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Closer ties or a merger of NSCG with the BCG and possibly with the GCG

At the 2001 AGM of NSCG in Oxford, a proposal was made that a working group should look into closer ties with BCG and GCG with the possibility of forming one much larger combined society. NSCG had previously set up a working party, when this was first proposed three years ago, as covered in "View from the chair" this issue.

A working party met on 27th July to consider the proposal made at the 2001 AGM. BCG have taken the matter forward with their membership by publishing a paper in their August 2001 Issue 20, proposing a merger of BCG and NSCG and including a straw poll form with an SAE. NSCG committee had not had a chance to discuss this further until a committee meeting on the 26th September in Birmingham.

NSCG committee decided that both the very positive views published by BCG, together with some alternative views should be presented. This would allow members who might not be fully aware of the arguments to have some basis upon which to make a decision.

NSCG committee has also requested that GCG also undertake a similar exercise. Opinions vary within NSCG committee members, however, it was felt that NSCG members views, rather than just those of the committee or a working party should be taken account of following the strength of opinion for closer ties expressed at the AGM

NSCG is a registered charity and as such, has to operate within the terms of its constitution, relevant parts of which are reproduced below. A full version of the NSCG constitution was published in issue 15, pp 25-30 (September 2000). As a charity, NSCG is required to fulfil its objects for the public benefit, rather than the benefit of its membership. The Trustees (i.e. the committee) are required to act in the best interest of the charity.

At this stage, NSCG wishes to gauge the opinion of its membership on whether a merger with BCG and GCG would be beneficial. To this end, NSCG committee has also decided to include an SAE for return of a straw poll ballot.

Amendments to the NSCG constitution require a two-thirds majority in favour; in order to proceed with any next steps, a similar majority would be required from this straw poll. NSCG committee would then work up necessary amendments to the constitution and possibly the organisation's name to be presented at the AGM in 2002 which would in turn require a two-thirds majority to be passed.

Relevant sections of NSCG constitution

1. Name

The name of the charity shall be the Natural Sciences Conservation Group, (or other such name as the Trustees may from time to time decide with approval from the Charity Commissioners).

The Group (hereinafter called the charity) is an unincorporated association with Charity Trustees elected by its members.

2. Objects

The objects of the charity shall be:

2.1. To advance the education of the public in natural science collections conservation.

2.2. To promote for the benefit of the public, the highest standards in the conservation, development, preparation, care and display of natural science collections and specimens.

3. Powers

In addition to any other powers which the Trustees may exercise the following powers in furtherance of their objects.

3.1. Power to encourage and develop education, training and research in natural science conservation through publications, regular meetings and seminars.

3.2. Power to raise funds and to invite and receive contributions, provided that in raising funds the trustees shall not undertake any substantial permanent trading activities.

3.3. Power to invest the funds of the charity in any of the investments for the time being authorised for the investment of trust funds.

3.4. The Trustees shall have the power to provide indemnity insurance for themselves out of the income of the charity provided that any such insurance shall not extend to any claim arising from any act or omission which the Trustees knew to be a breach of trust or breach of duty or which was committed by the Trustees in reckless disregard of whether it was a breach of trust or breach of duty or not.

3.5. Power to do all such lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the objects.

5. Meetings and Proceedings of the Charity Trustees

5.1. The Trustees shall be charged with the organisation and promotion of the group.

5.2. The Trustees shall carry out the wishes of the membership as determined at the Annual General Meeting of members.

5.3. The Trustees shall meet as a committee at least three times a year in addition to holding an annual general meeting.

5.4. The quorum required for any meeting of the Trustees shall be three Trustees or one third of the total number of Trustees whichever number is the greater.

5.5. An emergency or special meeting of Trustees can be called to discuss a particular matter with 7 days notice.

5.6. The Trustee holding the officer post of chair shall chair all meetings, in their absence this duty can be undertaken by one of the other officer posts.

5.7. The chair has a right to a second or casting vote when the number of Trustees voting for or against a resolution are equal.

5.8. Minutes of meetings shall be taken.

15 Powers of Amendment

15.1. Subject to the following provisions of this clause, the Constitution may be amended by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a general meeting. The notice of the general meeting must include notice of the resolution setting out the terms of the amendment proposed.

15.2. No amendment may be made to clause 2, clause 3.4, clause 12, clause 14, clause 16 or this clause without the prior written approval of the Charity Commissioners.

15.3. No amendment may be made which would have the effect of making the charity cease to be a charity at law.

15.4. The Trustees must:

- a. promptly send to the Commissioners a copy of any amendments made; and
- b. keep a copy of any such amendment with this Constitution.

16. Power of Dissolution

If the Charity Trustees decide that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the charity, they shall call a meeting of all members of the charity of which not less than 21 day's notice (stating the terms of the resolution) shall be given. If the proposal is confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, the Charity Trustees shall have the power to realise any assets held by on or behalf of the charity. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to the object of this charity as the members of the charity may determine, or failing that, shall be applied for some other charitable purpose.