GUIDANCE for PARTICIPANTS AT FIELD MEETINGS

One of the delights of membership of the Society is to be introduced to new areas of the country and new species. An important consideration for the BSBI is that this is done well and with the welfare and enjoyment of attendees in mind.

Some meetings are suitable for slow progress over level ground. At others there may be steep terrain or boggy conditions. If you are not able to keep up with other members of the party, or need to return to the starting point, you may become a liability to them. We ask all participants to consider whether the meeting is appropriate for them.

Needless to say people will come along with different background knowledge, expectations and abilities, but we aim to provide outings that everyone enjoys. This guidance gives you some suggestions on how to make the most of the meeting. We welcome feedback on how to make improvements and these should be sent to the party leader after the event or to the Hon. Field Meetings Secretary Jonathan Shanklin fieldmeetings@bsbi.org.

These notes particularly apply to BSBI meetings advertised in the Yearbook and web page and marked as BSBI or Country in the meetings diary. Other arrangements may be in place for meetings listed in the calendar as vc, vcr or local.

1. Meeting types

We organise many different types of meeting. Some will be designed to show off the flora of a specific site. Others are designed for improving botanical skills, and may range from those with tutors helping complete beginners, to those teaching recorders how to split “difficult” taxa. Many meetings will seek to record the flora of an area, particularly as we are recording for Atlas 2020. BSBI meetings are keyed as: **G**eneral (these meetings will explore the whole flora of an area, possibly with some recording; beginners and experts are equally welcome), **T**raining (these meetings will have a tutor to help with identification skills, but can be specialised), **R**ecording (all participants will help with recording an area so should be suitably experienced) and **S**pecialised (the meeting will concentrate on one species or on a particular group). If you have never attended a BSBI meeting before, then a General or appropriate Training meeting is a good place to start.

2. Booking

Most meetings are now booked in advance by email. Make sure you give your name and additional contact details. Guests are welcome if there is space – please check with the leader. Indicate if you are arriving by car, and if you are able to provide lifts if necessary. The organiser may make further information

available, by letter, by email, on a web page or via social media. Please do not just turn up on the day.

3. Attendance

Meetings are often over-subscribed, so members who have booked places **must** inform the leader if they cannot attend. This may allow another member to take your place. You will need to arrange your own transport and accommodation (if necessary) which you will have to cancel if you are unable to attend the meeting, or if the meeting itself is cancelled.

4. Charges

There is usually no charge for BSBI day field meetings, though there may be an entry charge at some sites. Meetings lasting more than one day may include a registration fee and an offer of an accommodation package. This will usually be made clear in the Field Meetings Programme published in the Yearbook and on the web page. Please read the booking details and instructions carefully and refer to the leader(s) if in doubt.

5. Insurance

BSBI members attending excursions, and their guests, do so at their own risk. Individuals may wish to organise their own insurance cover, and this is highly recommended for overseas excursions.

6. Medical

It is in your interests to inform the leader of any relevant medical condition which may require special consideration. The meeting description will give information on what the day entails, and you should be fit enough to comfortably complete the trip. Contact the leader if in doubt.

7. Equipment

Come appropriately prepared for the weather and terrain, with the necessary clothing and footwear. Items that may be useful at a field meeting include: maps, compass, ruler, GPS, identification guides, record card, hand lens, penknife, sample bag, first aid or medical supplies and mobile phone.

8. Arrival

Arrive promptly, so as not to inconvenience other members of the party. We recommend aiming to arrive about 10 minutes early. Introduce yourself to the leader who will check you off on the sign-in sheet.

9. Code of Conduct

No specimens should be picked unless this is suggested by the leader – plants common in one area may be rare in another. Please follow the Code of Conduct for the conservation and enjoyment of wild plants. You should also be aware of the advice given in Safety in the Field. Members are expected to follow the Countryside Code or the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, avoiding damage to property and ensuring that livestock does not escape. When you are on a road you should follow the Highway Code, paying particular note to the section on pedestrians (the links take you to the code for the majority of the UK).

10. Safety

At the start of all meetings, the leader will give a short safety briefing, in which members are given information about the major hazards and how to deal with them. You can assume that the usual hazards of a day in the field are present. If it is your first field trip let the leader know. Please pay careful attention to the briefing and respect the advice of the leader, who will usually be very familiar with the terrain to be explored.

Leaders have the right to exclude participants who are not adequately shod or clothed or who may become a liability to other members of the party, particularly on rough or mountainous terrain. Vehicles and their contents are parked at their owners' risk.

11. Dogs

Because many field meetings are held in nature reserves or where there are grazing animals, dogs are not normally allowed. Registered guide dogs are exempt from this requirement, unless they are prohibited by the landowners. In exceptional circumstances a dog may be brought to a meeting, provided that there is explicit advance agreement, in writing, with the leader and all other party members.