

## The 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the British Neuroscience Association

14:00-14:35, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021  
Held online via Zoom

### Introduction and welcome by the Chief Executive, Dr Anne Cooke (AC)

- AC welcomed and thanked all attendees for joining the AGM. AC explained that this meeting is being recorded for minuting purposes only and will not be kept on file.
- AC reminded BNA members that they're also a member of the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS).
- AC introduced Rik Henson (RH- current BNA President), Catherine Harmer (CH – BNA Treasurer) and Zoe Kourtzi (ZK - Secretary)
- For the purposes of this meeting, the reporting period is from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (year-end 2020).
- A vote will be held during today's meeting to adopt the accounts, which will be presented by CH.

### Report from the President, Professor Rik Henson (RH)

#### 1. Governance: Confirmation of elected Council and Committee members since previous AGM

- Since the previous AGM (September 2020) the following people have been appointed:
  - **Tara Spires-Jones** from the University of Edinburgh has been appointed as Trustee and Council member, to the position of President-Elect.
- Since the previous AGM (September 2020) the following people have been appointed in the BNA Executive team:
  - **Joseph Clift** has been appointed as Head of Policy and Campaigns.
  - **Hannah Thurgur** has been appointed as Executive Officer.
- RH gave thanks to those who have completed their time on the Council and committee since the previous AGM, namely:
  - **Stafford Lightman** from the University of Bristol, who stood down as past-President.
- RH also gave thanks to those who continue to give their time to the BNA Council and Committee and the BNA Executive team.

#### 2. Strategy: Update on the BNA's strategic plans

The BNA is a membership organisation whose vision and purpose is *“to preserve and protect health and advance public engagement in neuroscience, through supporting, promoting and representing neuroscientists and neuroscience research”*, a vision which is articulated in more detail in the charity's official 'Objects' - which can be found in the Annual Report and Articles of Association listed with the Charity Commission. More can be found online in [governing documents](#).

To help the Council and Committee members deliver these Objects in a strategic, joined-up manner, the BNA has three overarching and connected strategic aims: to **Inform, Connect, and Influence**.

These aims were arrived at through a series of strategic workshops and engagement with members and all of the BNA's activities fall within one or more of these aims.

During the period being reported on at this AGM (from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020), the BNA is delighted to report achievements in all three aims. RH highlighted several activities across the aims and encouraged attendees to look at the full Trustees' Annual Report and to contact the BNA after the AGM if they wish to comment, ask about, or suggest activities they would like to undertake.

**Aim one: To Inform.** The BNA have continued to 'inform' through engagement with schools via webinars, participating in public engagement events and hosting the 2019 Festive Symposium in London.

The BNA's scientific journal, *Brain and Neuroscience Advances* remains an important means by which we inform the profession about the latest neuroscience research and the BNA are delighted that the journal was indexed in April 2020. During this reporting period, there were 21 articles published in *Brain and Neuroscience Advances*. RH encouraged all to visit the journal, [Brain and Neuroscience Advances](#), as well as promoting the low article processing charge (APC) rate and encouraging submissions to the journal. RH explained that if the BNA can increase income from the journal then this would provide a stable income stream in the future. RH also noted that in the current publishing landscape, some scientists are concerned by the transparency of journals and their profits. RH explained that society journals, such as the BNA journal, are a special form of journal whereby profits are fed back into the society and therefore will benefit members. The BNA aims to make the journal as credible as possible with full gold open access, transparency and openness (TOP) badges and registered reports.

**Aim two: To Connect.** There are now 40 local group representatives (LGRs), which form a hardworking and enthusiastic group of individuals. There was an in-person Forum held in London in March 2020 and online LGRs' meetings have taken place throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

RH highlighted the BNA's online webinars, which are fully listed in the trustees' report. This included the webinar and live Q&A 'When industry meets academia: Sir Mene Pangalos on improving translation', which was part of the BNA's '*Building Bridges Between: Industry & Academia*' initiative. Sir Mene Pangalos is the Astra Zeneca Executive Vice-President and, in the webinar, provided the pharmaceutical stance on improve translation.

**Aim three: To Influence.** In November 2019, the '*Credibility in neuroscience*' campaign was launched at the House of Commons. The '*Credibility in neuroscience*' campaign seeks to influence the way neuroscience is done, in order to maximise transparency, reproducibility, replicability and reliability of research. Since his appointment in April 2020, Joseph Clift has used his experience to help increase the BNA's influence on policy, such as projects on the Research Excellent Framework (REF). This work is also supported by Narender Ramnani (BNA council member for Research Policy), who sits on the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, demonstrating the increased voice of the BNA in policy.

The BNA have also launched equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives, which will be discussed in further detail at the next AGM.

### **Report from the Treasurer, Professor Catherine Harmer (CH)**

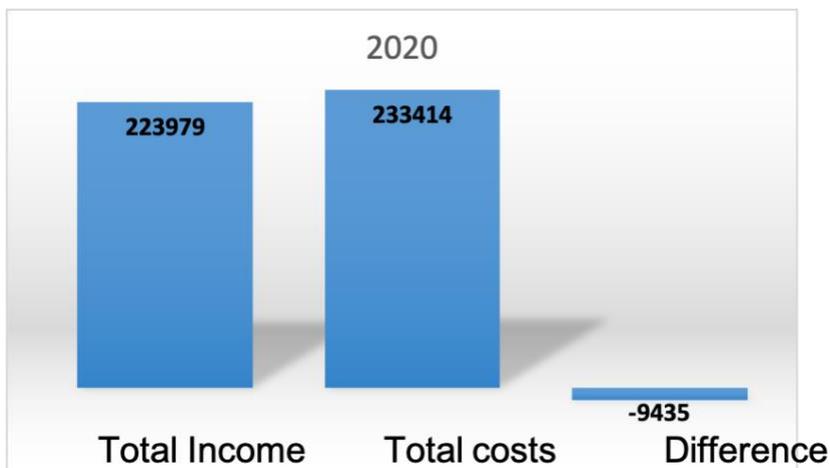
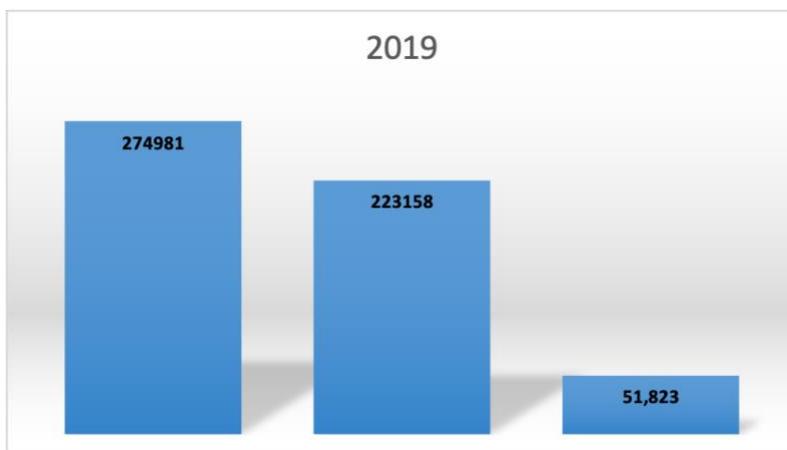
#### *1. Annual accounts for the British Neuroscience Association Ltd and for BNA Events Ltd*

Reserves



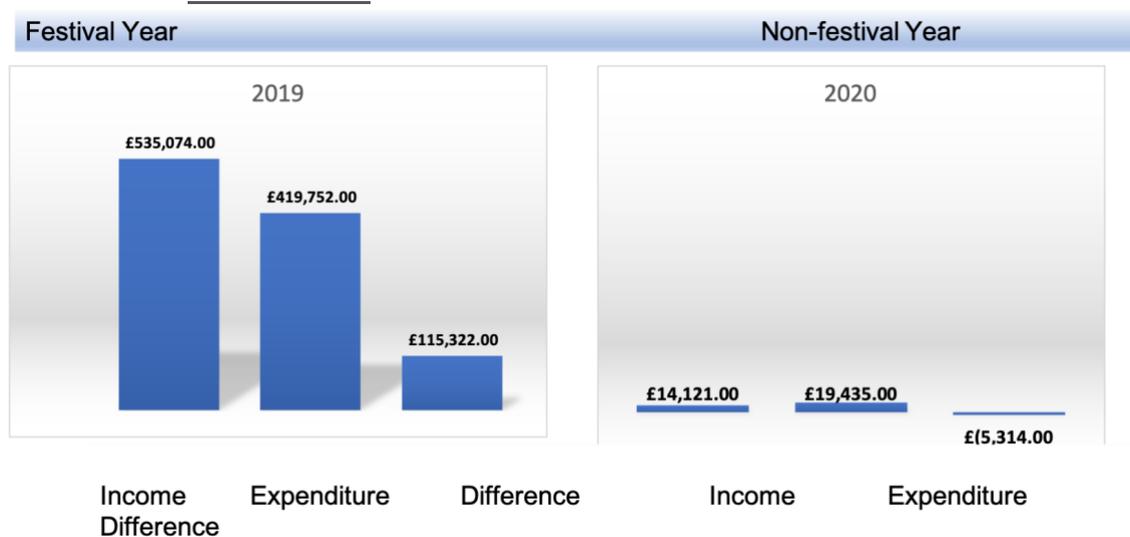
- BNA Charity: Reserves include in advance funding for Credibility in neuroscience project and development work, part of which has been undergone planned expenditure over the last year
- BNA Events: Reserves follow a 2-year cycle in line with income from biennial Festival of Neuroscience

Year-end (YE) accounts of BNA Charity



- CH compared the total income, total costs, and the difference for YE2020 with YE2019 (shown above)
- Major income sources include dividends paid from our subsidiary company BNA Events Ltd (Festival income), membership and advertising
- Major expenses come from office/staff costs, Gatsby credibility in neuroscience activities, bursaries, subscriptions/membership, and Bulletin production
- Thanks were given to Gatsby and all other funders and supporters of the BNA, including members.

YE accounts of BNA Events Ltd



- CH compared the total income, total costs, and the difference for YE2020 with YE2019 (shown above).
- Income from registration, sponsorship and donations (Festive Symposium)
- Costs for website, legal and professional fees, (limited) travel.

Summary:

- The YE2020 accounts show a stable pattern of income and planned expenditure.
- BNA Events ran at a small deficit consistent with non-festival year in 2020.
- Our investments took a hit from pandemic-linked market changes but have since recovered
- BNA charity remains in a good position, with planned expenditure in line with core mission, activities and supported by Gatsby Funding.
- We continue to be careful in light of uncertainty on income sources going forward

**AC asked attending members to adopt and accept the presented accounts, agreeing that they are a true record of our accounts by way of a poll presenting the following question: *Do you accept (adopt) the account for the BNA Ltd for YE 2020.***

The accounts were unanimously accepted and adopted by all who voted (44 votes cast) and will now be submitted to Companies House and the Charity Commission.

## Report from the Secretary, Professor Zoe Kourtzi (ZK)

### 1. Membership report for YE2020

- The total membership number has increased from 2065 (1<sup>st</sup> October 2019) to 2432 (September 2020). There has been growth within each membership type. A marked increase was observed around February 2020 and is most likely to be linked to the FENS 2020 Forum. There was a significant increase in Full, Associate and Full (Industry) memberships.
- In 2019, the BNA noticed there was a membership retention issue and therefore in 2020 there was a membership reengagement campaign to contact expired members to re-join.
- The LGRs are an important means for the BNA to remain engaged with BNA members across different institutions. There was an in-person LGR Forum at the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre in March 2020, which helped strengthen the LGR networks.

### 2. Meetings

Although many meetings and events were taken online during this reporting period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were still able to connect online during this period.

- **‘Pain, Pleasure and the Agony of Christmas’, BNA Festive Symposium December 2019, London:** this launched the ‘pain’ theme for 2019, it was a very successful symposium and covered by BBC Radio 4.
- **FENS Forum 2020, July 2020:** an international neuroscience conference that explores all domains in modern brain research. The event was due to be in Glasgow with the BNA as the Host Society. However, the conference was hosted online instead due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The BNA worked closely with FENS to make sure the virtual meeting was an exciting and valuable conference experience.
- **When industry meets academia: Sir Mene Pangalos on improving translation, September 2020:** online webinar and live Q&A Webinar with Astra Zeneca Executive Vice-President, Sir Mene Pangalos.

### 3. 2019 BNA prize winners

The BNA continues to celebrate the achievement of neuroscientists, with the following prizes being awarded during the reporting period of 2019-2020:

- Professor Steve McMahon, Sherrington Professor of Physiology at King's College London – Outstanding Contribution to Neuroscience
- Dr Dean Burnett – Public Engagement of Neuroscience
- Dr James Phillips, University of Cambridge – Postgraduate prize
- Pia Siegele, University of Edinburgh – Undergraduate prize

## Q&A with attendees

*Can you confirm that none of the investments support fossil fuel companies?*

AC passed the question to CH. CH confirmed that the BNA’s investment portfolio is restricted to ethical companies.

*I am new to the association and sorry for asking an unusual question for this forum. Is there scope for a Q&A link on your website? I am keen to get involved with fellow researchers, or research currently being conducted.*

AC responded that a Q&A link is a good idea and noted there is currently the form on website which can be filled in and will be picked up by the BNA office. There is also a members' directory on the BNA website to find people with shared interests.

*How did the Festival go this year? Will there be a dividend into the charity to support future costs?*

AC responded that the BNA2021 Festival of Neuroscience that took place in April 2021 was different to previous Festivals as it took place online due to COVID-19. It was a challenging time to take the Festival online and it was particularly important to ensure it was successful as the charity relies on the Festival as a source of income. Although the Festival doesn't fall within the reporting period of this AGM, the BNA are delighted to announce there was a profit of £60k - £70k and there will be a dividend payment to the charity. However, it is important to note that this profit is significantly less than an in-person event and therefore something the BNA will need to consider for future meetings.

*Is the positive outcome of the Festival of Neuroscience encouraging having more online events including the next festival?*

RH answered that the BNA hasn't decided yet. RH said the BNA should try an in-person meeting at next Festival, noting that posters and networking are better in-person. RH added that a hybrid event has been discussed as there are advantages such as reduced travel. However, there is the concern of low attendance with hybrid events.

*Once the BNA Festival is no longer available on the website it was hosted on, where can we find the recordings of the symposiums?*

Online Festival access is still available until 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The BNA are in the process of looking at the recordings and deciding where/if they will be held, i.e. on the website/YouTube channel. Those that will be made public will be freely available after August.

*Can you explain how you arrived at the costs for the online BNA festival, as some may see this as a bit over what other online Festival are charging? Did you need to charge so much for the online Festival if you made £60,000 profit?*

CH explained that the income from the Festival is essential for keeping the BNA afloat, as demonstrated in the accounts presented during this AGM. The profit from the Festival is half of the income we receive for the whole year. CH explained that it is not pure profit as it is funding the rest of the BNA's activities. Once we can increase other income streams, then we can look at reducing Festival costs.

Ac explained that the Festival registrations were substantially less than attending FENS and SfN and were 50% of what we charged for the in-person event. The BNA had originally thought that it would be a struggle to make the online Festival break even, but even with that knowledge decided to keep registration fees low. Luckily there were some strong sponsorships that came in just before the Festival, from which the profit was generated. The BNA encourages anyone who finds the registration fee hard to meet to apply for bursaries and carer grants for the Festival.

*Is the BNA open to collaborate with university neuroscience societies this following academic year?*

Yes, we are always open to collaborating! Please do get in touch via the BNA office ([office@bna.org.uk](mailto:office@bna.org.uk)). Most institutions with a neuroscience course have a local group.

AC encouraged all to get in touch with any feedback or comments via the BNA office ([office@bna.org.uk](mailto:office@bna.org.uk)), through the BNA website or social media. AC gave thanks to all for attending.