1.   **Overview**

This document is a proposal for discussion.

BVF has a new draft constitution that enables electronic voting to broaden the involvement of the membership, particularly in elections for committee posts.

At the current time the BVF membership is 610. The AGM typically attracts between 30 and 50 members.

The first task is to nominate a disinterested Election Officer who will conduct the election.

There are 2 options for a voting system:

   a)   Manual Counting of Forms
   b)   Electronic Voting

Both are discussed in the following sections.

2.   **Manual Counting of Forms**

Issue of Voting Forms

A voting form may contain a set of sections eg:

   - There is a choice of only Y/N to a question
   - There is a choice between several candidates for one position eg Treasurer
   - There is a selection of several from a list of candidates (eg election as a Committee member).

The form is drawn up as a Word document by the Election Officer and is sent to all current members of BVF. The majority are sent by email, the remainder by letter post. The Subject of the email included the words "BVF Election".

The voting forms are completed by the members and returned to the Election Officer. A Closing Date is indicated after which returns will not be accepted.

The Data Manager produces an Excel spreadsheet from the database of current members. The spreadsheet contains just the email address of each member in sorted order. This Email spreadsheet is used to limit fraudulent or multiple returns of voting forms.

Manual Counting of Returns

The Election Officer sets up an email filter so that emails with a title containing "BVF Election" are filtered to a dedicated folder.

For each email returned the Election Officer locates the sender's email address and marks the receipt of the email. If an email does not exist then the voting paper can be discarded. If an email has already been received then the voting paper can be discarded. The spreadsheet can provide a count of valid replies received.

The voting paper is then printed.

On the Closing Date the Election Officer accumulates the conclusions of the election in whatever way he/she finds appropriate from the set of printed voting papers. When handling the voting papers the Election Officer has no indication of the identity of the voter.

The conclusions are tabulated and sent to the Chairman of the BVF committee to publish.

This process is manually intensive and is a burden on the Election Officer. However it does have safeguards against fraud and can be implemented now with our existing technology.

3.   Automated Counting

Issue of Voting Forms

A voting form may contain a set of sections eg:

- There is a choice of only Y/N to a question
- There is a choice between several candidates for one position eg Treasurer
- There is a selection of several from a list of candidates (eg election as a Committee member).

The form is drawn up as an HTML page on the BVF website.

An email is sent to all current members of BVF to announce the election and to provide a link to the voting page.

A Word document is prepared by the Election Officer and is sent to all current snail mail members of BVF.

A Closing Date is indicated after which returns will not be accepted.

The voting forms are completed on-line by the members. Validation checks eg choosing a maximum of 6 candidates for the position of Committee Member is done on the form (with Javascript).

Counting of Returns

Voting forms are submitted to a new Election software package hosted on the BVF server and integrated with the BVF members' database.

As each form is received a check is made to ensure that the member is current and that the member has not already voted. In either case the voting form is rejected.

The votes are accumulated in the BVF database.

On the Closing Date the Election Officer stops the receiving of further entries. Any paper voting slips returned are entered by the Election Officer.

The conclusions of the election, tabulated by the election software, are sent to the Chairman of the BVF committee to publish.

This process is easy for the Election Officer. It does have safeguards against fraud. However it requires an Election software package to be written or obtained and integrated with the BVF database.

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