

# Botanic Gardens Education Network

## Annual Report 2020-21



*Photo: Bgen Conference 2019 at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew*

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

[info@Bgen.org.uk](mailto:info@Bgen.org.uk)  
[www.Bgen.org.uk](http://www.Bgen.org.uk)  
Bgen is a registered  
Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
no: 1103482



This Annual Report summarises Bgen activity since the Bgen AGM on Thursday 12th November 2020.

In early 2021 the Bgen Board launched a new strategy for the organisation for the next four years, with a renewed 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 the membership.

Our new strategy will guide the Board to continue to serve our members and strengthen the network with a focus on more inclusive and accessible services and opportunities; position Bgen as experts in the field of learning and engagement with plants and the environment; and become a more resilient organisation, through strong relevant governance and financial stability.

A two-year action plan is helping us implement these objectives and evaluate our success year on year, with the support of Bgen's Coordinator, advisors and members.

## 1. Bgen Annual Conference

Our Annual Conference is an important strand of Bgen's offer and although our 2020 Conference was cancelled due to Covid, we were delighted to be able to develop our 2021 Conference online.

The theme for the Conference was **Climate Change – Action Through Plants** and was held in our regular November slot, coinciding with COP26. With the UK hosting COP26 in Glasgow there was heightened awareness of and commitment to tackling the climate and ecological emergency. For people who had plants are part of your education and engagement programmes, our Online Conference aimed to build on this awareness and focus down on how plants can be the catalyst for climate action.

By taking part in the Conference people working in botanic gardens, outdoor spaces and heritage sites were able to:



- Understand the impact of climate change on the biodiversity of their botanic gardens and outdoor spaces
- Develop climate & ecological emergency themes into their education and community engagement programmes, linked to curriculum, wellbeing and practical action
- Explore how positive management of their gardens and open spaces can make a tangible difference to the climate change targets

The Conference attracted a lot of interest from Bgen members and the wider heritage education community with 115 delegates and speakers joining us over the 2 half day sessions share ideas, learn skills and develop new ways of thinking. As the Conference was online, for the first time we were able to invite speakers from other countries and were grateful for the contributions from the USA, Canada, Republic of Ireland and Sweden as well as homegrown talent from the UK.

This year Bgen received support from the Finnis Scott Trust, enabling us to offer half-fee bursaries to early career plant educators, plant educators and horticulturalists working in small teams or as sole educators and those who have limited access to support and training.

We received very positive feedback from delegates including:

*"Inspirational, clear speakers with energy and passion"*

*"A great collection of speakers covering the topic of climate change from many different angles."*

*"Great to hear what is happening in other countries would be good to have input from front line parts of the world."*

*"I want to thank you for organize this event. It's help us to improve our educational activities in our botanic gardens and to stimulate us to relate with other educators and different experts from all world."*

*"Every session had something that I found useful and informative."*

**Conference 2022:** We are looking into the feasibility of holding a hybrid Bgen Annual Conference in 2022, bringing together the benefits on face-to-face networking, in-garden inspiration and online accessibility.



## 2. Training and Events

With the ongoing nature of the pandemic, the Board took the decision to move all Bgen training online and have been very pleased with the response from both participants and speakers.

This shift to virtual engagement and programming also support our new strategy and plans to strengthen the network by providing more inclusive and accessible opportunities for training, networking and support, as well as responding to our members' needs, interests and sector trends.

**'Engaging Teenagers and Young Adults in the Outdoors'** was scheduled to run at University of Bristol Botanic Garden on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020 but was postponed due to Covid-19. All the scheduled speakers agreed to take part in the online version of this training, which was held on 4th & 11th March 2021 (morning sessions). A total of 61 participants and speakers took part in this training.

**'Developing Interactive Digital Engagement'** was held online on 26th May & 8th June 2021 (mornings only) with 51 participants and speakers taking part. Digital trainer Dr Jamie Gallagher provided the first morning training session and the second session showcased good practice from gardens and green spaces.

**'Equality and Diversity: a transformative programme'** was devised following feedback from members at one of Virtual Coffee Mornings. This bespoke programme of monthly sessions has been created and run by Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President of the Black Environment Network and was fully booked with 15 participants.

**'Virtual Coffee Mornings'** In the absence of face-to-face events, we have been running monthly events on Zoom to connect members together, share thoughts and experiences and get a feel for what future support Bgen can provide. To date 4 events have taken place, each focussing on a particular theme:

- Shaping Equality & Diversity
- Podcasting
- Creative ways to engage your audience online
- Communicating Climate Science

The Bgen Board are very grateful to the contributors to these virtual coffee mornings - especially Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President of the Black Environment Network, Royal Meteorological Society, PlantNetwork and The Royal Parks.



### 3. Bgen Board

**3.1 Bgen Board Meetings:** The Bgen Board has continued its programme of meetings, all held online:

- December 7<sup>th</sup> 2020 – reviewing CIO application, Trustee recruitment and Trustee skills audit.
- February 12<sup>th</sup> 2021 – planning Training and Conference programme for 2021/2.
- May 20<sup>th</sup> 2021 – trustee skills audit, fundraising and event planning.
- September 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 – conference planning, brand refresh and new website.
- December 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 – planning Training for 2022; preparation for AGM.
- January 19<sup>th</sup> 2022 – Bgen Annual General Meeting, held online.

Each Board member serves on one specialised workstream group: Training, Conference, Fundraising, Communication & Membership and Governance and regular meetings of each of these workstreams have been held. The focus of activity for these workstreams have been:

- **Communications & Membership:** Development of new Bgen website to facilitate sharing of resources, advertising of job opportunities and promotion of events.
- **Governance:** Successfully completed the conversion of Botanic Gardens Education Network to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation; development of Trustee Handbook; recruitment of Trustees, alignment of policy and practice as a CIO.
- **Fundraising & Sponsorship:** Application to various funding sources; development of 4 Year Strategy for Bgen.
- **Conference & Training:** Joined forces to plan online events.
- The **Treasury Group** have continued to oversee the Bgen finances and make recommendations to the Bgen Board.

**3.2 Bgen Board Members (12.11.20 – 19.01.2022):** The Bgen Board has continued working through the pandemic though some of the members have been furloughed. Here are details of Bgen Board members (pre-AGM Jan 2022) and the workstreams they are involved in:

- Catherine Addison -Communication & Membership Lead
- Chris Meakin, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum – Governance Workstream
- Felicity Gaffney, National Botanic Garden Ireland – Conference Workstream
- Gail Bromley, BGCI – Treasurer and Fundraising and Sponsorship Lead
- Helen Miller, BGCI – Training Workstream, (*currently on Maternity leave Dominic Grantley-Smith, BGCI stands in as observer*)
- Jill Baker, RHS Garden Hyde Hall -Training Workstream
- Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President of Black Environment Network.
- Ledy Leyssen, The Royal Parks, Governance Lead



- Rachel Godfrey, RHS – Training Lead
- Rose Froud, Ness Botanic Gardens - Communication & Membership Lead
- Susie Kelpie, Bgen Member - Conference Lead

The Bgen Board is supported by Sue Dampney (Bgen Coordinator), 3 Hours West (website) and Sandy Openshaw (bookkeeper) and would like to thank Dominic Grantley-Smith, BGCI for supporting the Conference and training meetings.

Our grateful thanks go to our amazing Coordinator Sue Dampney, who has maintained the organisation through her sterling service throughout what has been such a difficult period for all. Her dedication to keeping Bgen's communications, events and administrative activities going for not only members, but also the Board, has been exceptional and is hugely appreciated. The Board would like to officially record their thanks to her.

### **3.3 Bgen Board Member changes agreed at Annual General Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022:**

**Re-election:** Catherine Addison, Felicity Gaffney, Gail Bromley and Susie Kelpie have all come to the end of their 3 year term of office. Felicity, Gail and Susie would like to stay on and seek re-election at the AGM in January 2022.

**Resignations:** Catherine Addison has decided not to stand for re-election, having moved into a new job away from the plant education sector. Catherine has been a very active member of Bgen since joining in 2015, bringing fresh energy and perspective to the Board and reinvigorating communication and membership services. Catherine was also an active member of the BIAZA committee and worked hard to share experiences and connect these two organisations.

**Election:** An open call to Bgen members was made in May and December 2021, and we welcomed the following people to the Board:

- Frances Sampayo (Chelsea Physic Garden)
- Sarah Garry (British Society of Soil Science)
- Sarah Webley (South London Botanical Institute)
- Suzanne Hermiston (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh)
- Zoë Chapman (Ness Botanic Gardens, University of Liverpool)

Therefore the Bgen Board members **from January 19<sup>th</sup> 2022 are:**

- Chris Meakin, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum – Governance Workstream
- Felicity Gaffney, National Botanic Garden Ireland – Conference Workstream
- Gail Bromley, BGCI – Treasurer and Fundraising and Sponsorship Lead



- Helen Miller, BGCI – Training Workstream, (*currently on Maternity leave Dominic Grantley-Smith, BGCI stands in as observer*)
- Jill Baker, RHS Garden Hyde Hall -Training Workstream
- Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President of Black Environment Network.
- Ledy Leyssen, The Royal Parks, Governance Lead
- Rachel Godfrey, RHS – Training Lead
- Rose Froud, Ness Botanic Gardens - Communication & Membership Lead
- Susie Kelpie, Bgen Member - Conference Lead
- Frances Sampayo (Chelsea Physic Garden)
- Sarah Garry (British Society of Soil Science)
- Sarah Webley (South London Botanical Institute)
- Suzanne Hermiston (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh)
- Zoë Chapman (Ness Botanic Gardens, University of Liverpool)



## 4. Bgen Membership

Bgen currently has 329 members, this includes members from 30 Organisations and 18 individual members.

Bgen provides:

- Networking for members
- Promotion for members' events, training and job / volunteering opportunities
- Reciprocal membership across participants
- Training events across the UK (though not during pandemic)
- An annual conference to reflect on current sector trends and themes

## 5. Reference and administrative information

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

The current information for Bgen is as follows:

- Charity name: Botanic Gardens Education Network (Bgen)
- Charity Registration Number: 1103482
- Registered Office: 47 Kew Green, Richmond upon Thames, Surrey TW9 3AB

## 6. Accounts for financial year 2020/21

### Treasurers Report

The financial year 2020-2021, not unexpectedly, resulted in a huge impact on Bgen's finances due to Covid 19 restrictions. We were unable to proceed with any face-to-face training or run our annual conference on site as per normal, both of which normally contribute hugely to our annual income.

We took the decision as a Board to make the move to online provision where possible which required a refurbishment of the website and a restructure of the training programme. Many members were furloughed as a result of Covid 19 and with lowered staffing opportunities there were no adverts, another of Bgen's income sources, adding to our loss of income.

We maintained good communications with and support for our members through on-line Virtual Coffee Mornings and discussions re the future of learning provision in botanic gardens and similar organisations and as a result were able to maintain our membership



income. Online provision of training was resumed towards the end of the period which enabled us to move forward and regroup ahead of the 2021-22 financial year. Bgen was able to maintain the services of our excellent Coordinator, albeit with reduced input which allowed us to maintain a reasonable service for members.

As the financial year 2019-20 closed with £27,680 in the bank, the Board agreed to use banked monies to redesign and refurbish the website enabling us to be better prepared for future on-line delivery of training, our conference and communications to members. The summary of income and expenditure for this period is:

Income £2,444 and Expenditure of £12,347, which is a loss for the 2020-2021 financial year of £9,903 (see Receipts and Payments form on next pages for detail).


You will see that the accounts for 2020-2021 have been moved to a "Receipts and Payments" accounting system as we became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2021 – allowing us to move to a simplified accounting system which will reduce our accountancy costs substantially.

The accounts have been discussed by the Board of Trustees and accepted as accurate. We will be seeking your adoption of the accounts at the AGM so that they can be filed with the Charity Commission before the end of January 2022.

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

*Gail Bromley MBE, Bgen Treasurer*

[See Bgen Receipts and Payments 2020-1 on next page]

	CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES	Botanic Gardens Education Network			No (if any)		CC16a
		Receipts and payments accounts					
		For the period from	Period start date 1.4.2020	To	Period end date 31.3.2021		
Section A Receipts and payments							
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year		
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £		
A1 Receipts							
Training Days	1,150	-	-	1,150	3,600		
Membership	804	-	-	804	1,881		
Adverts	490	-	-	490	1,050		
Conference	-	-	-	-	18,120		
Grants	-	-	-	-	1,800		
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	37		
	-	-	-	-	-		
	-	-	-	-	-		
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	2,444	-	-	2,444	26,488		
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).							
	-	-	-	-			
	-	-	-	-	-		
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-		
Total receipts	2,444	-	-	2,444	26,488		
A3 Payments							
Administrator	5,135	-	-	5,135	10,826		
Training Day Expenses	64	-	-	64	1,571		
Marketing	6,000	-	-	6,000	-		
Computer & Software	127	-	-	127	915		
Consultancy & Professional	52	-	-	52	1,148		
Bookkeeping	759	-	-	759	1,182		
Bank Charges	210	-	-	210	460		
Conference Expenses	-	-	-	-	10,346		
Bursaries	-	-	-	-	2,200		
Sub total	12,347	-	-	12,347	28,648		
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)							
	-	-	-	-			
	-	-	-	-			
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-		
Total payments	12,347	-	-	12,347	28,648		
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 9,903	-	-	- 9,903	- 2,160		
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-		
A6 Cash funds last year end	27,057	623	-	27,680	-		
Cash funds this year end	17,154	623	-	17,777	- 2,160		

## 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	17,117	623	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>17,117</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>-</b>
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))			
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Debtors	1,004	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Laptop	595		199
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Creditors		1,527	
			-	
			-	
			-	



*Thanks to Bgen Board of Trustees for their work this past year and to our members for their continuing support in sharing ideas and advice, learning, skills and resources with their fellow members, to continue to instilling passion and knowledge for plant and nature education.*