

KIRSTENBOSCH BRANCH
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Kirstenbosch
on 16 July 2022 at 10h30 in the Old Mutual Hall

1. Opening of Meeting

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ceinwen Smith, Veronica Boniface, Tony Boniface, Sue Nepgen, David Marais, Trunell Morom, Alison James, Doug James, Rupert Koopman, Keith Kirsten, Dorothy Malan, Jonathan Cornell, Rhonwen Cornell and PM Burnell.

3. Confirmation of Quorum

Quorum was confirmed with 86 members present.

4. Condonation of Postponement of AGM from 18 June 2022

The postponement of the AGM until after the National BotSoc AGM on 2 July 2022 was approved by acclamation.

5. Approval of Minutes of the AGM held on 26 June 2021

- The Minutes were available on the website prior to the AGM. With no objections the Minutes were proposed by Jill Gribble and seconded by Sean McGivern.

6. Chairman's Report – Jeremy Wiley

The Chairman reported on the year ending 31 March 2022. The main points were as follows:

- In the last year the Branch has lost two longstanding members and volunteers, Owen Moore and Esme Morris.
- The total current membership of the Botanical Society is around 14600 of which about 9600 are members allocated to the Kirstenbosch Branch.
- A new branch website sporting the modern revised Botanical Society branding and imagery was launched. Overall, the Branch has established a much improved and more visible online presence.
- Email newsletters are distributed regularly to over 7600 members' email addresses.
- Following the successful first 'online' plant sale in 2021 the Kirstenbosch Online Plant Sale was held again in late May through to mid-June 2022. A second physical plant sale will be held later in 2022 with a focus on succulents.
- The Branch has continued its invasive alien clearing or 'hacking' programme around the periphery of Kirstenbosch, in Cecilia Forest, on the slopes of Devil's Peak above UCT, on the shores of Princess Vlei and at Rondevlei, under the leadership of Tom Robbins. The Branch continues to contribute financially towards replanting of several endangered species at Princess Vlei.
- The branch has donated funds towards the collection of seeds and the propagation of several endangered fynbos species for the Haasendal Reserve.
- The branch has continued to support the Ingcungu Sunbird Project in and around schools in the South Peninsula led by project manager and branch committee member, Ceinwen Smith. This project is creating a network of fynbos feeding stations particularly for sunbirds from the Cape Peninsula mountain chain right across the Cape Flats to the Hottentots Holland mountain range, and teaches school children about the importance of biodiversity, ecology and nature conservation in general.
- The popular Kirstenbosch Branch botanical walks for members have attracted increasingly large and diverse numbers of enthusiastic members and guests. These walks throughout the mountainous Cape Peninsula have been conducted under the enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership of Dirk Muller, Tony and Pat Rebelo, Margaret Kahle and several other BotSoc stalwarts.

- BotSoc members provide voluntary services at Kirstenbosch in the propagation of endangered species in the nurseries and the provision of voluntary garden guiding by SANBI-accredited guides many of whom are BotSoc members.
- During the past year approximately R450,000 has been allocated from Kirstenbosch Branch share of the Botanical Society and SANBI Partnership Fund towards the training and employment of 14 young horticultural assistants at Kirstenbosch via the Extended Public Works Programme.
- The Branch has collated a collection of personal oral anecdotes about Kirstenbosch, its people and its botanical heritage through interviews with key figures who have been involved with Kirstenbosch for much of their lives.
- The bookshops have struggled to overcome the lingering effects on their operational and financial performance caused by the COVID-19 restrictions and the negative macro-economic environment. The business has 'pivoted' by creating an online e-commerce presence but continues to sustain financial losses. Given the above the Branch Committee has decided that the financial losses of the bookshop business can no longer be sustained because they deplete reserves and divert scarce resources from other important Branch activities and plant conservation projects. To this end the Branch Committee is working towards a plan to cut the trading losses and reorganise the bookshop business by 31st August 2022.
- The Branch has engaged closely with and has been supported by BotSoc GM, Antonia De Barros, and her National Office team including Rupert Koopman, Simone van Rooyen and Bradley Bergh and remains aligned with and supportive of the objectives of the national body of the Botanical Society.
- Given the terms of the renegotiated Collaboration Agreement between SANBI and BotSoc, the Kirstenbosch Branch is disappointed that the current management of SANBI appear not to regard the Botanical Society as a credible, long term and increasingly valuable civil society future partner.

7. Treasurer's Report – Munier Dalwai

- The Financials of Botanical Society of South Africa were audited by the auditor Annelie Lucas; which included the financials of the Kirstenbosch Branch.
- The Bookshop Financials for the 2022 year have been included in the Kirstenbosch Financials.
- Due to COVID-19, an online Plant Fair was held during the year under review.

	2022	2022	2022	2021
		A		B
	Bookshop	Branch	Total	Total
Income				
Bookshop Gross Profit	890 227		890 227	694 470
Membership Fees		373 006	373 006	373 575
Events & Fund Raising		245 575	245 575	
Donations & Bequests		715 374	715 374	398 445
Interest Received		80 572	80 572	73 510
Sundry Income	-	<u>18 568</u>	<u>18 568</u>	<u>1 312</u>
Total Income	890 227	1 433 095	2 323 322	1 541 312
Total Expenses	<u>1 413 980</u>	<u>755 371</u>	<u>2 169 351</u>	<u>1 864 752</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>- 523 753</u>	<u>677 724</u>	<u>153 971</u>	<u>- 323 440</u>

Income

- Bookshop made a loss of R523 753 for the year (2021 loss was R420 893).
- Membership fees marginally decreased by R569.
- Bequests received from Estate Late WT Fraser and Rowland & Leta Hill Trust.

- Interest income increased due to higher amounts invested during the year.

Expenses

- Employee costs increased marginally.
- Rent is based on 7% of turnover.
- Computer costs increased mainly due to web design costs.
- Other Admin costs increased substantially as Plant Fair expenses are included.

8. Approval of the 2022 Annual Financial Statements

Proposed by Sean McGivern and seconded by Nic Muller.

9. Appointment of the Auditor for 2022/2023

The reappointment of Annelie Lucas was proposed by Sean McGivern and seconded by Marinda Nel.

10. Election of Committee Members

There were seven nominees for the committee: Carol Cornell, Munier Dalwai, Donald Mmei Matjuda, Chris Moir, Ceinwen Smith, Grant Smith, Simon Tamblyn and Jeremy Wiley. Since there were not more nominees than positions on the committee in terms of the constitution, the Chair asked the meeting whether the seven nominees could be accepted to form the new committee or whether there should be a vote. Prof Eugene Moll proposed that the nominees be accepted. This motion was seconded by Dr Nathan Finkelstein.

11. Resolutions proposed in terms of Paragraph 20.1.5.6 of the Constitution

No resolutions were received from members.

12. Speaker - Santie Gouws: "Citizen Stewardship initiatives towards protection and restoration in Assegaiboskloof and Jonkershoek Valley"

13. Questions & Answers

Nic Muller convened the Questions and Answers session.

A question was asked about improving the visibility of the bookshop at Gate 2.

- Poor visibility has been recognised as a problem for years and additional signage is being considered.

A suggestion was made about actively asking members and visitors to the garden for donations.

- BotSoc General Manager, Antonia de Barros said that a fundraising strategy was being drafted as a priority along with the marketing strategy and would consider suggestions such as this one.

It was asked where the decision came from to charge tourists a higher entry fee than local visitors to Kirstenbosch.

- SANBI is the custodian of Kirstenbosch NBG and this decision was made at SANBI national level.

It was asked whether it was true that SANBI would be stopping free entry to the gardens for BotSoc members, and what could be done to prevent this happening.

- Council Chair, Kyra Lunderstedt said that the collaboration agreement between SANBI and BotSoc was currently being renegotiated. An information session had been held online the day before and she invited members to access the slides from the information session on the national BotSoc website.
- Antonia de Barros noted that the Kirstenbosch Branch had postponed the AGM until after the national AGM on 1 July so that members could engage on this issue at the National AGM. An invitation had been sent to all members to participate in the previous day's information session.
- BotSoc is a civil society that focusses on plant conservation. Because of the partnership between BotSoc and SANBI, BotSoc members have had the privilege of access to the national botanical gardens because of their membership of BotSoc. Due to COVID-19

SANBI suffered a revenue loss of R111m in the last financial year. BotSoc's contribution to SANBI from a portion of BotSoc membership fees is only 0.6% of SANBI's budget of R700m. SANBI can no longer offer free entry to BotSoc members as they are under extreme pressure to generate revenue. SANBI have indicated that they wish to start their own loyalty programme offering discounted entry to the gardens. BotSoc members will be offered a 10% discount on garden entry.

Dirk Muller asked whether an age analysis could be done of BotSoc members to ascertain what percentage were pensioners.

- Antonia de Barros said that the data is available and that the majority of memberships are families with young children.

14. Closure

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.