



The Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust

*Promoting friendship & understanding through financial support
for Nigerian education*

THE 15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of
THE BRITAIN-NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL TRUST
on THURSDAY 25th JULY 2024 at 3.00pm
at
THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE
PARK PLACE, ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON SW1A

MINUTES

Members registered to attend:

1. Michael Adeyeye
2. Christine Afolabi
3. Christine Afolabi guest
4. Babatunde Akinyanju
5. Ayodeji Alaka
6. Bim Babarinde
7. Titilola Babarinde
8. Jean Degenhardt
9. [REDACTED]
10. Dr Salamat Fada
11. Ms Vanessa Fada
12. Dr. Mike Gould
13. Edward F Hill
14. Alan Hofman
15. Mrs Hofman
16. Caroline Kalu
17. Mr Panchen G Large
18. Mrs Panchen G Large
19. Dr. Jonathan Lawley
20. Mrs Shirley Obuaya
21. Rita Odumosu
22. Samuel Okeiyi
23. Mr Christian Nduka Okeke, Head of Consular, Education and Welfare, NIGERIA
HIGH COMMISSION
24. Kevin Rafferty
25. Derek Sawyer
26. Karen Sussex
27. Frances Tarr
28. Tony Williams

Trustees attending

1. Prof. Kabiru Isyaku
2. Adebayo Oladimeji
3. Janet Mary Kirk
4. Prof Graham Furniss
5. David Brandler
6. John Lee
7. Greg Ojieh
8. Elizabeth Dudley

Item 1 **WELCOME**

1. Introduction to those seated on the top table, table namely **Mr John Lee**, Treasurer; **Professor Graham Furniss**, Vice Chair & **Mr David Brandler**, Chair. And especially Mr Christian Nduka Okeke, Head of Consular, Education and Welfare, NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSION

Item 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Remembering our late Patron, Sir Mervyn Brown, KCMG OBE (who died on 28 September 2023, 4 days after turning 100 on 24 September 2023) with thanks for his life and the work that he put in.

To give apologies from General (Dr) YD Gowon, BA PhD, our Trustees Dafe Diejomaoh and Dele Fatayi Williams who are in Nigeria at the moment, Edith Ngozi David, Mike Abiola and, also, from members of the Trust, including Peter Henry, Martyn R Hale, Morin George-Douglas (has tragically lost both brothers over the past year) Robin & Joan Story, Lady Juliet Atako-Gregory and Jimi Adefiranye.

Item 3 TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

‘Before I review the Trust’s activities in the last 12 months, I would like briefly to comment on two of the most significant economic factors affecting Nigeria recently – the rapid deterioration of the international value of the Naira & the significant inflation which has touched all aspects of life in the country, most especially for the less well off.

I am not an economist, but they are undoubtedly linked and will continue to be until or unless the country becomes less dependent on imports in order to sustain a reasonable standard of life.

I mention this because of course it has a bearing on BNET's existing projects and how we assess potential ones. On the one hand, as our funds are in Sterling, we can take advantage of the weakening Naira when we send funds to Nigeria. On the other hand, grant requests & estimates must often quickly be reviewed upwards as all costs increase. This is particularly true, for example, where we are paying school fees, but I am glad to report we appreciate the

challenges facing schools we support and have been adjusting grants where necessary to reflect the reality of costs.

Our difficulty remains how to assess new requests. Our priorities remain to focus on teacher training projects and those we believe to have the maximum clear impact on the children involved. We are careful not to approve projects where we feel we will not have enough control over and/or knowledge of the personnel managing the requests. As we are a small organisation with limited ability to vet the many requests we receive, it does mean we are probably over-cautious when it comes to approving new proposals; however, in the end we feel it is better to spend less money carefully than more money without control, even though we recognise the increased need for outside assistance at all levels of public education in Nigeria.

Here are the details of the projects we have supported over the last 12 months:

(i) **N.T.I. KADUNA.**

We continue to sponsor one serving teacher from each of the 36 States + Federal Capital Territory (FCT) doing their 3 year online NCE course. We sponsor their 2nd & 3rd year fees provided they pass the minimum in their exams each year as well as award a prize of N100,000 to the best student at the end of the course. The prize is the Gary Clark prize named in honour and memory of our late Secretary. For follow up on this project, we are indebted to Professor Kabiru Isyazu who has devoted much of his so-called free time after retiring from Ado Bayero Kano to monitoring and handling our projects in the North.

Once the current NTI cohort graduate this year, we are planning to change our sponsorship from teachers taking the National Certificate of Education (NCE) course to those serving teachers actually teaching taking the online undergraduate degree course which we hope will strengthen their teaching skills even more. This is where we want to go when complete the current cohort.

(ii) **IBRA FOUNDATION SCHOOL – MIRINGA, BORNO STATE.**

This year we agreed to pay for the supply of a new overhead water tank & solar driven submersible pump for the school borehole to a total value of N2.4m. With the continued lack of regular power supply and the high cost of diesel it had become impossible to justify use of a generator to pump water for the pupils.

(iii) **REEL FOUNDATION – LAGOS.**

Members will recall we have been sponsoring this organisation based in the outskirts of Lagos for several years. They arrange after hours activities for local children combining fun & learning. Their founder Ajoke Adeola attended our 2019 AGM and gave a wonderful review of how the organisation has grown over the last few years, thanks in part to our sponsorship. This year we again

gave a grant of N5.6m to assist with operational expenses and to sponsor a spelling bee competition for the children and give them digital literacy training.

(iv) **CENGAGE – SUPPLY OF READING BOOKS.**

In last year's report I mentioned we were honoured to receive a donation of 11,800 reading books aimed at early secondary school level from Cengage, an offshoot of National Geographic Magazine.

These books have now been distributed to the schools that we work with and via various State Departments of Education to local public schools. Like any reading matter, they have been greatly appreciated by the teachers & children that received them and I want to thank again Professor Kabiru in the North & Greg Ojieh & Dele Fatayi-Williams in Lagos & the East for organising the distribution.

(v) **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION GIRLS' SCHOOL – UMUTU, DELTA STATE.**

Members may recall we helped set up this school some years ago which we co-financed with the Catholic Bishopric of Warri. It has had a mixed history, partly due to financial restraints as well as security issues and the difficulty in attracting both boarding pupils and teachers.

It is now co-educational & we currently sponsor 10 local day children to attend for a total of N1.2m per term (3 terms in the year). The school has requested a major supporting grant for the coming year and I expect to report on that in next year's report.

(vi) **SUPPLY OF NIGERIA & AFRICA JIGSAW PUZZLES.**

This follows a popular initiative undertaken by the Trust pre Covid, we have again purchased 500 jigsaws (total £4000) – half of the countries in Africa & half of the States in Nigeria – and shipped them to Nigeria. These have been divided into 2 – half to be distributed from Lagos & half from Kano, donated to schools we already work with and have proved very popular – helping children to learn the names & whereabouts of the States of Nigeria and the countries of Africa.

(vii) **DAILY DELIGHT MONTESSORI SCHOOL – LAGOS.**

This is another initiative & project in its second year, where we sponsor 15 children to attend this school where parents would otherwise not be able to afford the fees. The total cost this year will be N5.1m which will include provision of textbooks for the year going forward.

(viii) **GETHSEMANE SCHOOL – JOS.**

This is the school run by the adopted daughter of our late Trustee, Professor Lalaje Bown.

The school has a large intake of children from the nearby military barracks and waives fees for many orphaned military children. This year, although BNET does not normally support building projects, we have given a grant of N1.7m to assist in the renovation of a classroom block.

(ix) **HOPE FOR THE VILLAGE CHILD FOUNDATION – KADUNA.**

This is the Catholic organisation run by Sister Rita which we have supported for many years. In her Eighties, Sister Rita, an American lady, continues to live in Kaduna and run her Foundation that supports children's education in rural communities of South Kaduna. This year we donated N2m to help run her Peace Clubs which the Foundation organizes, taking village children on local trips outside their villages to meet other children from different communities.

(x) **LIFE BUILDERS INITIATIVE – ABUJA.**

After a successful first year sponsoring 25 children in the programme, which helps educate children from some of the IDP camps around Abuja, we plan to continue to and expand our contribution. This is a privately run organization where children are helped from the IDP camps outside the normal schools which don't really cater properly for the education of these children. We will be reviewing this project in the next month and, as I say, hopefully expanding it going forward.

None of these projects could have got off the ground without the tireless work of the Trust's officers and the support of the Trustees and you, our Members. I must give a special thank you to our Secretary Elizabeth Dudley and our Treasurer John Lee who have single handedly (or is that double handedly) ensure the administration of the Trust is up to date and financially sound.

Above all, I thank again our Nigerian based Trustees, Engineer Greg Ojieh, Professor Kabiru Isyaku & Dele Fatayi-Williams who has just moved into a new house he has spent three years building, so is unable to be here this year.

Without their experienced, expert input in so many areas, BNET would be a far less effective organisation.

Finally, I thank Frances Tarr our retired administrator for coming out for the day to assist us, and Karen Sussex who uploads items and runs our website and has agreed to help us with our membership with our Membership Secretary. And, of course, I thank all of the members, those of you who are here and those of you who could not make it for your continued support.

I now hand over to our Treasurer, John Lee, for our financial report.'

Item 4

TO RECEIVE THE TREASURER'S REPORT & ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023

The Treasurer, Mr JR Lee, presented his report on the accounts for the period ending December 31, 2023.

Compared to the previous year, activity in 2023 was at a similar level, taking into account movement with the Nigeria Naira exchange rate.

Bank interest and investment increased by 40 % to £6,245, while voluntary income comprising membership subscriptions, tax reclaims and donations came to £3,112.

Overall income for the year increased by 15% to £10,216 primarily reflecting the credit interest & Investment income.

Grants were £ 24,304 as against £27,658 in 2022.

Governance and supporting costs, including administrative expenses were £29,016, an increase of 19% over 2022. This was explained by an Exchange loss of £6,492 [2022 £ 5,481 Gain}. This Loss resulted from the movement of GBP to BNET's Naira account. In normal years this figure would be a gain.

The overall Funds closing balance is reduced to £ 238,923 as against in 2022 £281,619.

The Trustees are addressing as a priority the need to attract new members and donors. Before closing the Treasurer explained that the full set of accounts are available for viewing on the BNET website and on the Charities Commission website.

Questions to the Treasurer were as follows:

- i) Dr Michael Gould suggested putting £50k of cash funds in fixed investment fund to earn £ over 6 months. The Treasurer reported that with £70k in liquid cash, an assessment will be made to assess further according to fluidity rates. However, in terms of where BNET is, investments may only be liquidated once the cash account is below £80K. A couple of large donations over the past few years has helped the Trust pay for the projects currently being supported.
- ii) Tony Williams asked what commitments are on the books in money terms going forward. The Treasurer reported that the balance sheets show that the only long-term commitments are the auditors' fee. BNET is not actually tied down to any of the current projects.
- iii) Tony Williams asked what happens when a supported school 'runs out of fuel'. The Chair advised that the Board has been and is talking about the future of the Trust with the above presentation of accounts and the need for membership/donations/fundraising. However, a major fundraising campaign would need to be in Nigeria as this is where all the grants are spent. With the current liquidity, current investments and no further funding, the Trust estimates there will be a further 5-6 years continuing the projects as we do.

- iv) Dr. Salamatu Fada advised exploring the diaspora, Nigerians in the UK, as contributors, in N Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as in England – through small donations to sustain the Trust. Especially as looking at the number of projects supported by the Trust demonstrates both the success of what BNET does alongside the need for the Trust to continue.
- v) It was asked whether the NHC may be in agreement with appointing a professional fundraiser working alongside a ‘givers’ yearbook’ where, as a normal rule of thumb, 12% goes to the fundraiser with the rest going to the charity. The Chair reported this has been considered and, in fact, the Trust has in the past worked with a professional fundraiser on one specific UCL project. However it did not come to anything but agreed this is a valuable suggestion and something the Trustees will consider further.
- vi) Patrick Emek suggested involving the Nigeria High Commission in networking Nigerians in the UK. The Chair reported that BNET has a new Trustee, the editor of Africa Voice, Mike Abiola, who had hoped to be present at the AGM. He has excellent connections with the Nigerian diaspora and it is hoped he will help BNET to reach members of the Nigerian community better than we do at the moment.

There being no further questions, the report of the Treasurer and Statement of Financial Activities for 2023 were approved by a show of hands of all members present.

Item 5 **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS**

John Lee confirmed Messrs Crowe Clark Whitehill LLP have signified their willingness to continue as Independent Examiners of the Trust and proposed they be re-appointed for the ensuing year. Kevin Rafferty seconded the motion which was agreed by all present.

Item 6 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Under Clause 5(9) of the Constitution of the Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust, one third of the Board of Trustees retire annually at the Annual General Meeting. Those due to retire at this Annual General are, **Professor Graham Furniss, Mr Dafe Diejomaoh and Mrs Edith Ngozi David.** All trustees, being eligible and having signified their willingness to serve again, are prepared to be re-elected

The Chair proposed a motion that GF, DD and END be re-elected, seconded by Professor Isyaku. The Chair also proposed that they are re-elected en bloc, seconded by Tony Williams and agreed by all.

Item 7 RETIREMENT OF MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Under Clause 7(4) of the Constitution of the Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust, “a Trustee shall cease to hold office if he or she resigns as a Trustee by notice to the Trust (but only if at least five Trustees will remain in office when the notice of resignation is to take effect)”.

Edith Ngozi David, BNET Membership Secretary, whilst remaining a Trustee, has given notice to the Trust of her intention to stand down/resign as Membership Secretary at today's AGM. She couldn't be here today due to a family illness. On behalf of all Trustees and Members thanked END for her service to BNET over the past two years as Membership Secretary.

Item 8 ELECTION OF MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Under Clause 5 of the Constitution of the Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust, The Appointment of Trustees, Clause 5(1) states, “The Trustee may appoint any person who is willing to act as a Trustee. They may also appoint Trustees to act as Officers.”

And, Under Clause 5 (7): “The Membership Secretary of the Trust shall be elected for a period of twelve months from among their number by members of the Board of Trustees annually at their first meeting after the Annual General Meeting in each year and may be re-elected.”

The Board is delighted to confirm that our Trustee, Janet Mary Kirk, alongside Karen Sussex who undertakes all our work on the website and communication with Members, have expressed their willingness to take on the combined role of Membership Secretary. As Chair The Chair proposed a motion that JMK/KS be elected as Membership Secretary, seconded by Mr Adebayo Oladimeji and approved by all.

**Item 9 ADDRESS BY MR CHRISTIAN NDUKA
OKEKE, HEAD OF CONSULAR,
EDUCATION AND WELFARE, NIGERIA
HIGH COMMISSION**

‘Let me recognize the members at the High Table, distinguished members of BNET, to thank you and say a very warm good evening. My name is Christian Okeke, presently the Head of Consular Education and Welfare at the Nigeria High Commission in London. The acting High Commissioner would have been here today but he is very new in the UK and asked me to send his apologies and attend today on his behalf.

Today is not my first time of hearing about this Trust. Last year I was supposed to have attended this meeting but, due to activities in the mission, I was not able to attend. It is hoped the acting High Commissioner will be able to attend the AGM next year, unless a new High Commissioner is appointed.

I have listened to the Chair's report and commend the activities and work undertaken by the Trust and ask that BNET carries on this work that can never be exhausted in any history book. We want to say, on behalf of the Nigeria High Commission, that we acknowledge the work of BNET, which is very important and very dear to us, our people and Nigerian communities.

Item 12

CLOSURE

BNET Chair, David Brandler, thanked all for attending and formally closed the meeting at 4:25pm, and particularly thanking members for acknowledging the value of the work undertaken by the Trust.