



# BOURNEMOUTH NATURAL SCIENCE SOCIETY & MUSEUM

## ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 OF TRUSTEES FOR BOURNEMOUTH NATURAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

### 1. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS

- a. The charity's name: Bournemouth Natural Science Society.
- b. The Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered number: CE006863. The registered charity number: 1165951.
- c. The address of the principal office of the charity: 39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 3NS. Tel. 01202 553525.
- d. The charity's trustees for the year were: Mr Grenham Ireland (Chair), Mr Gerry Duggan, (Treasurer), Mrs Jacqueline Bainbridge (Honorary Secretary), Miss Pam Field, Mr Malcolm Gould, Mrs Anne Jolliffe, Mr Steve Limburn and Mr Colin Lord.

### 2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Society was formed in 1903. A new Constitution and Rules for the CIO were agreed at the AGM held on 5 December 2015. The Charitable Incorporated Organisation was registered on 9th March 2016. Financial and related matters are overseen by the trustees who this year have met both in person and via Zoom. The trustees are also responsible for the appointment of those officers of the Society who have responsibility for substantial assets of the Society. The trustee body is elected annually by secret ballot by members present at the Annual General Meeting. Up to nine trustees may be elected. Of these two are ex-officio, the treasurer and secretary. A chairman is elected at the first meeting of the new trustee body each year.

The Assembly of the Society is open to all members, who can raise any matter of overall interest. The Assembly usually meets roughly quarterly. The first meeting was held following the AGM on 10 December 2022 to elect the Assembly Chair and Section Chairs. That meeting and those on 28 March and 26 September 2023 were 'hybrid' i.e., took place both in person and remotely via Zoom. The hybrid meeting scheduled for 27 June 2023 was cancelled due to the lack of a Chair of Assembly.

The activities of the Society are run by a small number of committees. An ad hoc Programme Committee (consisting of those Section Chairs who can attend meetings by Zoom) continues to be responsible for the lecture programme. A number of field trips were organised from spring to autumn 2023. The Museum Committee and the Library Committee have both met once.

### 3. FINANCE

#### 3.1 BNSS Financial Review 2022-23

As in previous years, the BNSS trustees and a strong body of volunteers continue to strive to maintain a stable financial structure, achieve our objectives, reduce risks and invest in our collections and infrastructure. The total revenue BNSS has generated from all sources has increased by 37% to £55.3k in 2022-23, whilst expenditure increased by 7.3% to £50.5k. This has resulted in a surplus of £4.8k for the year. Highlights for 2022-23 include sales which have increased from £2.1k to £4.8k with a profit margin of nearly 150%. Reflecting increased visitor numbers, refreshments sales have increased from £1.2k to £3.3k. Donations from cash and credit cards have increased from £4.8k to £8.1k. This has the added benefit of increasing Gift Aid payments to the Society from HMRC. Subscription income has decreased slightly by £250, mainly from members writing annual cheques, whilst there was a modest growth of 1% in members opting to use the quarterly discounted direct debit facility. Lettings revenue has stayed approximately the same, despite the loss of our long-term tenant halfway through the year. The shortfall was made up by filming companies using the museum to host a series of Jane Goodall interviews. The trustees are placing the museum building on various film company registers with the aim of generating revenue from a similar source. The commercial property market is currently oversupplied, so the trustees expect a significant decline in this income category for next year. The 140% increase in investment income reflects increases in interest rates and resumption of dividends following the pandemic. The final £7k HLF lantern grant was paid this year. The principal changes in expenditure include utilities (principally gas) from £3.4k to £5.5k, an increase of 60%; and salary, to keep pace with the statutory minimum wage. Preventative maintenance to the building to further improve its water-tightness and therefore preserve the collections increased by 10% along with insulation and heating upgrades.

Next year's budget includes some high capital expenditure items:

- an electrical safety upgrade for wiring and light fittings (some statutory)	Est	£50k
- improved in-cabinet display lighting (as prototyped in the Egyptology section)	Est	£3k
- upgrade to internal fire doors (subject to planning permission)	Est	£25k
- suitable high quality display case for the recently restored orrery	Est	£5k
- house exterior maintenance	Est	£10k

### **3.2 Reserves**

BNSS's reserves policy is set to manage unforeseen financial difficulties. The level of unrestricted reserves required is set based on zero income for 2 years, ~£110k (i.e., without access to the building, an inability to generate revenue and zero grants being available). Accessible cash reserves are approx. £150k with long-term Charity Investment Funds £55k. Given the planned capital expenditure levels for 2024, the decrease in lettings income, higher energy costs and changes to the minimum wage, the current level of reserves conforms with Reserves Policy.

Sincere thanks to the Independent Examiner, Louise Tonkin of Fisherton Consulting, who reviews the accounts as required by the Charity Commission; to Mary Tiller, the Assistant Treasurer who manages all cash including Gift Aid; and to the Membership Secretary, Sally Grant, who keeps the records required by HMRC for Gift Aid eligibility.

## **4. MEMBERSHIP**

Membership was 242 on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 and 251 on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023. During the year, there were 33 new members, 22 left and 2 deaths.

## **5. PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The museum has been open on Tuesdays throughout the year and on some Saturdays. During August 2023 the museum was open additionally on Mondays and Saturdays with good attendances. Throughout the year, weekly lectures via Zoom were made available to the public who requested a link. Lectures were advertised on the BNSS Facebook page as well as the BNSS website. All activities were free to enter but were also supported by members explaining the importance of donations to keeping our activities going and to providing support towards maintaining the old Victorian building. BNSS was again able to host the Arts University Bournemouth Spring display by second year students. The Young Explorers programme for 7 – 12-year-olds continued and has had a successful year with attendance at many meetings being in the high teens and low twenties. We hosted over 15 visits from local organisations including from six local schools and also language school and scout groups and made five external visits to schools taking demonstration materials. In total, our Education Officer organised and engaged with over a thousand children and young adults.

## **6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **6.1 Programme**

A total of 60 lectures were held in this financial year; these were a mix of Zoom, in-house and hybrid meetings. Average attendance in the final quarter of 2022 was 35 and in 2023 to the end of September average attendance was 38. The programme committee of seven people work hard to cover a wide range of topics. The programme committee attempt to fill every Tuesday evening slot and a fortnightly lecture in-house on a Saturday afternoon. Three quizzes were held through the year. Six botanical field trips were held during the spring and summer months. A delightful astronomy walk was held along Bournemouth seafront with a small talk about each planet as walkers passed through its orbit, ending up at the aptly named Neptune bar! A photo competition was held, and prizes awarded. A joint meeting was held between the BNSS and the Quekett Microscopical Club.

### **6.2 Strategic Plan**

A Strategic Plan was published in late 2016 and is due to be replaced as part of the preparations for re-accreditation but this has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A sub-group of trustees devised a new set of aims and objectives for the new Strategic Plan and these were agreed by the trustees and put forward for discussion at the Assembly meeting in March 2023. Following this consultation, amendments were made and the sub-committee worked out a detailed action plan which is now being costed. It is expected that a new Strategic Plan for 2024-2027 will be ready by March 2024.

### **6.3 Museum Curation**

The general curation of the collections has continued with low levels of pest infestation and pyrite decay. The cessation of production of the pest prevention product for the entomology specimens meant that a new approach has needed be found, serious damage has not been observed thus far. The building in general has remained in reasonable condition with no current problems. We still await the accreditation renewal demand from the Arts Council and a review of the current situation is to be held. New lighting has been fitted to the cabinets in the Egyptology room which improves the visibility and appearance of the specimens, this approach should be considered for other areas.

The top floor rooms which are currently unlet are being used for display and storage purposes this will prevent future letting and its income. Storage in general is a problem and serious consideration must be given to an alternative. The orrery has been refurbished and is now fit for display and demonstration. To prevent damage by visitors in the future a secure case that allows visibility and demonstration is required. Also, an adequate location is to be established to allow visitors to clearly see the operation.

It is still necessary to address the problems associated with the general environment of the building together with the electrical power requirements.

#### **6.4 Museum Public Openings and Exhibitions**

As is normal the museum was open to the public on Tuesdays throughout the year. In addition, we opened for three days between Christmas and New Year and for two extra days each week (Saturdays and Mondays) during August. We were fortunate that sufficient volunteers were available to cover those additional days particularly those in December. Tours of the building were arranged in Architectural Heritage Week in September with an increased attendance this year.

#### **6.5 Publicity**

We have completed another year without a Publicity Officer and instead various other officers and volunteers have done what they could. The publicity which we did do was mainly by postings on our website and Facebook pages and also postings on the Institute of Physics website and our noticeboards. If we are to achieve the aims in our nascent new Strategic Plan, we need to find someone or a team to rectify this deficiency.

### **7. PREMISES**

A number of leaks have been repaired making the building watertight and many rotting windowsills have been repaired. Radiators have been installed in the library connected to the central heating system. New carpets and a substantial underlay have been installed in the library and the caretaker's bedroom. A new dishwasher and refrigerator have been installed in the kitchen. We are on our third year of an insurance package for the building, the insurers have agreed to another 3-year package starting in 2024. Contracts have been set up with the electricity and gas suppliers to get the best price and we are monitoring the supply and price.

### **8. LIBRARY**

New radiators have been fitted along with new carpet and roof insulation. This will help to reduce humidity and keep the books in good condition. It has been a quiet year in the library with thirty books borrowed, no purchases and eight donations, mainly from Ray Chapman. We are continuing to move books from the reference library into the main library and should finish this soon.

### **9. HEALTH & SAFETY**

We continue to monitor and ensure the house meets the statutory requirements for health & safety. We have updated the fire panel and the emergency lighting, PAT testing, and fire extinguishers. Emergency first aid training was carried out which will last 3 years.

### **10. VOLUNTEERS**

The trustees are extremely grateful to those members of the Society who act as volunteers and also to members of the public who have given their services as volunteers. Without them, we would have been unable to open the museum as often as we did in 2022-23. As stated in previous reports, our aim to open the museum more frequently remains in place, but at present, with our current volunteer numbers, that is not a practical proposition. Once again, we would ask that any member who does not currently volunteer but is interested in doing so should either get in touch via [contact@bnss.org.uk](mailto:contact@bnss.org.uk) or call into the museum on a Tuesday.

### **11. COLLABORATIONS**

We had a joint meeting with the Quekett Microscopical Club with whom we hold an affiliate membership. We have kept our collaboration with the Arts University Bournemouth. Our patron Jane Goodall has continued to use our premises to hold recordings of her interviews with a number of organisations for which we are grateful.

### **12. THANKS**

This has largely been a year of return to normality for the Society, but we continue to be indebted to our members for keeping us running through their subscriptions. From the other sections of the report, you will be aware of the many contributions from trustees, officers, members and volunteers without which the Society would cease to function. Our website and social media continue to be important for communication with members and the public. We are grateful for another year of free 'charity hosting' for the website from 34SP.

*The Trustees, November 2023*