approve the appointment of Crowe Clark Whitehill LLP as the Society's auditors for 2021/22
- 4.14 The meeting voted by a show of hands to **APPROVE** the said appointment.

**f) Appointment of Vice Presidents**

4.15 The President announced the appointment of James Alexander-Sinclair as Vice President of the Society for the year to the end of the 2022 AGM.

4.16 The President also reported that Council had re-appointed the following as Vice Presidents for 2021/22:

- Rosie Atkins
- Michael Balston
- Lawrence Banks CBE, VMH, DL
- Baroness Floella Benjamin
- Christopher Brickell CBE, VMH
- The Count de Kerchove de Denterghem
- Raymond Evison OBE, VMH
- Mark Fane
- Jim Gardiner
- Rosy Hardy
- The Rt Hon the Lord Heseltine CH, PC
- Robert Hillier OBE, VMH
- Professor Brian Huntley
- Roy Lancaster CBE, VMH
- Jekka McVicar VMH
- Sandy Muirhead
- Dr Henry Oakeley VMH
- Jane Pepper
- Dougal Philip
- John Ravenscroft VMH
- John Sales VMH
- Prunella Scarlett LVO
- Tom Stuart-Smith
- Vicomte Philippe de Spoelberch
- Dr Kiat Tan
- Alan Titchmarsh MBE, VMH, DL
- Richard Webb VMH

**g) Close of AGM**

4.17 The President thanked those present and drew the formal proceedings of the AGM to a close.

**5. Members' questions**

5.1 Members attending the meeting asked the following questions, some of which had been tabled in advance of the AGM:

5.2 *The Society has made an excellent job of covering the South East and North West areas of England with their gardens. There are significant populations in both those areas situated within a viable and repeatable day trip distance (50 miles) of 2 Gardens as shown in the attached map. That however leaves a swathe of the country across the Midlands a considerable distance and travel time from these Gardens. What plans does the Society have to 'level up' by constructing a Garden that will address the lack of coverage across the Midlands, a region of approximately some 7 million people? P Goff*

The Director General responded that we have just opened our fifth RHS garden in Bridgewater, Salford, this month. There were many factors why this particular location was selected in the end, but when we started our search, it included looking at locations across the Midlands as we wanted to increase our presence in this area as well as across other areas of the UK. The fifth garden was part of our ten year Strategic Investment Plan and as we look to what we might do once this programme is finished, we

will definitely consider the viability of a garden in in the Midlands. We do want to be relevant and accessible to more people everywhere in the UK, but we also need to be mindful of what we can afford and there are many elements to consider to find that perfect location for another RHS Garden. In the meantime we are very lucky to have our incredible RHS Partner Gardens in the Midlands such as Belvoir Castle – Grantham, Middleton Hall – Tamworth, The Dorothy Clive Garden - Market Drayton but many more too all of which can be found on our website.

- 5.3 *Last year, with changes to the AGM as a result of the pandemic, was the first year I had been able to participate in the AGM as a RHS member. Getting time off work and travelling to Wisley or another location is tricky for me and no doubt for many other members. I am unable to be at this year's in-person AGM either.*

*I understand that the National Trust's AGM later this year will be a mixed format of in-person and online. Will the RHS also consider moving AGMs online or to a mixed format to allow for greater participation by members.*  
K Long

- 5.4 *Oh dear, why oh why have you not included a Zoom option in this year's AGM? If the situation over the last year has taught us anything it is surely that there are hundreds of members of organisations who feel disenfranchised by their inability to attend physical face-to-face meetings because of distance or other inability to travel, and remote links give them an opportunity to participate.*

*I understand that you want to have a physical face-to-face meeting if at all possible but why should this be to the exclusion of a remote option? Surely both can be combined to everyone's advantage.*  
*I feel you have taken a backward step here and a valuable opportunity has been lost. E. Patricia Hammersley*

The Present thanked the members for these helpful questions, which would be answered together and continued that he agreed with the sentiment of both. The more we can engage more members at the AGM the better.

AGMs are formal events governed by bye-laws and rules. The RHS bye-laws were created long before virtual meetings or zoom were even heard off. At present, the RHS bye-laws do not provide for the Society to hold an AGM virtually. That is to say we cannot currently have a virtual or part virtual proper AGM. We will shortly review the bye-laws, scheduled for later this year and look at potential changes to allow for greater flexibility at AGMs. Virtual elements will be considered as part of this review. Last year with Covid restrictions in place we were unable to hold an in-person AGM. The meeting was conducted with a limited number of trustees and officers on zoom. We recorded the zoom meeting and put it on the RHS website to share it with members.

We will take the same approach at this years AGM as we did last year and record the AGM speeches and put them online on our website. So may I reassure both of our members they will get the same sharing of the AGM as we did last year. We are currently looking carefully at what other organisations are doing both in the corporate private sector as well as the not-for-profit sector to see what we can learn for the future and input these learnings into the bye-laws review. However let me end where I started and

say we will strive to find ways to share the AGM with more members and I would like to thank K Long and P Hammersley for taking the time to ask their questions.

- 5.5 *I note that in the 'Notice of the Annual General Meeting 2021' it is stated that there is only one validly nominated candidate for each of the roles of President, Treasurer and three Ordinary Council Members and that as such all of the nominated individuals will be elected unopposed. To the ordinary member the nomination process therefore appears to be a 'closed shop'. As I recall this situation arises in most years suggesting that it may be time to review the barriers to entry to the nomination process to create a more overtly democratic process. What action does the RHS propose to take to create a more democratic nomination process in future years? T Barnett*

The President thanked the member for the question which gave the opportunity to explain a little of the process behind the nominations we have today at the AGM.

Firstly may I start by reassuring you and everyone present that there is an open, fair and transparent process in place. If you google 'RHS Council election process' you will find an a clear explanation step-by-step on how to apply to become a Council member or if you google 'how do I become an RHS Council member' this document appears in the first page of the search as the sixth item. It is also on our website under the 'what we do' section. So it's easy to find out how to apply.

The document explains the RHS bye laws, eligibility, time commitment, interests and skills, how to stand for election with support of the Council or indeed stand for election without the support of the Council. For this year it explained that you needed to send in your Application by February 26. Our Nominations, Appointments and Governance "NAG" Committee chaired by Lorna Parker oversees all appointments, including those to Council.

We advertise Council vacancies through The Garden magazine in October of each year (with a reminder in December). We also invite those we work with across the governance structure (including many non-Council members) to 'advertise' these positions for us within their networks. Our aim in this is to attract submissions from as many people as possible. Once submissions have been received, NAG undertakes a robust evaluation process, including an interview with NAG members. This ensures NAG can make informed recommendations to Council as to which candidates might receive their support (taking into account the skills currently on Council, succession planning, and the fit of the individual). For example ahead of this year's nominations we did a skills audit of the Council against our Strategic needs and identified the need to step up our Technology skills on Council and you will see a top rate Technology candidate here today. This year the NAG committee reviewed many more potential candidates than the 3 council nominations you see at the AGM. However you do not have to go through the evaluation process, any member may stand for election providing they meet the requirements in the Bye-laws and regulations and their nomination paper is signed by a

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proposer, seconder and six other supporters and can commit the necessary time.

We would welcome more nominations and have already undertaken to advertise more widely for the 2022 vacancies, such as on LinkedIn.  
Thank you for your question.

- 5.6 *The RHS has the most amazing assets from print, web, events, gardens etc – wonderful opportunity to bring in a partnership model of brands and suppliers to help grow the audience and add value - is there a commercial partnership strategy? J Hay*

The Director General responded that the activities of the RHS are a mix of charitable and commercial (that funds further charitable activities). The Society has a corporate partnerships team that works with like-minded brands in a number of areas such as advertising for The Garden, licensing products in retail and show sponsorship. The Director of Gardens and Shows outlined that there is a currently a good integrated model in place.

- 5.7 *Are you getting quotes from all the TV companies and not just the BBC. Bearing in mind how the BBC has treated the over 75's. P Kennedy*

The Director General responded that the contract with the BBC is reviewed every few years when the Society also speaks with other TV companies. However, at present the BBC is the only channel able to offer such large audiences and breadth of coverage.

- 5.8 *Is the magazine safe to continue to be posted and not just online as is the fashion? P Kennedy*

The Director of Members, Marketing and Digital responded that there is no intention to stop posting The Garden magazine and in member surveys the overwhelming number of respondents would like a hard copy. However, the Society is also investigating the option of a digital copy for those that would prefer this.

- 5.9 *Before the pandemic, cars parked in fields and on grass verges were a symptom of the excess number of car journey's generated by Wisley. Unpleasant overcrowding occurred here and at events like Chelsea. After the pandemic will the RHS continue to use pre-booking systems, or will the need to maximise the charity's revenue come before the need to set a good environmental example and protect the visitor experience. B Carr.*

The Director General responded that when the pandemic hit the Society had to move to pre-booking in order to manage capacity. Whilst operationally this has worked well there have been a high number of complaints from members unable to book and it is likely pre-booking will therefore be removed. The Director of Gardens and Shows outlined that access to carparks 4 and 5 at Wisley will be improved with the addition of an electric shuttle bus. It was also noted that during Covid many people choose to travel alone and as the pandemic eases it is likely people will go back to sharing cars.

- 5.10 *How many partner gardens does the RHS have and what is the take up? T Rogers*

The Director of Horticulture, Education and Communities responded that in member surveys, partner gardens are continuously rated the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> most popular aspect of membership. The Society is pleased to have retained 207 gardens in 2021 and it is hoped that more will be added.

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- 5.11 *The President's proxy votes in the election of members to Council excludes independent members from being successful elected. T Rogers*  
Elections to Council are run in accordance with the Bye-laws and applicants are invited from all members.
- 5.12 *The M2/A3 decision has been delayed by a further six months, does the Society have any plans to make further appeals to the minister? Member*  
The decision on the M25/A3 has been deferred to the Secretary of State and has been pushed back by 12 months to November 2021. The Estates Team are very involved and the Society will keep pushing to prevent environmental damage from the proposed scheme.
- 5.13 *It would be good if accommodation could be provided at other RHS gardens besides Rosemoor. Member*  
This is something that was considered but no suitable space has yet been identified at other gardens.
- 5.14 *There are many courses and workshops available in other RHS gardens but not Wisley. There are also no guided tours at Wisley. Member*  
The Director of Gardens and Shows responded that there are some at Wisley but these do sell out quickly. These are advertised on the RHS website but the Director will check they are being marketed appropriately.
- 5.15 *Gardens question time on Radio 4 is hugely popular and it would be great if something could be done face to face at Wisley. Member*  
The Director General responded that there will be regular events at Wisley Hilltop and advisory is also available to members online and at shows.

**END**