



Botanic Gardens Education Network Annual Report 2022

This Annual Report summarises Bgen activity from 1st January to 31st December 2022

Botanic Gardens Education Network
c/o Museum No.1
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Richmond
TW9 3AB

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www.Bgen.org.uk
Bgen is a registered
Charitable Incorporated Organisation
no: 1103482

BGEN

Who we are

Bgen (the Botanic Gardens Education Network) was founded in 1990 by a group of botanic garden educators, to share expertise and develop best practice in environmental and biodiversity education.

Our network supports and builds capacity in educators across the UK in areas such as the natural and plant sciences, biodiversity and sustainability, visitor engagement, audience development and impact, as well as funding, training and job opportunities.

The network is run by a voluntary Board of Trustees, supported by a part-time Coordinator to help administrate and organise training and networking activities for its members.

Our Mission

To be a knowledgeable and strong network of organisations and professionals delivering inspiring, innovative and relevant public engagement through plants and nature.

Our Vision

To inspire, innovate and influence how people engage with plants and the environment by empowering a strong network of organisations and building capacity in our membership.

Our Objectives

1. Serve our members and strengthen the network
2. Position bgen as experts in the field with regards to learning and engagement with plants and the environment.
3. Become a resilient organisation, through strong relevant governance and financial stability.

Our Values

Innovate: We welcome new ideas and find creative solutions to educate and engage the public in plant based and nature conservation.

Pursue excellence: We aspire to excellence in everything we do, by delivering high quality services to our members and always keep on improving.

Collaborate: We believe that by working together with our members and partners through reflective practice and sharing resources and ideas, we can provide better services and solutions

Be inclusive: We value ideas, views and strengths of everyone we work with and support. We treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Act with integrity: We promote an open and honest environment that gives credit and acknowledges mistakes. We ensure charity resources are managed responsibly, with ethical values and sustainable working practices.

Trustee Declaration

The trustees have paid due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission, and in deciding what activities Bgen should undertake.

1. Bgen Membership

As of 31st December 2022, Bgen has 380 members, this includes members from 37 Organisations and 44 individual members.

Compared to the previous year, membership grew by 51 members. This was largely due to the return of lapsed members who had not renewed during the pandemic.

Membership fees: the Board reviewed membership fees in 2022 as these had remained at the same level since before lockdown. At the September meeting, Trustees agreed the following structure and pricing, to reflect the diversity and size of organisations and individuals and provide a fairer approach:

Membership type	Price
Individual	£40
Student	£18
Organisation 1-4 staff	£135
Organisation 5-10 staff	£170
Organisation over 10 staff	£210

Bgen provides:

- Networking for members
- Promotion for members' events, training, and job / volunteering opportunities
- Reciprocal membership across participants
- Training events across the UK (currently delivered online)
- An annual conference to reflect on current sector trends and themes

2. Training and Events

Since the pandemic, Bgen has delivered all training and activity for members online. This move has allowed members and wider participants to provide more inclusive and accessible opportunities for training, networking and support, with positive feedback from participants and speakers. An overview of training and events activity is below:

Understanding & Communicating Climate Science Training – February 2022

Partnering with PlantNetwork and the Royal Meteorological Society (RMetS), and led by Prof. Liz Bentley, Chief Executive of RMetS, Hannah Mallinson, Science Engagement Manager, RMetS, and Dr Sylvia Knight, Head of Education, RMetS. 34 participants (43 tickets sold).

Developing Effective and Engaging Social Media – March 2022

Led by experienced public engagement trainer and science communicator Dr Jamie Gallagher, this training event focused the ins and outs of social media, its main channels and looked at how to create share-worthy content messages. Case studies were provided by RHS Campaign for School Gardening and the Linnean Society Discover More Series, led by Joe Burton, Education and Public Events Manager. 31 participants (34 tickets sold).

Masterclass in Evaluation – September 2022

Led by Kate Measures, Director at Heritage Insider, this masterclass addressed the where, what, and why we evaluate, providing a selection of creative techniques and how to use them. 21 participants.

Soil Secrets – November 2022 (postponed to February 2023)

Originally scheduled to run in November, Soil Secrets has been rescheduled for 8th February 2023. This training session will explore Fungi and Earthworms and the essential roles they play in soil health.

‘Virtual Coffee Mornings’

We ran one Virtual Coffee Morning in 2022, following on from the successful series of events Bgen organised in the previous year. Feedback from 2021 Bgen Conference showed that these free sharing learning and networking sessions had a clear purpose during lockdown, and although interest continued in 2022 with the return of activities and audiences back to member organisations, participants’ time was scarce. We plan to restart coffee mornings for 2023.

3. Bgen Annual Conference

Our Annual Conference is an important strand of Bgen’s offer providing the opportunity to reflect on key issues and trends across the sector and offering participants to connect and share learning and ideas for future work.

While 2020 Conference was cancelled due to Covid, we were delighted to deliver the 2021 Conference online in November last year. The virtual platform allowed us to have international speakers from the USA, Canada, Republic of Ireland and Sweden, as well as homegrown talent from the UK, to discuss Climate Change – Action Through Plants, in line with COP26. The Conference attracted wide interest from Bgen members and the wider heritage education community with 115 delegates and speakers joining us over the 2 half day sessions.

Conference 2022: the Board agreed to move the Conference to January 2023 to allow time to plan for an in-person conference at RHS Wisley’s new Hilltop Centre. This will be the first face to face conference since the Covid pandemic and will offer bursaries from the Finnis Scott Trust to educators and organisations travelling from outside the Southeast region, as well as students, freelancers or the unemployed, to help support participation and access to the conference.

Bgen is looking to alternate its annual conference from face-to-face and online, to strike a balance between accessibility and inclusion, and international perspectives and UK focus.

4. Structure Governance and Management

Bgen successfully converted from a Charitable Company to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 4th May 2021.

Changes to the Constitution:

In January 2022, the Board submitted a resolution to the Charity Commission to change the Trustee application and appointment process. This change allowed for up to 1/3 of the Board to be appointed from outside the membership to help recruit more effectively to help advance the charity's objectives, bring new ideas and experience to strengthen the Board, and help grow equality, diversity and inclusion.

5. Bgen Board

5.1 Bgen Board Meetings:

All Board meetings were held online to maximise Trustee participation:

- 17th February 2022 – welcome new Trustees, training plan, conference 22-23, coordinator recruitment
- Friday 20th May 2022 – welcome new Coordinator, governance focus, training and conference update
- Thursday 15th September 2022 – Conference plan, comms update, finance, and membership fee review
- Thursday 1st December 2022 – preparation of AGM and conference 22-23

The AGM for 21-22 was confirmed for Wednesday 11th January 2023, as part of the Bgen Conference 22-23 at RHS Wisley.

5.2 Bgen Board Workstreams:

Each Board member serves on one (or two) specialised workstream group: Training, Conference, Fundraising, Communication & Membership and Governance. For the past two years due to the pandemic, some of these workstreams joined forces to increase capacity and support to Bgen's activities through lockdown.

Workstreams meet regularly in between Board Meetings, to plan in detail their areas of work and advance on actions across the year. The focus of activity for these workstreams have been:

- **Communications & Membership:** advertising of job opportunities and promotion of events, audit of comms activity, recruitment of voluntary event reviewer role
- **Governance:** recruitment and induction of new Trustees to the Board, recruitment of new Coordinator
- **Fundraising & Sponsorship:** submission of bids to external trusts and foundations

- **Conference & Training:** Joined forces to plan events through the year and 22-23 Conference
- The **Treasury Group** have continued to oversee the Bgen finances and make recommendations to the Bgen Board.

5.3 Bgen Board Members:

After the last AGM in January 2022, the Bgen Board had the following changes:

Re-election: Felicity Gaffney, Gail Bromley and Susie Kelpie sought re-election for another 3 years.

Resignations: Jill Baker from RHS Garden Hyde Hall, asked to step down. This will be formally confirmed at the AGM in January.

Role changes: Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President of Black Environment Network, has agreed to become an expert advisor to Bgen, as such, she has stepped down as Trustee from December 2022.

Election: After an open call for new Trustees in 2021, in 2022 we welcomed five new Board members: Zoë Chapman (Ness Botanic Gardens, University of Liverpool), Sarah Garry (British Society of Soil Science), Suzanne Hermiston (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh), Frances Sampayo (Chelsea Physic Garden), and Sarah Webley (South London Botanical Institute).

Current Bgen Board (pre-11th January 2023 AGM):

Trustee Name	Workstream	Appointed	Status
Jill Baker, RHS Garden Hyde Hall	Training	2007	Resigned Jan 2023
Gail Bromley, BGCI	Treasurer, Fundraising and Sponsorship Lead	2006	Active
Zoë Chapman, Ness Botanic Gardens, University of Liverpool		Jan 2022	Active
Rose Froud, Ness Botanic Gardens	Communication and Membership Lead	2020	Active
Felicity Gaffney, National Botanic Garden Ireland	Conference and Training	2015	Active
Sarah Garry, British Society of Soil Science	Fundraising and Sponsorship	Jan 2022	Active
Rachel Godfrey, RHS	Training and Conference Lead	2019	Active
Suzanne Hermiston, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh	Training and Conference	Jan 2022	Active
Susie Kelpie, Bgen Member	Training and Conference	2012	Active

Ledy Leyssen, The Royal Parks	Governance Lead, Treasury group	2017	Active
Chris Meakin, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum	Governance	2017	Active
Helen Miller, BGCI	Training)	2019	Active
Frances Sampayo, Chelsea Physic Garden	Governance	Jan 2022	Active
Sarah Webley, South London Botanical Institute	Training and Conference	Jan 2022	Active

() Dominic Grantley-Smith, BGCI, stood in as observer until September 2022*

The Bgen Board is supported by Sophie Edwards (Bgen Coordinator), 3 Hours West (website) and Sandy Openshaw (bookkeeper).

6. Reference and administrative information

Charity name: Botanic Gardens Education Network (Bgen)
Charity Registration Number: 1103482
Registered Office: c/o Museum No.1, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond,
TW9 3AB

Trustee Selection:

BGEN is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from its members, and thanks to recent changes to the Constitution, BGEN can now recruit Trustees from outside the membership that can bring specialist skills and experience in support of BGEN's objectives.

Our trustees bring a broad range of skills and sector knowledge to the Board, with no financial remuneration from the charity. Trustees are appointed based on their knowledge and experience. Every trustee is appointed for an initial three-year term by a resolution passed at annual AGM and can also be co-opted throughout the year before they are confirmed at annual general meetings. Trustees can be re-elected when their initial three-year period.

BGEN trustees abide by Charity Commission guidelines on Trustees Responsibilities. BGEN's Constitution and Trustee Handbook provide further guidance in this area.

7. Financial Review and Accounts for financial year 2021/22

Reserves Policy

Reserves are that part of a charity's unrestricted funds that is freely available to spend on any of the charity's purposes. bgen maintains free unrestricted reserves:

- to provide a level of working capital that protects the continuity of our work, ensuring the stability of the network, its programmes, employment and ongoing operations
- to provide a level of funding for unexpected opportunities, non-recurring expenses that will build long-term capacity, such as staff development, research and development, or investment in equipment and support materials
- to provide cover for risks such as unforeseen expenditure, one-time unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss of income or funding, or uninsured losses.

The board of trustees will review the above criteria with reference to bgen's strategy and Annual Plan and determine the target level of free reserves to meet these.

The Board of Trustees will at times designate funds from free reserves for significant project costs or replacement of major assets.

Operating Reserves are not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds or eliminate any ongoing budget gap. It is the intention for Operating Reserves to be used and replenished within a reasonably short period of time. The Operating Reserve Policy will be implemented in concert with the other governance / policies of BGEN and is intended to support the goals and strategies contained in BGEN's Finance Policy and strategic and operational plans.

Treasurers Report

Although the accounting year for 2021-2022 (April 21-March 22) saw a small loss, there were signs that there was light at the end of the tunnel for Bgen finances, heralded by the announcement that Covid 19 restrictions would be finally lifted before the end of February 2022. Bgen settled into a pattern of on-line training provision and were able to still attract reasonable uptake for workshops and a virtual conference in November 2021. The latter was particularly successful due to input from several international speakers that encouraged ticket sales – so a huge 'thank you' to the organisers. The funds agreed by the board to upgrade and redesign our website, also proved to be a good decision, as this supported better communication and promotional activity. Our grateful thanks to our coordinator and the communications team who oversaw the changes.

Membership remained steady, even though many botanic garden and environmental education staff had been furloughed earlier. Numbers were maintained due to the provision of a new high level training course, run over a number of months, as well as an emphasis on training workshops that would support members to become more digitally competent and better prepared for delivery of on-line content in their own organisations – much needed during this period. The removal of restrictions towards the end of the accounting year also meant that revenue from advertising picked up (£1,300 as opposed to £490 in the previous accounting year).

Bgen was able to finance the services of our excellent Coordinator, Sue Dampney, albeit again with reduced input, which provided continuity and allowed us to maintain a reasonable overall service for members. We were fortunate to receive a grant from the Marsh Christian Trust of £500 which we were able to set against coordinator fees. We were also successful in being awarded a grant from the Finnis Scott Foundation for £2000. This was provided to support bursaries for members to attend the annual conference. It had been hoped that this would be before the end of 2022 – however we were able to retain the money which has now been allocated for the face to face conference at Wisley January 11th and 12th 2023. We are immensely grateful to both our funders for their generosity.

The financial year 2021-22 closed with £16,975.65 in the bank and the summary of income and expenditure for this period is:

Income £14,902 (previous year £2444) and Expenditure of £15,704 (previous year £12,347), which is a loss for the 2021-2022 financial year of £803 (see Receipts and Payments form on next pages for detail).

(NB As Bgen has moved to a simplified 'Receipts and Payments' accounting system. This shows money moving in and out and doesn't take account of accruals - money that has been earned or spent but not yet paid. This might mean that occasionally there seems to be a mismatch between what monies Bgen has and the paperwork.)

The accounts were discussed and approved by the Board of Trustees in their September meeting 2022. We are now seeking your adoption of the accounts at the AGM so that they can be filed with the Charity Commission before the end of January 2023.

My grateful thanks to the Board, the Treasury Group and our Coordinator for all their support over this recovery period.

Gail Bromley MBE FLS, Bgen Treasurer

[See Bgen Receipts and Payments 2021-2 on next page]



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
Botanic Garden Education Network	CE025039

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/04/2021		31/03/2022

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted to the nearest £	Restricted to the nearest £	Endowment to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Training Days	6,181	-	-	6,181	1,150
Membership	1,828	-	-	1,828	804
Adverts	1,300	-	-	1,300	490
Conference	3,070	-	-	3,070	-
Grants	2,500	-	-	2,500	-
Miscellaneous	23	-	-	23	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for	14,902	-	-	14,902	2,444
A2 Asset and investment sales,					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	14,902	-	-	14,902	2,444
A3 Payments					
Administrator & Recruitment	8,774	-	-	8,774	5,135
Training Day Expenses	2,820	-	-	2,820	64
Marketing	2,369	-	-	2,369	6,000
Computer & Software	340	-	-	340	127
Consultancy & Professional	38	-	-	38	52
Bookkeeping	936	-	-	936	759
Bank charges	307	-	-	307	210
Conference Expenses	120	-	-	120	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	15,704	-	-	15,704	12,347
A4 Asset and investment					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	15,704	-	-	15,704	12,347
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 803	-	-	- 803	- 9,903
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	17,154	623	-	17,777	-
Cash funds this year end	16,352	623	-	16,975	- 9,903

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank	16,352	623	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	16,352	623	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Debtors	3,001	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Laptop		595	1
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities	Creditors	47	-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name		Date of approval

Thanks to our Bgen Coordinators for their invaluable administration of all network activities and their steadfast support to the Board - Sue Dampney (2015-2022) and Sophie Edwards (2022-); to our Board of Trustees for their work this past year, and to our members for their continuing support, participation and contribution of ideas, skills, and resources, to help advance Bgen's mission.