

Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting of the National Eczema Society

**Held at 1.30pm on Wednesday 25 September 2024,
by Zoom video conference**

Andrew Proctor, Chief Executive of National Eczema Society introduced the AGM and explained the meeting arrangements and voting process. He confirmed receipt of 26 completed proxy voting forms from members who are not able to attend the meeting, authorising the Chair and/or CEO to vote on their behalf on resolutions during the AGM as needed. Andrew confirmed the meeting was quorate.

1. Approve the Minutes of the previous AGM held on Tuesday 13 September 2023 (Resolution 1)

The Minutes were considered and no amendments were requested; members approved with a majority show of hands and/or Zoom thumbs-up signal.

2. Chair's report on activities for the year to 31 December 2023

Stephen Pugh, Chair of National Eczema Society, welcomed everyone to the AGM and noted the meeting was being held online again this year.

Stephen reviewed the charity's work during the 2023 financial year, which is also the 2023 calendar year. He then went on to talk about the charity's work in 2024, noting we are already nine months into the current year.

Core to our mission as a charity is providing information and advice. We produce a range of popular patient information booklets and factsheets, and we updated several of these during the year. Our website attracts over two million visits a year, which is testament to the range and quality of our online information offer. We also run eczema information webinars and held two events during the year in conjunction with St John's DermAcademy, linked to the world-renown St Johns Institute at Guys and St Thomas' Hospital in London. We share information through the work of local support groups, like our West Surrey and North East Hants group represented at the AGM today, who organised an information day with a guest speaker in March. We also responded to around 1000 enquiries to the helpline over the year.

Beyond this, we support eczema research and the Society is very encouraged to see more research into treatments for eczema and new medicines being introduced. The Society contributes to research in a number of ways, including providing patient insights for researchers, taking part in steering committees and supporting patient recruitment to clinical trials. NES Trustee, Dr Celia Moss and Andrew Proctor had research papers published during the year.

In 2023 we launched a major campaign calling on the MHRA, the UK medicines regulator, to mandate clear strength labelling on topical steroid (TCS) medicines, as part of our wider work to improve care and raise awareness of eczema. This was a big project for the Society in 2023, extending into 2024, and particular thanks to Dr Celia Moss for her work on this. It can be difficult for many patients to find the strength/potency of the TCS medicines used to treat eczema flare-ups. In the Society's earlier patient survey on the topic, there was overwhelming support for introducing clear strength

labelling for TCS and we can be justifiably proud to lead this important initiative to support safe and effective use of TCS medicines.

During the year we began work to update our position statement on Topical Steroid Withdrawal (TSW), originally published in 2021, in conjunction with the British Association of Dermatologists and British Dermatological Nursing Group. This is a difficult area to achieve consensus because of the lack of research evidence and varying views among patients and clinicians. It is important to keep the position statement under review, as more becomes known about TSW.

The impact of eczema on mental health was the theme for National Eczema Week 2023. Thanks to funding secured from Sanofi, we created a short film called 'More than Just an Itch', highlighting the experiences of patients talking about how eczema impacts their mental health and emotional wellbeing. The video was shortlisted for a Smiley Charity Film Award. We also recorded a series of 'More than Just an Itch' podcasts for National Eczema Week, featuring patients, parents of children with eczema and healthcare professionals.

Our wider media coverage over the year was good, including syndicated coverage through PA News during National Eczema Week, mention in a BBC Morning Live story about cold weather and eczema, and coverage in the Mail on Sunday, The Times and i newspaper. Our following and engagement on social media continues to grow.

Many thanks to our members and other supporters for their generosity and especially those supporters who left us legacies, which are so important for our charity's sustainability. We also appreciate the commitment of supporters taking part in challenge events like the London Marathon and raising money on our behalf. And many thanks to our volunteers as well, including members of the West Surrey & North East Hampshire group who raised a magnificent £2000 last year for the Society.

The Society's Trustees conducted a strategy review in 2023 and asked themselves the big question, 'If the National Eczema Society didn't exist and we were setting it up today, what would we want the charity to do?' Trustees were clear that we want to represent the eight million eczema sufferers in the UK – 1 in 5 children and 1 in 10 adults. A huge number of people suffer from eczema, some relatively mildly and some very severely in ways that have huge impacts on their lives.

We want to become more of a campaigning organisation, to speak on behalf of the eczema community. We believe dermatology more generally is a Cinderella specialty and does not have the voice of some other areas of medicine, despite the fact that eight million people suffer from eczema in the UK, among many other skin conditions.

We also want to focus on eczema research, which is so important for our members who want the next generation to suffer less than they did. Eczema remains an incurable, challenging condition, but research is making significant progress and there are many opportunities to support and advance this drive to finding better treatments and ultimately a cure.

We also want to continue providing information and advice, and the ways we do this have changed a lot over the five decades since our charity was founded.

We have appointed staff to lead on these three key strategic areas, and look forward to developing our work over the coming months and years. This new strategic direction has involved some challenging decisions, to ensure we have the right structure and resources in place. We took the difficult decision to close the eczema helpline in March 2024, which was taking a significant proportion of charity resources to operate. We recognise the helpline has been a great help to the

1000 or so people who use the service each year and will be missed. However, our focus going forward is on better representing the wider eczema community and that means doing some things differently, and we believe these changes will make a real difference to more people affected by this condition.

Stephen thanked fellow Trustees for their hard work over the year. The Trustee Board was unchanged in 2023, although Bharat Pandya stood down at the end of the year. Stephen also thanked the National Eczema Staff team for their contribution and everyone who had supported the charity over the year in different ways.

3. Treasurer's report on the accounts for the year to 31 December 2023

James Pitayanukul presented the Treasurer's report on the statutory accounts for the year to 31 December 2023. The full accounts are available for members to view on the Society's website in the 'Accountability and Impact' section.

The meeting was paused temporarily at 1.48pm for a few minutes, to deal with an unauthorised attempt by non-members to access the meeting.

Once the meeting resumed, James presented several charts, based on a format used in previous AGMs, to help illustrate the annual results. Total income for 2023 was £497,252 and expenditure £477,562, making for a modest surplus of £19,698. For historical context, in 2017, 2018 and 2022 we reported annual deficits, in 2020 and 2021 we achieved relatively large surpluses, and modest surpluses in 2019 and 2023.

Legacies continue to be an important element in the Society's overall income mix and totalled £110,610 in 2023. In years when legacy income is low, the Society typically records a deficit. Conversely, in years when legacy income is stronger, such as 2020 and 2021, we have achieved good surpluses. We are projecting a surplus position for 2024 at this point in year, again largely due to strong legacy income.

The Society's funds were £670,768 at the end of 2023, up from £651,070 the previous year. The reserves policy was reviewed by Trustees in 2022 and, reflecting the position with unpredictable legacy income, it was decided a target of 12 months future overhead expenditure is more appropriate to respond to any large fluctuations in income. With the surplus in 2023, we are now above the new revised minimum reserves target, which is £530,000, based on the expected expenditure for the 2024 financial year.

4. Re-appoint MHA MacIntyre Hudson as the Society's Auditor/Independent Examiner and to authorise the Board to fix their remuneration (Resolution 2).

The Treasurer James Pitayanukul confirmed that MHA MacIntyre Hudson had undertaken an Independent Examination of the Society's accounts this year and we have been happy with their work. MHA has conducted an Independent Examination or Audit of the Society's annual accounts since 2018. MHA is among the top chartered accountancy practice in the UK, and does audits and independent examinations for a number of charities and not-for-profit organisations. The Resolution was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands and/or Zoom thumbs-up signal.

5. Re-elect Hannah Kunzlik (Resolution 3a) and Hedwig Vollers (Resolution 3b) as Trustees.

The Chair confirmed Hannah Kunzlik and Hedwig Vollers were retiring from office under the requirements in the Society's Articles for Trustees to retire by rotation. Both are eligible for re-election and offered to stand for re-election.

Resolution 3a to re-elect Hannah Kunzlik was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands and/or Zoom thumbs-up signal.

Resolution 3b to re-elect Hedwig Vollers was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands and/or Zoom thumbs-up signal.

6. Any Other Business

The Chair was delighted to thank members of the Society's West Surrey and North East Hampshire Support Group for their wonderful fundraising efforts over the past year. The Group confirmed they would be contributing £2000 to support the important work of the Society. Helen Lovegrove and Vicky Robinson representing the Group, attended the meeting and thanked Committee members and local supporters. Stephen Pugh asked that Helen pass on the Society's grateful thanks to all members of the Group for a wonderful effort once again this past year with both fundraising and another successful Eczema Information Day in Guildford in March.

7. Meeting closed

The Chair invited questions, with none raised, and then closed the meeting. He thanked everyone attending and for their interest in and support of National Eczema Society.

Signed:

Stephen Pugh, Chair

Date: