Present – Norman Dickinson (ND), Keith Hine (KH), Neil Hope (NH), Daphne Hope (DH), Louise Clubley (LC), Derek Learman (DL), Moira Mannas (MM) + 16 others all listed.

Apologies received from Beth Otway (EO) + 8 others.

KH thanked ND for attending in his role as Southern Branch chair and welcomed everyone to the 2024 AGM.

# Minutes of 2023 AGM

All relevant documents had been circulated; hard copy was available for the attendee who hadn’t read the email, no further comments received or matters arising. The minutes were signed as a true record of the AGM and acceptance proposed by LC and seconded by David Clubley.

# Report on 2023 D.A. activities by KH

2023 was KH’s 6th and final year as chair and we enjoyed a full programme of interesting and varied speakers and also promoted the NVS at events at RHS Wisley. Our visit to Tozer’s seeds was popular and well attended. The year got off to a challenging start when our March meeting had to be cancelled due to the weather and our April speaker had to pull out at short notice due to a family emergency. Thanks to EO we were able to reschedule both Ray Broughton and Barnaby Millard to talk this year and Anthony Halstead stepped in with a talk on Pests on Vegetables. KH thanked the committee for all their efforts:

* Beth Otway (EO) – Events Secretary for producing our speaker programme on top of her work for the Surrey Horticultural Federation and her own pumpkinbeth website;
* Derek Learwood (DL) for Society Liaison and publicity
* Moira Mannas (MM) for taking meeting minutes and providing support at RHS events
* Neil Hope (NH) for membership duties; RHS liaison and sharing his growing expertise at RHS events
* Daphne Hope (DH) – Catering Secretary for providing meeting refreshments and demonstrating how delicious vegetables can be at RHS events
* Louise Clubley (LC) - Treasurer for keeping our accounts and promoting the NVS at RHS events

As noted at last year’s AGM and in messages to the membership and reports in Simply Vegetables the majority of the committee is standing down and it is vital for the membership to step up and take on responsibility for running it for the District Association (DA) to continue. LC and NH have kindly agreed to continue acting as account signatories temporarily until replacements have been enrolled and KH will be happy to continue to offer advice and guidance when necessary. NH will also continue to be actively involved in NVS activities as President of the Southern Branch. KH appealed to the membership to take on running the DA. The committee work only requires as much effort as people are willing to provide. The meeting room for the 2024 season has been booked and paid for and a full programme of speakers scheduled to attend. Enough funds have been raised to keep the DA running for about 3 years without further action so it’s an ideal opportunity to become involved and shape the future of the Association.

# Treasurers Report from LC and approval of accounts

The District Association account is very healthy standing at £4316 despite a net in year deficit of £942. The income was raised by one show at Wisley in June from sales and fund raising at the meetings.

We had six speakers and one cancelled meeting due to the weather in March. The DA provided sponsorship to Southern Branch for some classes in their Show. The rest of the expenditure related to costs for running the meetings.

The Lloyds account, transferred from HSBC last year, has run successfully online and at no cost. There was no interest, but HSBC were charging £5 a month for their Community Societies.

It is to be noted that practically all fund raising, to run this District Association has been generated by the efforts of Keith, Neil and Daphne. The selection of plants and cake provided very welcome contribution to our meetings and the public at Wisley. This public face informed and encouraged the visitors that came and spoke to us about the benefits of the NVS and how they could further their knowledge.

The current signatories on the bank account are LC and NH who have online access and KH. Payments are required to be signed off by 2 of the 3 signatories.

A copy of the accounts for 2023 had been circulated and were proposed by NH and seconded by Paul Yeoman for acceptance.

# Election of Chairman and Officers

KH stood down as chairman and ND took the chair in his capacity as NVS Trustee and chair of the Southern Branch. KH was thanked for all his hard work. As well as his activities as DA chair, he had also done the DA proud attending events such as Wisley and had done a brilliant job promoting the NVS and the Surrey DA. All the outgoing committee were thanked for keeping the DA running and in good order to be handed over. Of the current committee roles only Event Secretary (EO) and Meeting Secretary (MM) were continuing to stand and Karen Murray (KM) agreed to take on the role of Treasurer. No nominations had been received for the other roles including that of DA Chair. To prevent the Surrey DA from being dissolved ND said that under the NVS rules it would be possible for a temporary chair to take meetings until the other roles could be filled. KM is currently a member of a group affiliated to the NVS but will join the NVS as an individual member to take on the treasurer role.

Jonathan Cantelo-Jones agreed to be acting chair at speaker meetings.

ND advised that this would be enough to allow the Surrey DA to continue until the next AGM and the following roles and officers were elected unanimously with no objections raised or abstentions:

* Beth Otway (EO) – Events Secretary proposed by KH and seconded by Janet Arm
* Moira Mannas (MM) – Secretary proposed by KH and seconded by LC
* Karen Murray - Treasurer proposed by NH and seconded by Nicky Cornell
* Jonathan Cantelo-Jones – acting Chair proposed by KH and seconded by DH
* Society Liaison – no nominees
* RHS Liaison – no nominees
* Catering Secretary – no nominees

KH encouraged members to come forward to take on committee roles. Both he and ND hold roles on several committees and tailor their activities to the time they have available. ND said we would include an article in the Summer edition of Simply Veg inviting members to join the committee to lighten the load and take up the vacant roles. NH pointed out that the RHS had invited us again to take part in their Societies event, however we would have to decline as we have insufficient volunteers to take part. ND said that members could also help out by growing plants for sale at events: it only took 8 or 9 people to provide 5 or 6 plants to get a sales table together. Janet Arm said it would be useful to let people know what plants were required and that she still had small pots available that could be used. Once we have an active cohort of members in the group to take on DA activities again we will broadcast a message so that members can plan to grow extra for next year.

AOB

An attending representative from Bletchingley Horticultural Society (Patricia Barrett) requested that the DA resume holding speaker meetings in Redhill as her local gardening groups didn’t have many talks on vegetable growing. She proposed that the NVS should link up with her local groups and sponsor talks at their venues. Janet Arm pointed out that the current venue, East Horsley Village Hall, provides modern facilities in a central location with good transport links and on-site parking. Consequently the Surrey Horticultural Federation were moving their meetings to the East Horsley Village Hall. The Bletchingley representative said that the poor attendance at Redhill was down to the topic of the talk not being appropriate. Also that we should ensure that meeting dates don’t clash with other groups and that the venue postcode is included on the website. ND thanked her for her suggestions and said it would be a matter for the new committee to consider.

NH advised attendees that our next speaker Matt Peskett will be giving us a talk about The Joy of Giant Pumpkin Growing at 8pm on Wednesday 13th March 2024 in the Millennium Room at East Horsley Village Hall, Kingston Ave, East Horsley, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT24 6QT.

Meeting closed at 11:53 by ND