

BSBI Irish Branch AGM

To be held at 15.45pm on 21 October 2023, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin

Agenda:

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of BSBI Irish Branch AGM 2022
4. Matters arising from the Minutes
5. Chairperson's Report 2022-2023
6. Hon. Secretary's Report 2022-2023*
7. Report of the Ireland Officer 2022-2023*
8. Election members of the Committee for Ireland, to serve from 21st October 2023
9. AOB
10. Close of formal AGM at 16.30

* To be summarised in meeting; full documents can be viewed on the following pages.

BSBI Committee for Ireland (CfI)
AGM 21st October 2023
Secretary's Report 2022-2023

Since the last AGM, the CfI met four times for committee meetings on 8th October 2022 and 14th January 2023 in person in the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin, and on 15th April 2023 and 7th October 2023 via Zoom.

The Atlas 2020 in the Republic of Ireland Launch was held in the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin on 9th March, and the launch in Northern Ireland was held at Cultra Manor in County Down, hosted by National Museum Northern Ireland.

The Irish Spring Conference was held on 24th April at the National Botanic Gardens.

The BSBI Annual Spring Meeting was held from 19th to 22nd May in Killarney, Co. Kerry.

The Field Meetings Secretary, Mark McCorry, organised 15 field meetings over the year, including three weekend trips. For various reasons, 1 weekend field event was cancelled. The Ireland Officer organised two workshops.

Paul Green resigned from the position of Ireland Officer and was succeeded by Bridget Keehan in June.

There are now no vacant VCs. Aoife Delaney has retired as Joint VCR for H29 Leitrim and instead commenced recording as VCR for H30 Cavan. We welcome Oliver Lynch Milner who is taking over in Limerick (H08) from Tanya Slattery who resigned as VCR. We also welcome George Smith who joins Con Breen as Joint VCR in H23 Westmeath, and Ciaran Flynn who replaces Cliona Byrne as Joint VCR in H31 Louth alongside Kate Harrington.

The Irish membership count has seen an increase of 119 since last year's AGM, bringing the total to a record of 463 members as of 20th September 2023. There are 380 members in ROI and 83 in NI.

We would like to thank all those working in BSBI who assisted in the successful running of our Autumn Meeting and AGM last September and also our Atlas Launches in March, and the Spring Conference in April of this year. We would also like to thank Matthew Jebb and the staff of the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin for the use of their premises for our meeting today, and for providing accommodation at the Herbarium for the Irish Officer.

Thanks are also due to the staff at National Museum Northern Ireland for facilitating the Northern Ireland Atlas launch.

BSBI Committee for Ireland (CfI)
AGM 21st October 2023
Ireland Officer's Report 2022-2023

Paul Green retired from the post of Ireland Officer at the end of June, and I, Bridget Keehan, commenced as IO on 26th June, allowing a short handover period. Paul has remained worked as the Aquatic Plant Project Officer (1 day per week) for this season. The IO currently works 3.2. days (24 hours) per week.

Therefore, this report will combine Paul's and my activities during the year to date.

My work programme is organised in collaboration with my line manager, Country Support Officer James Harding-Morris. I am also in frequent contact with Robert Northridge, Chair of the Committee for Ireland, with whom I regularly catch up on day-to-day, Ireland-related matters.

On commencing work with BSBI I contacted all Ireland VCRs to introduce myself and provide my background and contact details.

As reported upon in the previous IO report, NPWS has agreed to provide continued funding for the IO. A modified table of outcomes has been produced to make the workload of the IO more manageable.

Irish Spring Conference 22nd April 2023

This was a face-to-face meeting in the Auditorium of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin. 90 people attended the event.

The IO organised the event with the CfI, and gave a talk on the writing of the Co Wexford Flora, as well as presenting a workshop on *Fumaria*. The programme included talks by Ciarán Flynn ('My First Year as a VCR'), Melinda Lyons ('The Flora and Protected Species of Bull Island'), Declan Doogue ('Recording the Irish Flora in the pre-Linnean era') and Cilian Roden ('Old Maps and New Fern records in the Slieve Aughty Uplands of Galway and Clare'), as well as a report and presentation on Plant Atlas 2020.

Atlas Launch

A Plant Atlas 2020 Launch was held at Glasnevin, Dublin on 9th March. This was attended by the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan.

The Plant Atlas Launch in Northern Ireland was held at the National Museum of Northern Ireland, Belfast on 15th March.

The BSBI Spring/Summer meeting

This took place at Killarney from 19-22 May. 65 people attended.

The IO was on the organising committee, as well as publicising the event on social media.

The IO attended the whole event, helping lead walks each day and chairing the evening talks on the second night.

The spring meeting was an extremely popular event that provided fantastic botanical training who those who attended, greatly improving many people's field skills, and also contributing to data collection in Killarney. It served to boost the profile of the BSBI in Ireland to members from the UK.

Field meetings held in Ireland during 2023

The Field Meetings Secretary, Mark McCorry, organised 15 field meetings over the year, including three weekend trips. For various reasons, one weekend field event was cancelled.

The Ireland Officer organised two workshops.

Field meetings included:

- Ballycroy National Park – 15th July
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- Fern Training Day (with a focus on the *Dryopteris affinis* group) , Co Wexford – 3rd September.
- Looking at Urban Flora – Newry, Co Down – 16th September
- Lake and ponds or limestone areas and cutover raised bog - Craughwell and Monivea, Co Galway – 17th September

There have also been events run by local groups, for example in Sligo and Leitrim. There have also been five dedicated Aquatic Plants workshops across Ireland to date, with a sixth coming up in October.

The IO attended the Ballycroy field meeting, two local meetings and three of the APP workshops, taking photographs and providing assistance as needed. These were good opportunities to introduce herself and meet VCRs and members across Ireland.

Aquatic Plant Project (APP)

Funding was awarded by NPWS in February to continue running the APP throughout 2023 and 2024.

The project this year has been co-ordinated by the APP manager Paul Green and Polly Spencer-Vellacott, with input from the IO. The required outputs for 2023 have delivered as follows:

Output 1 – delivery of two-part webinar

- One two-part webinar was provided at the beginning of the season, on :
 - Identification of stringy-leaved aquatic plants
 - Identification of feathery-leaved aquatic plantsThis was presented by Nick Stewart and is now available on YouTube (<https://bsbi.org/aquatic-plant-project>).

Output 2 – two targeted species surveys

Targeted surveys were led by the APP manager on two dates for *Groenlandia densa*, 12th August and 20th September, both times in Co Waterford. The species was recorded at 7 out of the 8 sites visited.

Nick Stewart also undertook a survey for *Ranunculus tripartita* on 21st May during the BSBI Summer Meeting, near Sneem, Co Kerry. This species was not refound.

Output 3 – provision of seven field events

Workshops and training were incorporated into the BSBI Summer Meeting, with a further six dedicated field events held at various locations across Ireland (Counties Clare/Galway; Offaly, Cavan, Westmeath, Laois and Sligo).

Most of the events have been led by Nick Stewart and Paul Green, variously assisted by local VCRs. Cilian Roden led the Clare/Galway meeting, and the IO attended and assisted with three events. Events to date have been co-ordinated by the APP manager Paul Green and Polly Spencer-Vellacott, however the IO is organising the final APP event in Co Sligo which will be held on 8th October.

Events were publicised on Twitter and Facebook in the preceding weeks and attendance has been very good throughout, ranging from 7-17 people at each meeting. Feedback on the training has been excellent.

The APP manager and IO distributed some grappnels and i.d. handbooks on long loan to interested attendees/VCRs to facilitate further aquatic plants recording. An article on the Aquatic Plants Project was published in Inland Waterways News (Autumn 2023).

Irish Botanical News – Ireland Officer’s report

The IO Paul Green wrote a report for inclusion in Irish Botanical News, which was published in March 2023. This outlined happenings over the past year and upcoming events.

Catch up with the Countries Support Manager and the Scotland Officer

The IO has fortnightly online meetings with Countries Support Manager James Harding-Morris, as well as monthly Country Support Team meetings with James, BSBI Scotland Officer James Harding and BSBI Scientific and England Officer Pete Stroh.

The IO attended MapMate training in Edinburgh and a ‘team building’ trip to Ben Lawers in early August with Matt Harding and James Harding-Morris.

Staff meetings

The IO attended all BSBI Staff Meetings, with the exception of 27th June when the IO handover was taking place. These take place on the last Tuesday of each month and are attended by all BBSI Staff.

The IO also attends the fortnightly BSBI virtual staff coffee breaks.

New / retiring VCRs

Tanya Slattery made the decision to step down from the role of VCR in Co. Limerick (H8) in July. Subsequently a young Master’s student, Olly Lynch, offered to fill this role, with the recommendation of Phoebe O’Brien (Co Clare VCR).

Olly is currently working on the StableGrass research project and has been completing grassland surveys with Phoebe over the summer, and has attended a number of BSBI field events. He is a competent botanist and appears very keen to build up his skills at every opportunity, so was considered a good candidate for the role.

Aoife Delaney, Co-VCR for Co Leitrim (H29) with Eamon Gaughan, has recently moved to Cavan so offered to take up the vacant role as VCR for Co Cavan (H30). Eamon was happy to assume full responsibility as VCR for both Sligo and Leitrim (H28 and H29).

The appointment of these two VCRs was approved by the CFI and confirmed by the Science and Data Committee at their meeting on 3rd October, meaning that all Irish Vice-Counties now have a VCR in place. Over the coming year, the IO intends to encourage and facilitate the appointment of co-VCRs where possible, particularly where a single VCR is currently managing the entire workload.

VCR support

As stated above, the IO attended MapMate training led by Jim McIntosh at RBG Edinburgh in early August, along with James Harding-Morris and Matt Harding. This was to facilitate providing support to VCRs.

Over the year, the IO has helped VCRs & members with MapMate problems and DDB queries, and facilitated DDB access where required.

The WhatsApp Group for VCRs in Ireland has been a great success, with around two-thirds of VCRs being part of the group. The IO acts as admin for the group. This is a great platform for discussion of new finds and i.d. queries and is used very frequently.

The IO and Robert Northridge met with Michael Philip (VCR for Dumbartonshire and co-VCR for Lanarkshire) who is speaking on Botanical Networks at our Autumn Meeting. He has offered to assist in setting up a similar network in a suitable vice-County in Ireland early next year.

NPWS – Rare plant / clubmoss surveys

- Three species surveys were completed by Paul Green as IO, for *Trifolium suffocatum* (found at Ferrycarrig Castle, Co. Wexford), *Salvia verbenaca* (found at Arklow, Co. Wicklow) and *Viola lutea* (not found; Lockstown, Co. Wicklow).
- On taking up the role in June, the IO discussed with Mike Wyse Jackson which additional rare plants to survey in 2023. Three surveys were undertaken in September 2023, for *Epilobium alsinifolium* and *Equisetum pratense* ((Glenade, Co Leitrim), and *Sorbus rupicola* (east end of Lough Gill, Co Leitrim). Of these, only *Equisetum pratense* was not re-found (further surveys will be attempted in 2024).
- No clubmoss surveys have been undertaken as yet in 2023, but these will be commenced in spring 2024.

Social media and outreach

The IO aims to post photos of plants each week on Twitter, and to take part in Wildflower Hour every Sunday.

Since taking up the post in June, the current IO aims to post/retweet several times weekly as well as taking part in Wildflower Hour and its weekly challenges. Since June BSBI Ireland's followers have increased by 50 to 2,786. BSBI and APP events are also publicised by the IO on both Twitter and Facebook.

The IO drafted the Ireland Country Roundup for the September 2023 edition of BSBI News. An article by the IO on interesting finds in Ireland over the summer has been submitted for inclusion in the autumn edition of the NBDC publication *Biodiversity Ireland*. The IO also supported prospective new VCR Olly Lynch in writing an article on his grassland research for September's BSBI News.

Biological Recording

- The IO has been collaborating with the rest of the Countries Support Team to investigate the incorporation of iRecord (and similar) data into the DDb. She also met with Damien McFerran of CeDAR to learn more about use of iRecord in Northern Ireland.
- The IO attended a workshop on Biological Recording in Northern Ireland on 18th October 2023, organised by BTO and attended by representatives of a wide range of organisations concerned with wildlife, ecology and conservation.
- The IO contributed to the consultation process for NBDC's draft Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

Autumn meeting and AGM 2023

This is to be held on the later than usual date of Saturday 21st October, NBG Glasnevin. The programme includes talks on topics ranging from Irish bryophytes to the life and work of eminent Irish botanist Evelyn Booth and workshops on horsetails and bryophytes. The Autumn Meeting will be followed by the AGM at the same venue.

New Year Plant Hunt

The IO took part in the 2023 New Year Plant Hunt and will also be involved in the 2024 New Year Plant Hunt, helping organise and coordinate individual and group recording events as required.

Programme of field events for 2024

The IO is assisting the Events Secretary with formulating a programme of events for 2024.