

# BSBI Forum 2023

## Draft Report, Julia Hanmer, BSBI CEO 25 May 2023

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### 1. Introduction

We held the second BSBI Forum meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023, an opportunity to discuss how we work together across BSBI. Many thanks to everyone who took part. This report provides a summary of the updates and discussions at the Forum. These include updates on progress against ideas raised at the first Forum meeting in 2022 and summaries of key themes from two 2023 discussion sessions: how do we best support VCRs and how do we plan and support a cohesive events programme? Each of these have suggested next steps, for consideration by committees or staff. The report also shares feedback from participants about the Forum.

**Further Feedback:** We would also welcome feedback on the ideas and suggestions in this report from BSBI members. It would be good to hear if members agree with the key themes and suggested actions in this report and can help implement any of the suggestions, or have other views or ideas to add. Please send your feedback to [Julia.Hanmer@bsbi.org](mailto:Julia.Hanmer@bsbi.org) by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023, so your views can be included in the final version of this report which will feed into our planning cycle for the rest of 2023 and our Strategy refresh consultations over the winter of 2023/24.

**Next steps:** Please can all Committees and staff consider the suggested next steps and whether these fit within their operational plans or work programmes. Also over the next year, gather and store ideas from members to bring to next year's Forum meeting.

Many thanks to everyone who took part in the 2023 Forum meeting, as participants, break out group chairs and reporters and by sending feedback. We really appreciate your input.

### 2. Aims of the Forum

The BSBI Forum aims to bring together trustees, committee members, Hon. officers and staff to discuss our work and future plans, particularly on cross-cutting topics. Following feedback from our first Forum meeting in March 2022 we focused on two in-depth discussion sessions at the Forum in 2023.

### 3. Forum Programme, 4 April 2023, online by Zoom

Time	Topic	Who leads
4:30 pm	Welcome and Introduction to the Forum	Chris Miles
4:35 pm	Update on progress since our 2022 Forum	Julia Hanmer
4:45 pm	<b>Session 1 - BSBI Vice County Recorder support – Introduction</b> <i>How do we best support Vice County Recorders (VCRs)?</i>	James Harding-Morris
4:55 pm	VCR support – break out groups (35 minutes)	
5:30 pm	VCR support – feedback to main session (25 minutes)	James Harding-Morris
5:55 pm	VCR support - Conclusions and next steps	James Harding-Morris
6:00	Break	
6:10	<b>Session 2 - BSBI Events - Introduction</b> <i>How do we best plan and support a cohesive BSBI events programme? (field meetings, indoor/online conferences &amp; events)</i>	Julia Hanmer
6:20	Events - Breakout groups (35 minutes)	
6:55	Events – Report back to main session (25 minutes)	Steve Gater
7:20	Forum conclusions, next steps & close	Chris Miles

### 4. Attendees

We invited all BSBI trustees, staff and members of the four country committees and three standing committees – a total of 98 people.

A doodle poll was held over the winter to pick the best date, which had to fit around the Plant Atlas 2020 launch planning and events.

34 people registered to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> April Forum meeting and were sent background papers including: the programme, with information about break out groups; BSBI’s VCR guidelines; a list of BSBI events; a map of 2023 Field meetings; BSBI’s Strategy Map; a summary of the panel discussion from the Recorders Meeting at FSC Preston Montford and some views from a survey of England VCRs.

28 people attended the Forum. Unfortunately, due to Virgin Media broadband outages that day, several participants struggled with internet connection during the meeting. A full list of attendees is included in the Appendix.

### 5. Update on progress since the 2022 Forum

Julia Hanmer presented an update on progress on the ideas and themes raised at the first Forum meeting in March 2022, as well as other key work over the past year and future plans. This update is summarised in the table below:

Key theme	Update on progress 2022-23 and future plans
<b>Skills, Training and Local engagement</b>	
Aquatic Plant Project showcase	2022 was another very successful year for the APP (89 people attended 8 training days, many more viewed 3 new online aquatic plant identification webinars and a training session at the Irish Autumn Meeting) and NPWS have agreed to fund BSBI for a follow-on three year project.

Local “Loose Networks” showcase	Local networks in West Central Scotland (three VCs) continue to be popular (150 people networked, 52 events planned, 3 data projects underway, 2 zoom ‘study groups’ in preparation) and are increasing engagement (volunteers helping with research, data input and leading events). Michael Philips ( <a href="mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk">botany@opus44.co.uk</a> ) is happy to support others in setting up loose networks.
Botany for All showcase	Urban Botany Project being piloted in a few cities in 2023. Amanda Tuke will update us on progress at the Autumn B&I Botanical Conference.
FISC assessments and Identiplant training courses	Thanks to the generosity of the members who founded these two programmes, both have now been brought fully in house within BSBI’s work and we are working to grow provision, led by BSBI’s new Training Coordinator, Chantal Helm.
Botanical Mentoring	For future consideration, if we have members willing to further develop this idea – for one or more target audiences. Contact Sarah Dalrymple or Julia Hanmer for further information
Plants on our Doorsteps	For future consideration, if we have a member willing to research local wild plant engagement materials available from existing projects and partnerships, which BSBI could signpost from our website. Contact Louise Marsh ( <a href="mailto:Louise.Marsh@bsbi.org">Louise.Marsh@bsbi.org</a> ) for further information
<b>Science and Data</b>	
Plant Atlas 2020	A huge area of work over the past year has been the completion and launch of Plant Atlas 2020 (online, book and summary reports highlighting changes in Britain and Ireland’s Flora). This has been a big collective effort across BSBI – a massive thank you to everyone involved.
Botanical Heatmaps	BSBI has worked in partnership with Natural England to develop <a href="#">Botanical Heatmaps in England</a> , to use our botanical data to guide land management and conservation decision making. This work was funded by the Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment. We have also started early discussions on developing Heatmaps in other countries.
Future Science & Data plans	In 2023 BSBI will be consulting on our new Science strategy, testing our new Data Entry App and recruiting a Data Support Officer. At the 2022 Forum and in previous years various ideas for new survey ideas have been raised (such a new Aquatic Plant survey) and decisions on which of these to take forward next will be made on these based on the new Science strategy themes.
<b>Volunteer support and recognition</b>	
Recognition through Awards	BSBI has extended our Awards to recognise more people’s contributions to botany. The first new awards were announced in April BSBI News and we encourage all members to consider nominating further people for future awards.
A team approach to the Vice County Recorder role	Various vice counties have been trying out this approach in recent years, and the idea was supported in the 2023 Forum discussions (see section 6 below).
<b>Communications</b>	
Communication with members (to seek and respond to their views and keep them up to date with our work)	The new members’ area of the BSBI website includes a route for members to give feedback and share ideas. Various new ideas were suggested by members over the past year including developing a VCR induction and updating the BSBI archive (since carried out by Clive

	<p>Stace). Jonathan Shanklin organised a Recorders Meeting at Preston Montford which included a discussion session.</p> <p>Updates to members continue in BSBI News (3/year), Recorders eNews (monthly), BSBI eNews (monthly) the Annual Review &amp; the AGM update talk.</p>
<p>Communication across BSBI's governance structures</p>	<p>We continue to work to improve communication and cross-fertilisation of ideas across BSBI. This is the whole aim of the Forum meeting in bringing committees, staff and trustees together for reflection once a year. Members give a lot of time to BSBI and its thanks to their hard work that we achieve so much, so it's important for them to have an opportunity to reflect and be involved in plans going forwards via the Forum.</p> <p>We also have a trustee and staff member linked to every committee and an open invitation to Chairs/Secretaries of committees to attend other committee meetings. In 2023 we introduced a new process to advertise vacancies on Standing Committees to members, resulting in 4 people coming forward from the wider membership (rather than because we'd asked them to stand). Please see Appendix for Committee structure.</p>
<p><b>European collaboration</b></p>	
<p>European Federation of Botanical Societies</p>	<p>At the 2022 Forum we agreed BSBI should participate in the formation of the new Federation of European Botanical Societies. We have since been involved in discussions on how we can contribute and early activities, such as submitting proposals for talks at the 2024 Conference in Madrid. For more information see <a href="https://bsbi.org">Federation of European Botanical Societies – Botanical Society of Britain &amp; Ireland (bsbi.org)</a> or contact Steve Gater <a href="mailto:Steve.Gater@bsbi.org">Steve.Gater@bsbi.org</a></p>
<p><b>Staff Review Update</b></p>	
<p>New staff roles</p>	<p>Another area of BSBI's work in 2023 has been the staff review, which aims to ensure we have the right staff roles in place to enable us to take forward our <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a>. We have recruited a new Countries Support Manager, James Harding Morris, to lead on overall development and support for our network of recorders. With Jim McIntosh retiring we also recruited a Scotland Officer, Matt Harding (4 days per week). To take forward FISC and Identiplant we recruited a Training Coordinator, Chantal Helm (funded by the income from these activities). We will be advertising for a Data Support Officer this summer to support BSBI's data management activities. Please see appendix for the latest staff chart.</p>

## 6. Discussion session 1: How do we best support Vice County Recorders (VCRs)?

### Overview

James Harding-Morris, BSBI Countries Support Manager, gave a presentation summarising the key themes raised by VCRs in their Annual Reports, the responses to Jonathan Shanklin’s survey of England VCRs, and from the general queries received by the Country Support Team. The four major themes that emerged were requests for guidance and support with iRecord, local groups, Rare Plant Registers, and MapMate and the DDb and James outlined the County Support team’s plans to provide guidance in these areas.

James introduced the questions for break out groups (see Appendix) and explained how to join the breakout groups and how to use the online board to capture ideas. Small groups discussed their questions and then presented key ideas back to the main session.

The discussion session provided valuable insights into the challenges and successes of the VCR role and the varied nature of VCR activities. A summary of the discussions is in the appendix. A number of key themes were identified and are summarised in the table below along with suggested next steps. One of the main themes was the importance of succession planning to ensure continuity. The Forum highlighted that VCRs are highly committed and knowledgeable, and a team approach to the role works well. However, with the Atlas complete, there are concerns that motivation for recording may decrease. The impact of COVID-19 on VCRs was also discussed, with some VCRs being impacted over the last few years by travel restrictions and the lack of face-to-face networking opportunities. The next steps outlined below should help to ensure the continued success of the VCR network and attract new VCRs to support BSBI's important work.

VCR Support - Key themes	Suggested Next Steps	By whom
<p><b>Succession planning:</b> The Forum discussions highlighted the importance of succession planning to ensure VCR continuity. There was discussion around the need to plan for succession and to make sure that VCRs let the BSBI know when they are considering resigning or retiring and for their ideas for successors. It was suggested that a workshop could be held to outline the role and attract potential trainee VCRs.</p>	<p><b>Succession planning workshop:</b> consider holding a workshop to outline the VCR role and to attract potential trainee VCRs</p> <p>Continue to encourage VCRs to succession plan and notify BSBI of when they plan to retire</p>	<p>Science &amp; Data committee (S&amp;D) with Country Support Team</p>
<p><b>Team approach:</b> The Forum noted that all VCRs are different, bringing different skills and strengths to the role and the role is broad, so a team approach to the VCR role works well. Being a joint recorder was identified as an effective way to manage the workload and increase support, as was having “apprentice” VCRs.</p>	<p><b>Team approach guidance:</b> produce guidance that outlines the team approach to the VCR role, including “joint recorders” and “apprentice VCRs”.</p>	<p>Country Support team</p>

<p><b>Motivation for recording:</b> With the Atlas complete, some VCRs raised concerns about the motivation for recording. It was suggested that the BSBI should explore new ways to motivate VCRs and to maintain engagement.</p>	<p><b>Motivation for recording:</b> explore new ways to motivate VCRs and maintain engagement. This could include training, support, and recognition for achievements (as per new BSBI Awards, introduced in 2022).</p>	<p>Country Support Team Nominations &amp; Awards committee</p>
<p><b>Networking:</b> There was a general consensus that networking opportunities (face-to-face events and virtual meetings) are important for VCRs in their work. There was a suggestion of creating an online VCR group for the whole BSBI, although some expressed concerns that such a group might be too large. There was a desire for better platforms and channels to support collaboration between VCRs, such as sharing expertise and case studies.</p>	<p><b>Networking:</b> Explore options for more networking opportunities for VCRs, such as regular face-to-face meetings and virtual events, to help build connections and share knowledge and experiences among VCRs across different regions. This could be facilitated by the S&amp;D or Country committees or other relevant groups within BSBI.</p>	<p>Country committees S&amp;D</p>
<p><b>Recorder meetings &amp; workshops – communications and frequency:</b> The Forum highlighted the need to ensure promotion for recorder meetings makes all recorders feel welcome, not just VCRs. Participants also discussed how regular VCR meetings and workshops can support the VCR network.</p>	<p><b>Promotion and recruitment:</b> explore new ways to communicate about and plan the recorder meetings and workshops to attract new VCRs and ensure that everyone feels welcome. This could include opening up workshops to anyone interested in recording, not just VCRs.</p> <p><b>Regular VCR workshops:</b> consider holding these to provide ongoing support and training for VCRs or people interested in the VCR role.</p>	<p>Country committees and workshop leaders  Country Support Team</p>

## 7. Discussion session 2: BSBI events – How do we best plan and support a cohesive BSBI events programme?

Julia Hanmer gave an overview of the different types BSBI events (field meetings, indoor and online conferences and events) and introduced questions for break out groups to consider. Then small groups discussed their questions and presented key ideas back to the main session. A list of the questions considered and points discussed is in the Appendix. The key themes and next steps which came from these are summarised in the table below.

Overall the Forum felt there was value in sharing experience about what events work well across BSBI, doing more communication to members about events and signposting County recorders and local groups and seeking feedback about events for evaluation. The Forum agreed there was a need for more events for beginners, more taxa specific events and workshops for intermediate and expert botanists, as well as holding “Train the trainer” training.

BSBI Events - Key themes	Suggested Next Steps	By Whom
<p><b>Share expertise, case studies and best practice:</b> There are good examples of events and training that work well within areas of BSBI's networks and there are opportunities to share this more widely.</p> <p>There is also still some confusion as to what BSBI's insurance does and does not cover, so this needs further communication and clarification</p>	<p><b>Case studies:</b> consider sharing event and training case studies of what works between different countries (committees, VCRs, members) including Scottish Outreach committee events such as beginners field meetings and Wildflower Family workshops.</p> <p>Clarify what BSBI's Insurance covers and communicate this regularly to VCRs and event leaders.</p>	<p>Country Committees and Country Support Team</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>Event communication &amp; promotion:</b></p> <p>The Forum felt members would welcome more emails about events local to them, as well as how to find their VCR and local botany group contact details (via the BSBI website).</p> <p>They also suggested we remind VCRs that they can get regular updates on new members in their county from Gwynn (on signing BSBI's Confidentiality and Data Handling agreement)</p>	<p><b>Event communication &amp; promotion:</b></p> <p>Trial a plan to send regular emails to members about events local to them and point them to the local pages on BSBI's website with VCR contact details.</p> <p>Continue regularly reminders to VCRs in communications and at recorders meetings that VCRs can have access to local members details (on signing a confidentiality agreement)</p>	<p>Membership and Communications team</p> <p>Staff and Country committees</p>
<p><b>Event evaluation</b> -The Forum felt it would be helpful to seek feedback from members and participants on why they do/don't attend events and how well event aims/outcomes were met, so long as this would be quick to provide and easy to collect. Desired event outcomes should be considered in advance and evaluated against these. BSBI's new membership database (Beacon) will help improve analysis of member attendance at events.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation</b> – When committees/staff are organising events, plan outcomes and design and pilot methods to gather quick feedback from participants about their expectations and whether the outcomes have been met.</p>	<p>Committees and staff organising events</p>
<p><b>More Beginners events:</b> Hold more events for absolute beginners (short, welcoming, avoid using scientific names). Consider beginners' engagement activities. Local botany groups are very valuable in encouraging beginner botanists and often closely linked to BSBI through their leaders.</p> <p>Also the Forum saw opportunities to collaborate to increase the plant content within partners' engagement and recording events such as Wildlife Trusts'</p>	<p><b>Support for beginners' events:</b></p> <p>Where resources allow or can be raised, consider providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support with running beginners' events, including in areas where there are gaps</li> <li>• New beginners' engagement challenges and events such as "From couch to 50 plants" (a plant ID challenge with linked resources and events) or</li> </ul>	<p>Events &amp; Communications Committee</p> <p>Country committees</p> <p>Country support and Membership &amp;</p>

<p>30 Days Wild, City Nature Challenge and Outdoor Classroom week.</p>	<p>“Summer Plant Hunt” or “Big Beginners bash”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider collaboration to increase the plant content within partners’ beginners’ engagement events</li> </ul>	<p>Communications teams</p>
<p><b>More taxa-specific events for intermediates and experts</b></p> <p>In discussing the needs of both intermediates and experts, the Forum felt it would be helpful to hold more sessions on identification of particular groups, as field meetings, workshops or study groups.</p> <p>They suggested consulting referees on events and inviting them to events and joining this up with considering referee succession.</p>	<p><b>Taxa-specific meetings and workshops:</b> Where resources allow, consider holding more sessions at intermediate and expert level on the identification of particular plant groups (field meetings, workshops or study groups)</p> <p>Consult referees and invite their involvement. Where possible join this up with referee succession planning.</p>	<p>Science &amp; Data Committee</p> <p>Country Committees</p> <p>Country Support Team</p> <p>Aquatic Plant Project and new NI Training &amp; Recording project</p>
<p><b>More Train the Trainer events-</b> in the past BSBI has held successful Train the Trainers events. The Forum felt it would be helpful to hold these events every 1.5-2 years. There was also a suggestion we identify our best Training communicators and help foster these skills.</p>	<p><b>Train the Trainers events</b> – seek members willing to organise a Train the Trainers event, with support from staff and S&amp;T committee.</p>	<p>Skills and Training Committee</p>
<p><b>Event decision making:</b> Improve the structure and coherence of overall event planning (to pace through year, even up geographic spread, balance online vs face to face, cater to different skill levels)</p>	<p><b>Committees and Staff</b> – as part of event planning and decision making by committees and staff, consider how these events add to the overall coherence of BSBI’s events programme. Where gaps or pinch points are identified, consider what actions or resources could help address these. For example, what resources are needed to help provide support with running event types which are in demand, but less well covered.</p>	<p>All committees and staff organising events</p>



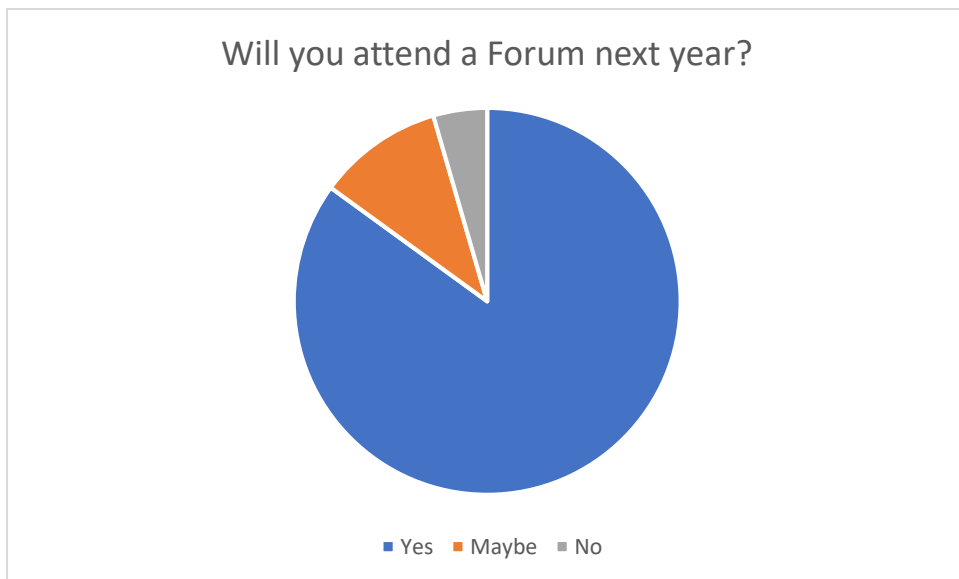
## 8. Feedback from Forum participants

We asked those who attended the Forum to complete a short feedback form. 20 of the 28 participants sent feedback. The tables and pie chart below give a summary of this feedback. Most participants particularly enjoyed the breakout groups and opportunity to share and contribute to discussions. Opinions on the timing of the meeting and the online jamboard were varied.

Area	Worked well	Less well
Breakouts	(12 comments) Breakout sessions (length, topics, chairing, feedback)	(3 comments) Would have liked more focused questions (3 comments)
Sharing/contributing	(9 comments) Opportunity to share ideas; nice to hear a range of thoughts and opinions; insight into the VCR role; good to contribute to discussions, listen to others, meet those don't usually meet	
Overall	(3 comments) Overall event and breakouts	
BSBI presentations	(3 comments) BSBI updates and presentations	
Timing	(3 comments) Timing and number of sessions	1 - Would prefer two hours not three 1 - Difficult timing (family dinner time)
Online jamboard	(3 comments) Online jamboard "excellent recording"	(3 comments) "Struggled with jamboards on small screen" "Horrible distraction" "Try a shared Google doc"

Areas	Suggestions for improvement
Embed Forum	Embed Forum as key opportunity to consider BSBI wide matters and set BSBI's future agenda. Would be good to hear Committees gathering and storing ideas from members to bring to the Forum (unless urgent). See how many of those not present contribute thoughts subsequently.
Topics	Less overlap between breakout topics. More focused questions and tighter chairing so achievable outcomes are clear. Or suggest series of open-ended working groups for more in-depth debate Suggestions for future discussion topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance on archiving – both paper and computer files of committee</li> <li>• How to publicise the DDb – a wonderful resource that should be much better known and available to researchers, ecologists, contractors at a reasonable price with conservation provisos</li> </ul>
Main session – participation and recording	Encourage chat participation and questions (Zoom chat participation was mainly in second session feedback). Nominate a recorder or record zoom for record keeping of main session feedback and overall summary.

Tech support	More people on tech support – overall and breakouts. One Powerpoint slideshow (not multiple) for ease of transfer. Give longer warning that end of breakout group is approaching (e.g. 5 minutes rather than 1 minute?).
Avoid merging breakout groups	Merging the breakout topics (due to lower numbers attending and Virgin broadband issues) meant couldn't contribute in ways had prepared based on programme and papers
Invitees	The small number of people invited (however 98 people were invited)
Actions	We need to make sure the issues raised are acted on before the next Forum
Other issues (outside of our control)	Virgin internet issues



## 9. Appendix

### Appendix Contents

- a) VCR support - questions and summary of discussions
- b) BSBI Events – questions and summary of discussions
- c) Forum attendee list
- d) BSBI Governance structure
- e) BSBI Staff structure

## a) VCR support – questions and summary of discussions

The overall session aimed to consider how we best support Vice County Recorders (VCRs). Four breakout groups considered the one of the following questions each and presented key ideas back to the main session.

Group	How do we best support VCRs? – Questions for Breakout Groups
1	<p><b>VCR Succession</b> - What could we put in place to support and encourage VCR succession?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working well?</li> <li>• What could we do more of or differently?</li> <li>• What succession support would be helpful?</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>VCR induction, training and networking:</b> How can we best induct and support new VCRs? (<i>consider VCs where there has been a 'gap' between recorders with no handover</i>) Considering our training &amp; networking opportunities for VCRs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what do we do well?</li> <li>• what could we do more of or differently?</li> <li>• Country-level splitting of events - do we want this or more cross-country?</li> <li>• What training and networking support would be helpful?</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b>VCR groups or teams:</b> There are various different ways VCRs work with local botanists, including local groups or networks, co-recorders or recording teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the pros and cons of different approaches?</li> <li>• What discrete functions of the VCR role could be shared or delegated?</li> <li>• What support would be helpful for these various different approaches?</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>VCR pressures &amp; solutions:</b> What are the pressures on VCRs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where is their time mostly spent?</li> <li>• What are the pinch-points?</li> <li>• What possible solutions are there?</li> <li>• What are the opportunities?</li> </ul>

### Summary of discussions

#### VCR succession

- Joint recordership works well and VCRs have a high level of commitment and knowledge
- Recruitment of potential VCRs could be improved through workshops and advertising the role
- Planning for succession and encouraging VCRs to inform BSBI when considering retiring or resigning
- The impact of COVID-19 on VCRs, including travel restrictions and meeting new people, is being mitigated
- Learning from Ireland's recruitment of joint VCRs and the challenges of recruiting in sparsely populated areas
- Regular VCR workshops and marketing recorder meetings to ensure all feel welcome
- Workshops could be open to anyone interested in recording, not just VCRs
- Ensuring all BSBI VCR support mechanisms are available to potential and current VCRs

#### VCR Induction, networking and training

- Better support for VCRs, including the creation of a support team and opportunities for future succession.
- More variety in training materials, including the use of videos, live sessions, and standard off-the-shelf guidance for various skills.
- Encouraging younger members to get involved and providing support for their involvement.
- Improvements to the induction process for new VCRs, including more consistency in training and the creation of a buddy system.
- Developing a 'journey' from non-member through to member through to VCR, and making the 'Role of a VCR' document less intimidating.

### **VCR Groups or Teams**

- The importance of Country Officers was emphasised.
- There are different roles within VCR groups or teams, with a focus on recording, training, outreach, IT, and communications. There is no typical VCR.
- Strategies for reaching out to potential VCRs were discussed, including advertising on county pages, linking up with universities, and reaching out to consultancies and LRCs.
- The group acknowledged that there is no typical group or team, so a one-size-fits-all approach is not possible. For example, some VCs in Ireland have very few botanists, but there are students and ecological consultants.
- The emphasis in a VC with few botanists should be on fieldwork, enjoyment, and building local networks/contacts. It can be difficult to focus on training and recording at the same time.
- The group suggested linking up with Wildlife Trusts to recruit, do outreach, and set up joint meetings. They also discussed ways that the BSBI could help, such as advertising on county pages, linking with universities via the academics list, and liaising with ecological consultancies and LRCs. Finally, they discussed how to change the culture to encourage deputy VCRs.

### **VCR Pressures and solutions**

- Succession planning: The importance of identifying and encouraging potential VCRs to ensure continuity and sustainability of the program.
- Data management: The need to communicate the importance of submitting data to the DDb and making it clear that the job is massive and that not everyone can do everything. Some VCRs expressed frustration about the lack of a taxon list that matches Stace for Mapmate.
- Communication and guidance: The need to communicate in many different ways and to keep communicating to ensure that the message lands. It was suggested to produce guidance, define "taskettes" within the remit of the VCR role, and capture case studies. VCRs also expressed a desire for more guidance on how to do tasks and how to apply the guidance flexibly to their own approach.
- Collaboration between VCRs: The suggestion of a VCR group for the whole BSBI, but some expressed concern that it would be too large. It was suggested to provide the right platforms for networking, including more face-to-face events and meetings organised by the Science and Data team.
- Awareness of opportunities and issues: VCRs expressed a desire for more understanding of what they can get involved with in a BSBI capacity, including large infrastructure projects where the BSBI could provide data or views. VCRs also noted that they receive lots of requests for species lists to support stopping development on people's doorsteps.

Link to jamboard from VCR support

discussion: <https://jamboard.google.com/d/16T6nXwmVARsraeMNtOe8fuqVdcAqWlTgisynxseBrlw/edit?usp=sharing>

## b) BSBI Events – questions and summary of discussion

The overall session aimed to consider how we best plan and support a cohesive BSBI events programme. Four breakout groups aimed to consider how BSBI's events meet the needs of participants, how we best support event leaders and how to make the best decisions about our overall events programme by addressing the following questions:

Group	How do we best plan and support a cohesive BSBI events programme? – Questions:
1	<p><b>Beginner &amp; Intermediate Botanists – Event Participation &amp; Style</b> - Considering member and non-member beginners and intermediate botanists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working well?</li> <li>• What could we do differently?</li> <li>• What style of events work for this audience (Online and in-person, geographic spread, urban vs rural, accessibility)? Have we got the balance right?</li> <li>• How do we evaluate?</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Expert Botanists – Event Participation &amp; Style</b> (members and non- members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working well?</li> <li>• What could we do differently?</li> <li>• What style of events work for this audience (Online and in-person, geographic spread, urban vs rural, accessibility?) Have we got the balance right?</li> <li>• How do we evaluate?</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Event leading -from the leaders' perspective – what are the support needs, barriers, capacity etc</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working well?</li> <li>• What could we do differently?</li> <li>• Who is running which type of event and why - who is asking for events to happen and who is doing them?</li> <li>• What are the pinch points? How can we overcome them?</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Event Decision making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors does BSBI take into account when making decisions about running events?</li> <li>• Who makes decisions about which type of events?</li> <li>• What is working well?</li> <li>• What could we do differently?</li> <li>• How do we evaluate?</li> </ul>

### Summary of discussions – BSBI Events:

Working Well	<p><b>Beginners</b> Wildflower family workshops (Faith Anstey format) New Year Plant Hunt – a fun, short event that can attract beginners and can be in urban areas, making it accessible to more people</p> <p><b>Intermediates:</b> BSBI is good at taking people with some botanical knowledge and moving them to the next level. Having Identiplant part of BSBI works well. Training material on website (videos and species descriptions)</p> <p><b>Experts:</b> Recorder conference Taxa specific meetings Workshop and ID sessions at residential meetings</p>
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	<p><b>Event leaders/organisers:</b> Wales AGM arranged by VCRs and well supported by staff. Finding speakers and field meeting locations works well</p> <p><b>Event decision making</b> Events are a key feature that attract people to BSBI Sharing event expertise e.g. via Scottish Outreach committee</p>
Do differently	<p><b>Beginners:</b> More events for absolute beginners (short, welcoming, avoid latin names)</p> <p><b>Intermediates:</b> More sessions on identification of particular groups &amp; study groups Wider advertising of BSBI training grants</p> <p><b>Experts:</b> More taxa-specific meetings Invite referees to more events</p> <p><b>Event leaders/organisers</b> Share event case studies between countries (e.g. Scottish Outreach work) Hold Training the Trainer event (run in the past but now overdue). “We need to identify our best training communicators. Ability to teach is not a by-product of expertise.” “It’s sometimes particularly hard for experts to remember what it’s like when you’re at the start of your botanical learning... &amp; give too much info early on.” Remind VCRs they can get regular updates on new members in their county from Gwynn (on signing BSBI’s Confidentiality and Data Handling agreement) Remind event leaders what is and is not covered under BSBI’s insurance</p> <p><b>Event decision making:</b> Improve structure and coherence of overall event planning (to pace through year, even up geographic spread, balance online vs face to face, cater to different skill levels) Consider providing support with running event types that are less well covered (e.g. beginner training courses) or where less capacity to organise/run events Communication is important (member perception as well as reality)</p>
Ideas	<p><b>Beginners:</b> “From couch to 50 common plants” – beginner plant identification challenge with linked resources and events Summer beginners event e.g. The Big Beginner Bash - in as many places as possible across Britain and Ireland simultaneously (perhaps all on the same week in summer?) A whole kaleidoscope of local events aimed specifically at total beginners. BSBI collaborate and increase plant content with partners: Outdoor classroom week, Wildlife Trusts 30 days wild, City Nature Challenge</p> <p><b>Intermediates:</b> Training in how to make a herbarium</p> <p><b>Experts:</b> “So you want to be...?” Opportunities for a mix of people/aspirations Send targeted emails to local members about events in their area (the Forum felt members would welcome more regular emails about local events and did not feel email fatigue) Consult referees on events and invite them to events. Consider referee succession.</p> <p><b>Event leaders/organisers</b></p>

	<p>Event organisations template/checklist</p> <p>Team approach to event organisation – share tasks, encourage members to get involved, flag support available, build confidence</p> <p>Build a list of venues and contacts at country or VC level? (Some felt such a list would quickly become out of date)</p>
Style of events	<p><b>All:</b></p> <p>Have multiple 1 day meetings in a local area (works well for WFS)</p> <p><b>Experts:</b></p> <p>Field meetings</p> <p>Workshop and ID sessions at residential meetings e.g. <i>Erophila</i> by Paul Green</p> <p>Opportunity to engage with people who know more and who know less and ask awkward questions! Mix of abilities - zone of proximal development</p> <p>Separate training and recording events (difficult to combine these)</p>
Evaluation	<p>Design method to gather quick feedback from participants (avoid forms)</p> <p>Find out what new members want/expect in terms of events</p> <p>Consider outcomes hope to achieve in advance and evaluate against these</p> <p>Report spread of events</p> <p>BSBI's new membership database (Beacon) will improve analysis of member attendance</p>

Link to jamboard for Events discussion: <https://jamboard.google.com/d/16glll7pHg0dQkCkQ-qTvD3h79-offM7efND53quArus/edit?usp=sharing>

### c) Forum Attendee List

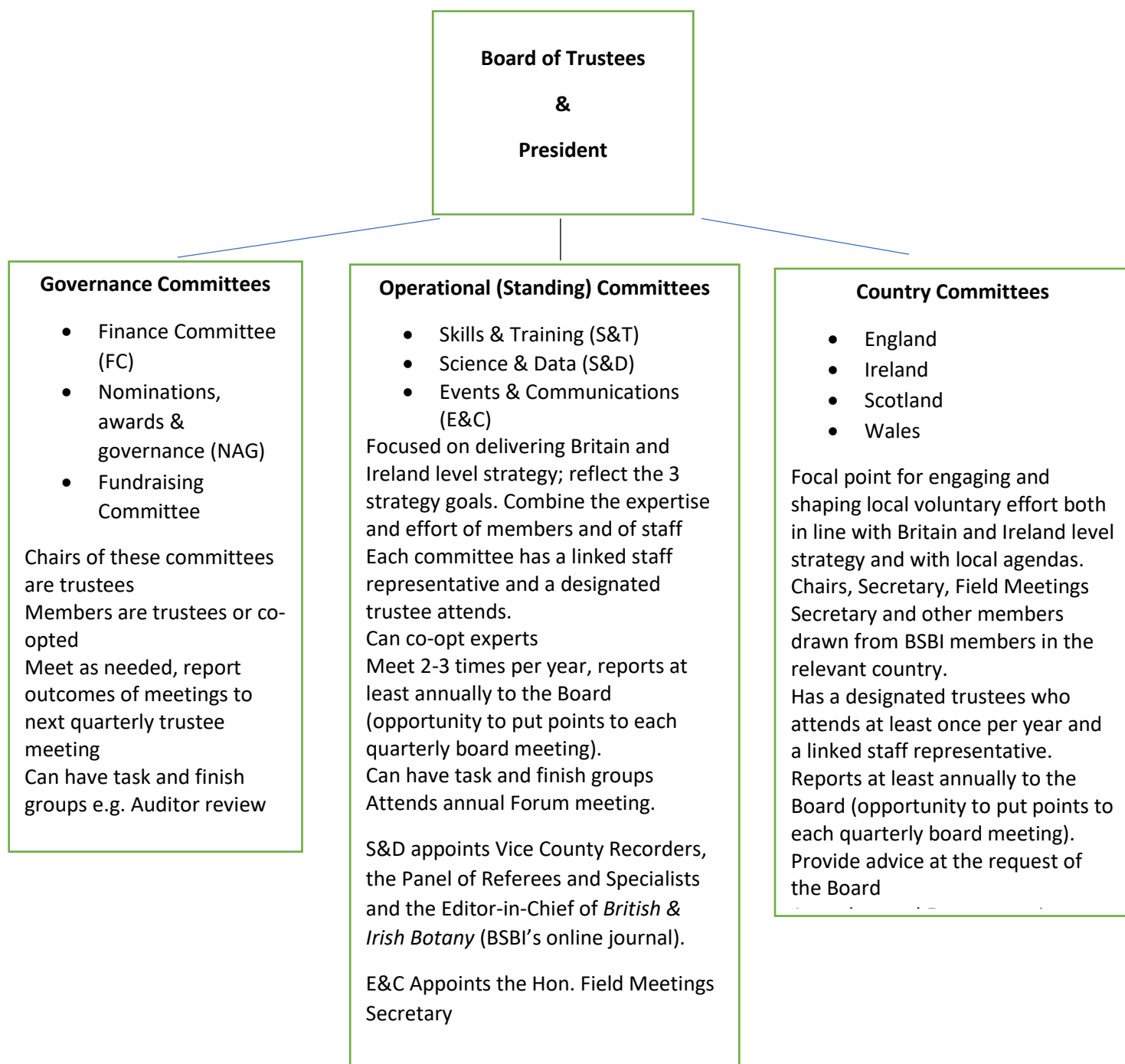
<b>Key to BSBI roles:</b>	S&T - Skills and Training Committee member
	E&C - Events and Communications Committee member
	S&D - Science and Data Committee member
	CfE, Cfl, Cfs, CfW – Member of the Country Committee for England (CfE), Ireland (Cfl), Scotland (Cfs) or Wales (CfW)
<b>Name</b>	<b>BSBI Roles</b>
Amanda Tuke	S&T
Anthony Thomas	Trustee, S&T
Chantal Helm	Staff (Training Coordinator)
Chris Miles	Trustee, Chair, VCR
David Elston	Cfs, VCR
Delyth Williams	CfW, VCR
Gwynn Ellis	Staff (Membership Secretary)
Helena Crouch	Trustee, CfE, S&D, VCR
Ian Denholm (1 <sup>st</sup> session)	S&D, B&I Botany Editor-in-Chief, VCR
James Harding-Morris	Staff (Countries Support Manager), VCR
Jodey Peyton	E&C
John Palmer	CfW
Jonathan Shanklin	CfE, E&C, Hon Field Events Sec, VCR
Julia Hanmer	Staff (Chief Executive)
Katharina Dehnen-Schmutz	S&D
Kevin Walker	Staff (Head of Science), VCR
Kylie Jones	Trustee, E&C
Liz Lavery	Cfs, VCR
Louise Marsh	Staff (Communications Officer)
Maria Long	Trustee
Mary Dean	Trustee (Chair), CfE, S&T, VCR
Michael Philip	Cfs, VCR
Nicola Dixon	E&C
Richard Jefferson	S&D
Robert Northridge	S&D, Cfl, VCR
Sarah Woods	Staff (Fundraising Manager)
Steve Gater	Trustee, Hon Gen Sec
Tom Humphrey	Staff (Database Officer)



## d) BSBI Governance Structure

BSBI is governed by a Board of Trustees, consisting of seven to twelve elected members. The Board is led by the Chair and supported by the Honorary General Secretary (Hon. Gen. Sec). The President and President-elect represent the Society externally and to members and can attend all BSBI trustee and committee meetings.

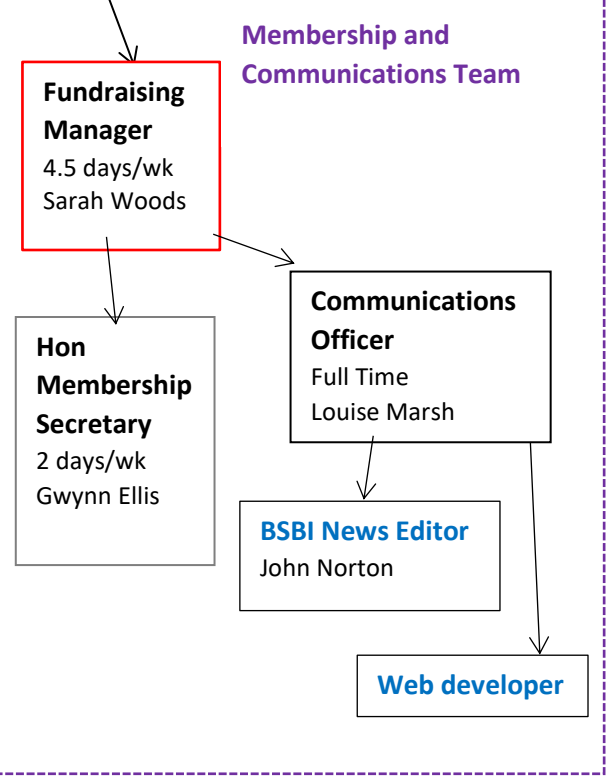
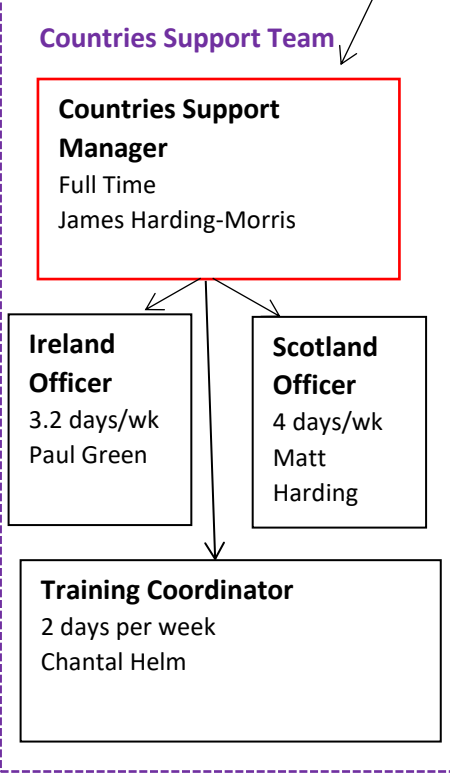
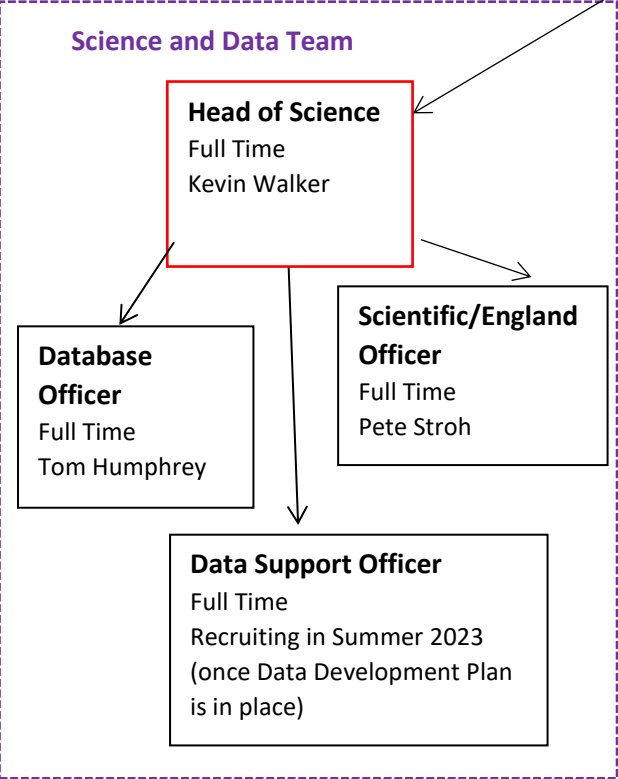
The trustees delegate certain work to three Standing Committees and there are also four County Committees. Each of these have Chairs and Secretaries, plus some have other roles for their area of work, such as as a Vice Chair or Treasurer. In addition, the trustees and/or Standing Committees can appoint various Honorary Officer or other voluntary roles to coordinate particular activities across the Society.



e) BSBI Staff Structure Chart

**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**Chief Executive**  
Full Time  
Julia Hanmer



**Finance Manager**  
3.5 days per week  
Julie Etherington

**Handbook Editor**  
Liz Kungu  
Reports to Skills & Training (publications subgroup) & liaises with CEO and Finance Manager



Manager role

**Roles in black** - Staff

**Roles in blue** - Contractors