

# Minutes from Annual General Meeting of the Earthworm Society of Britain

Date: Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020

Time: 10.00

Venue: Virtual meeting on Zoom

Contact: Kerry Calloway, Secretary ([kerrycalloway87@gmail.com](mailto:kerrycalloway87@gmail.com))

Committee Members Present: Frank Ashwood (FA), Charlie Bell (CB), Keiron Brown (KB) Rich Burkmar (RB), Kerry Calloway (KC), Rachel Clark (RC), Keith Lugg (KL), Anke Marsh (AM), Anthony Roach (AR) and Emma Sherlock (ES).

Members Present: Angela Lynch, Anne, Cairo Robb, Cathy Coombs, Catriona, Dave Pawson, Dawn, Geoff Newell, Gordon Punshon, Graeme Hutchinson, Hilary Robinson, Jan Kitty Williams, Jaromir Papez, Kath, Keith Elder, Kevin Butt, Linda LB, Lisa Rowley, Mike, Mike Burt, Moto G, Patrick Taylor, Paul Richens, Rachelle Lewis, Riaz, Ross, Sue T.

## 1. Apologies for Absence

Dave Budworth

## 2. Society Updates (ES)

### i. Apologies for absence

Dave Budworth

### ii. Chair's Report (ES) – this is a summary of the Chair's report from ES, for the full report contact KC.

ES: I will keep this brief which I'm sure you are all relieved to hear! However, I would very much like to thank all our lovely and committed committee members for all their hard work this year, as well as our members such as yourselves for continuing to support us and of course for attending our AGM. I believe this is the highest attendance of an AGM by a long way which is fantastic and has really made us think about how we might hold some future events. We love to hear from you all and have you all as involved with the society as possible, so this is brilliant.

This has obviously been quite an extraordinary year for everyone. The society has had to cancel all our courses and the recording and fieldtrips we had planned. They will of course be rearranged and we will continue our recording and training initiatives as soon as is safe to do so. So, I hope to see you in person again soon.

Despite all this we have still been making great progress: In particular our website has been improved hugely through great work from Rich, and Keiron has been working hard on our content. In particular we have our garden worms initiative to be launched this autumn which will be really exciting and we will be in touch about that shortly. The blogs and news sections are added to far more regularly and Anthony is still fielding any questions people may have. So do get in touch.

Membership is still high with great work from Charlie and Anke with members receiving regular emails and bulletins. We've also been reaching out to the scientific community and you'll hear more about that through Frank's work. The Constitution change this year is also a vital step forward for the society to flourish and I'd like to thank Kerry for a lot of hard work on this (and her husband Alex!). So, despite Covid, the society continues to get stronger and more relevant every year. So, it just leaves me to say thanks again to our committee; Kerry, Charlie, Rachel, Keiron, Frank, Rich, Keith, Anke and Anthony and to all our fantastic members. Here's to a happier rest of 2020 for all and... if we do still need to keep closer to home for longer, don't forget our Garden earthworm survey launching!

iii. Summary of Reports from other Officers – for the full reports contact KC

Treasurer’s Report (RC)

Summary of accounts for ESB from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020:

	Incoming	Expenditure	Notes
Membership via Cheques / Bank Transfer	£320		
Membership via PayPal	£1,130.00		*Total paid into PayPal account during financial year
Donations	£60		
PayPal Fee		66.99	*Total paid to PayPal for membership paid in during financial year
Insurance		£99.31	
Buglife Membership		£5.00	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£1,510</b>	<b>£171.30</b>	

Starting balance (on 01/04/2019):  
£5,763.70

Closing balance (on 31/03/2020):  
£6,889.39

Account uplift of  
£1,125.69

Financial monthly summary for financial year April 2019 – March 2020

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Year End
<b>INCOME</b>													
Membership Cheques / Bank Transfer	£15.00		£130.00		£50.00	£5.00		£10.00	£90.00	£10.00	£10.00		£320.00
Membership PayPal					£850.00								£850.00
Donations									£60.00				£60.00
Recorder Packs													£0.00
ID Courses													£0.00
<b>INCOME TOTAL</b>	<b>£15.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£130.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£900.00</b>	<b>£5.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£150.00</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£1,230.00</b>
<b>OUTGOINGS</b>													
FSC Earthworm Key													£0.00
Recorder Packs													£0.00
Consumables													£0.00
Equipment													£0.00
PayPal Fee													£0.00
Venue Hire													£0.00
Travel/Accommodation													£0.00
Website													£0.00
Insurance						£99.31							£99.31
Buglife Membership				£5.00									£5.00
Expenses													£0.00
<b>OUTGOINGS TOTAL</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£5.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£99.31</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£104.31</b>
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>£15.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£130.00</b>	<b>-£5.00</b>	<b>£900.00</b>	<b>-£94.31</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£150.00</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£1,125.69</b>
Account Balance on 1st of Month	£5,763.70	£5,778.70	£5,778.70	£5,908.70	£5,903.70	£6,803.70	£6,709.39	£6,709.39	£6,719.39	£6,869.39	£6,879.39	£6,889.39	
Account Balance on 30/31st of Month	£5,778.70	£5,778.70	£5,908.70	£5,903.70	£6,803.70	£6,709.39	£6,709.39	£6,719.39	£6,869.39	£6,879.39	£6,889.39	£6,889.39	

iv. Membership Officer (CB)

To date (28/07/20) the ESB has 243 memberships currently active. These comprise:

- 117 Individual annual memberships (-66)
- 122 Life memberships (+13)
- 4 Family annual memberships (-14)

There has been a slight drop-off in memberships this year, following the huge surge in memberships after Emma’s appearance on Autumnwatch in 2018. This is not unexpected and memberships are still at a healthy level, with an increase in Life memberships which is pleasing.

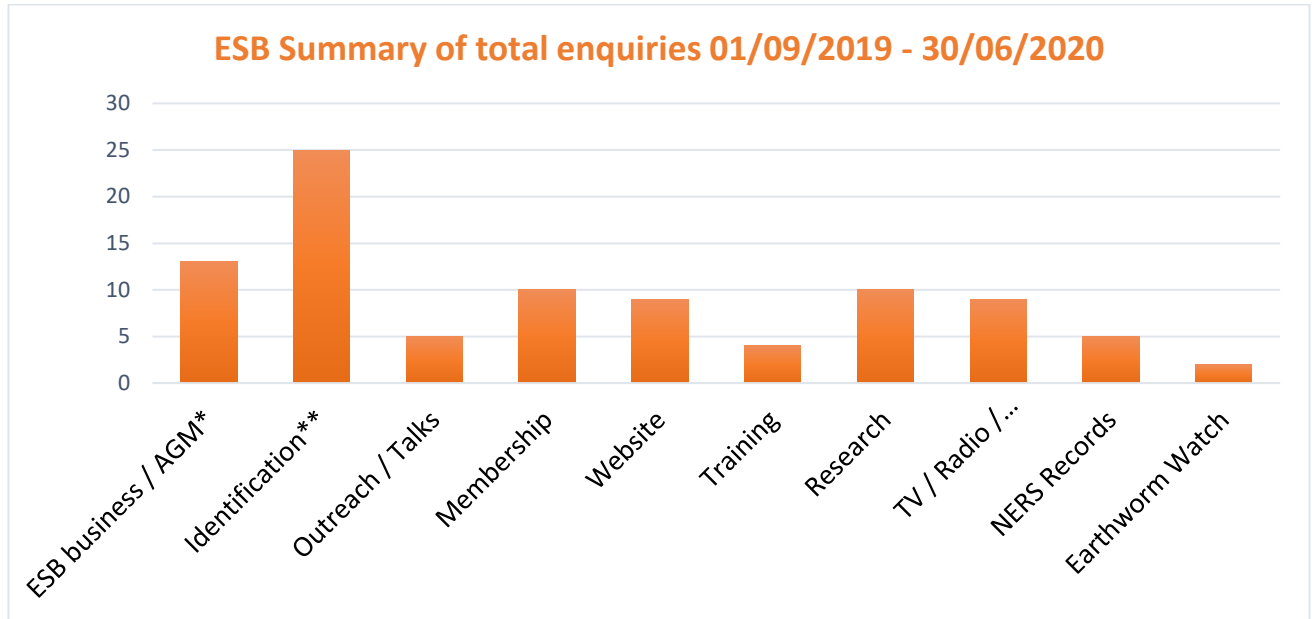
The decline in number of Family memberships is due to this option being removed from the website as a new membership option. Some members wished to retain the £10 payment for Family memberships rather than converting to Individual memberships, hence the fact we still have 4 Family memberships.

To date (28/07/20), there are 232 subscribers to this email. This only includes 2020 members as due to GDPR lapsed members are removed from the email three months into the new calendar year if they have not renewed membership.

Emails in 2020 have a 58.9% open rate, exactly the same as last year last year, which apparently is good for the environmental/NGO sector. This is an underestimation of the percentage of people reading the email, as it does not count emails read in the reading pane of an email programme such as Outlook.

v. Enquiries Officer (AR)

Between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, we received a total of 92 enquires that relate to a broad range of subject categories, as can be seen in the graph.



vi. Website Officer (RB) - <https://www.earthwormsoc.org.uk/>

Our website is hosted by a company called Clook (<https://www.clook.net/>) on a shared server. The website is implemented on a well-established open source platform called Drupal (version 8). Drupal is a Content Management System (CSM) which allows us to easily spread responsibility for content creation and management across all those people that need it.

The only financial costs associated with the website are hosting and domain registration which we manage through Clook. Hosting costs us £96 per year. Domain registration ([earthwormsoc.org.uk](https://www.earthwormsoc.org.uk/)), costs us about £9 per year. There are no financial costs for managing and maintaining the website since we do all this within the society.

We monitor use of the website with Google Analytics. Over the current reporting period (1st Oct 2019 to 11th July 2020), Google Analytics has registered the following statistics:

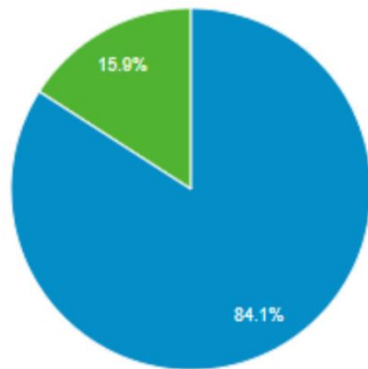
- Sessions: 54,770
- Users: 46,172
- Pageviews: 87,042
- Pages / Session: 1.59
- Avg. Session Duration: 1 min 29 secs

The graph shows the weekly users of the website throughout the year. You can see that there was a very strong growth in sessions/users around April/May which may reflect more traffic coming in during the Covid-19 lockdown.

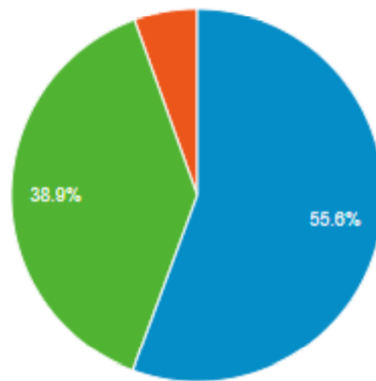


The pie charts show the proportion of new vs returning website visitors and the platforms used to access the website. The majority of sessions on our website are from users using mobile devices. It underlines the importance of making sure that our pages work well on small-format screens like mobiles. When we designed the website, we made every effort to make it 'responsive' to small format devices like mobiles.

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



User platform



1. ■ mobile
2. ■ desktop
3. ■ tablet

The main technical maintenance associated with a Drupal website is updating the core software whenever new versions are released. The main reason for keeping the software up to date is to keep the website secure against malicious use. Since the last AGM (29/09/2019) the core software has been updated 13 times.

vii. Recording Officer Report (KB)

The ESB earthworm database contains (as of 31/07/2020) 16,628 processed records:

- 11,756 of these are earthworm research dataset records.
- 4,872 of these are National Earthworm Recording Scheme records.

6 earthworm species datasets have been uploaded to the NBN Atlas:

- Earthworm Research Group (UCLan) Earthworm Records (Great Britain)
- Environment Agency *Eiseniella tetraedra* Records (England)
- Forest Research Earthworm Records (UK)
- National Earthworm Recording Scheme Records (Channel Islands)
- National Earthworm Recording Scheme Records (Great Britain)
- Soil Biodiversity Group (NHM) Earthworm Records (Great Britain)

The map to the right shows the number of records in the ESB earthworm database by country:

Work was undertaken in June 2020 to update all records towards Darwin Core standards, and the comments field (associated with records) is now separated into 3 remarks fields: Location Remarks, Occurrence Remarks and Identification Remarks.

The following recording projects have been worked on this year:

- Record Enhancement Project  
Frank Ashwood, Keiron Brown and Emma Sherlock have been reviewing records and enhancing habitat and microhabitat data from comments, source literature and communications with researchers/recorders.

Before the project, the ESB held 14,069 complete records (with both habitat and sampling method specified). Following the project, the ESB holds 14,800 complete records.

- Garden Earthworm Survey  
Keiron Brown and Rich Burkmar have produced and implemented a soil pit survey form on iRecord that will enable the ESB to collect sample site-level data in addition to biological records.

The Garden Earthworm Survey will be launched in Autumn 2020 using the soil pit survey iRecord form.



viii. Research Officer Report (FA)

I have formatted and submitted records from another season of my own fieldwork in Scotland, contributing records from over 20 woodland and agricultural sites. Furthermore, the UCLan dataset has now been fully transcribed and submitted; adding over 20 years of earthworm research records from across the UK. I have contacted and chased earthworm researchers from a number of groups and organisations, however as always, many researchers have been slow or unenthusiastic about sharing data with us. I plan to contact these researchers again; however, there may be a better way to obtain already published data – via a broad literature review as part of the national earthworm distribution research project. This major ongoing piece of work is looking at national earthworm distribution, based on the NERS and research records datasets. Through a number of meetings and time spent formatting datasets, we are almost ready to begin the data analysis phase of the research project. However, through an existing collaboration with Dr Aiden Keith at CEH, it appears that we may be able to boost the research records database through the addition of results from a wide literature review of >200 existing UK earthworm research papers. This would significantly enhance the research records database and improve the ESB research project, as well as building strong ties to another earthworm research group in the UK.

Myself and Kieron Brown have been in ongoing communication with Olaf Schmidt from UCD, Aiden Keith from CEH and the NBDC in Ireland, and we have finally obtained two earthworm distribution datasets for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. These have subsequently been found to have formatting issues, however hopefully they will prove useful.

Finally, I am pleased to see the continued strengthening of ties between the Earthworm Research Group at UCLan and the ESB, with them visiting the NHM in January this year. Hopefully this relationship will continue to develop and may lead to future collaborative research opportunities and knowledge exchange events.

**3. Changes to the Constitution (KC)**

KC: We are proposing to change the constitution of the ESB because the current one is overly complicated and restrictive. It requires 10% of the membership to be present at an AGM to be quorate. As the number of ESB members have grown significantly over the last few of years it has become very difficult to be quorate at our AGMs. The proposed new constitution was sent out to all members on 12/07/2020.

Voting was carried out virtually using the survey tool on Zoom.

Attendees were asked:

“Do you agree to accept the revised constitution for the Earthworm Society of Britain?”

And chose from the following answers:

Answer 1: Yes

Answer 2: No

Answer 3: Abstain

**Results: 33/36 voted yes, 3/36 did not respond.**

**The proposal to change the constitution was passed.** The new constitution was signed by the (newly appointed) trustees after the meeting via the online document signing tool, DocuSign. Contact KC for a copy.

**4. Appointment of Trustees (KC)**

Voting was carried out virtually using the survey tool on Zoom.

Nominated Trustees	Votes
Emma Sherlock – Chair	35/35
Kerry Calloway - Secretary	35/35
Rachel Clark - Treasurer	35/35
Frank Ashwood	35/35
Charlie Bell	35/35
Keiron Brown	35/35
Rich Burkmar	35/35
Keith Lugg	35/35
Anke Marsh	35/35
Anthony Roach	35/35

\*Votes are out of 35 (although 36 attended) as trustees cannot vote for themselves.