



Botanic Gardens Education Network

Annual Report 2025

This Annual Report summarises BGEN activity from 1st January to 31st December 2025

Botanic Gardens Education Network
c/o Botanic Gardens Conservation International
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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 2025, BGEN has 191 members, this includes members from 45 organisations and 63 individual members. Membership renewals were processed in April 2025.

Compared to the previous year, organisational membership increased by 9 organisations. The total membership has reduced by 69. This reduction is down to a data clear up conducted on our membership platform, Membership Works. Several duplications and out of date members were collated or removed.

Current membership rates are summarised below:

Membership type	2025 Price
Individual (non-organisation based)	£40
Student	£18
Organisation 1-4 staff	£135
Organisation 5-10 staff	£170
Organisation over 10 staff	£210

BGEN provides:

- Networking for members through virtual coffee mornings and online forum events
- Promotion for members' events, training, and job / volunteering opportunities
- Professional development and training events relevant to members (currently delivered online)
- An annual conference to reflect on current sector trends and themes

We have six reciprocal membership organisations. Staff working at these organisations are non-paying, non-voting members. Reciprocal members include:

BGCI

Botanic Gardens Conservation International - BGCI's work aims to promote and develop a more efficient, cost effective and rational approach to plant conservation in botanic gardens.

Black Environment Network

Black Environment Network is working towards a vision of full multicultural environmental participation, local and global.

Thrive

We use gardening to bring about positive changes in the lives of people living with disabilities or ill health, or who are isolated, disadvantaged, or vulnerable.

LEEF

London Environmental Educators forum. LEEF is a membership organisation for London's most passionate green educators. We meet to share skills and knowledge to improve the quality and quantity of environmental education delivered across the capital.

BIAZA

The British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) is the professional body representing the best zoos and aquariums in the UK and Ireland.

PlantNetwork

PlantNetwork is a charity and membership organisation that provides training and network support to gardens and gardeners throughout Britain and Ireland.

2. Training and Events

In 2025 BGEN ran a full and diverse set of virtual coffee mornings and training sessions.

Virtual Coffee Mornings – these are free for members and charged for non-members:

Dr Sarah Edwards – The Ethnobotanical: Plants, Peoples & Perspectives - 7 January

Dr Sarah Edwards is an ethnobotanist and biodiversity informaticist, currently based at the University of Oxford, where she teaches ethnobiology and biological conservation. Sarah discussed the interdisciplinary field of Ethnobotany, drawing on her personal experience as a practising ethnobotanist.

Dr Kim Polgreen - Nature and Sustainability Education and Connection in Secondary Schools – 30 April

Dr Kim Polgreen is a nature and sustainability educator and researcher based at the University of Oxford. In Kim's talk she shared some of what she has learned from 5 years in outdoor education at the University of Oxford's Wytham Woods, and her practical and research work encouraging nature connection in secondary schools.

Sara Blair-Manning & Jen Ridding – Developing HE partnerships at Birmingham Botanical Gardens - 4 July

Both Sara and Jen are based at Birmingham Botanical Gardens: Sara Blair-Manning is Chief Executive and Jen Ridding is Head of Learning and Engagement. In their talk they discussed how Birmingham Botanical Gardens, an independent charity, are currently building strategic partnerships and collaborations with universities to develop new approaches to horticulture, research, audience development, and engagement.

Ruth Carter – Natural History GCSE - 15 October

Ruth Carter is a Stakeholder Relationships Manager at Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examination Board (OCR) leading on Greening the Curriculum and Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging for the Policy Team. She is currently working on the new Natural History GCSE and in this presentation she gave an update on where they currently are and what will come next.

Daniel Docking - Understanding the Role of Humans in the Spread of Invasive Non-Native Plants – 2 December

Daniel Docking is the Technical Manager for the Property Care Association (PCA), specialising in Invasive Non-Native Plants (INNP). Daniel discussed the importance of understanding the role humans play in the spread of invasive plants, how to identify key species and a structured, responsible and effective approach to managing them.

Online Training (these are charged at a reduced rate for members, and full price for non-members):

Dr Adam Levy - Communicating Climate Change – 26 March

Dr Adam Levy is a science journalist and climate change communicator. This session, delivered by the Royal Meteorological Society, was designed to empower communicators and educators by providing a refresher on the current state of play on climate change and sharing best practices for effective climate communication.

Alex Mills - Etymology – 18 June

Alex Mills is a botanist and educator working for Natural England. Delving into the world of the etymology and plant names, Alex demonstrated how the names of plants – scientific and vernacular – tell us so much about plants, our world, and ourselves.

Dr Isabel Gilbert - Decolonisation practices – 19 Aug

Dr Isabel Gilbert is a lecturer and historian based at the University of Worcester. Her research focuses on colonial legacies, anti-colonialism, interpretation and symbolism, as well as social justice. In this training session, Isabel explored the ways in which our places are connected to legacies of colonialism and considered the extent to which we have already undertaken work to understand or interpret this.

Dr Matt Elliot – Biosecurity - 16 September

Dr Matt Elliot works as a Plant Health & Biosecurity Scientist at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. This session explained the issues associated with biosecurity for botanic gardens and offered advice on processes which can be introduced to improve biosecurity.

Dr Andy Chandler- Grevatt - Moss Safari – an introduction to moss identification - 4 November

Dr. Andrew Chandler- Grevatt is a science educator with a long career as a teacher, researcher, and author of school science textbooks. In session participants learnt about the organisms that make their home in moss, basic urban moss identification, and understanding moss as a microhabitat and microecosystem.

3. BGEN Annual Conference (National Botanic Garden of Wales)

Gardens of Tomorrow: Addressing the Climate Crisis through Education and Decolonisation

Wednesday 5th and Thursday 6th February, 2025

BGEN's 2025 Annual Conference, *"Gardens of Tomorrow: Addressing the climate crisis through education and democratisation"*, was held at the National Botanic Garden of Wales and attended by 56 delegates from across the botanic garden, museum, education and research sectors. Delegate feedback demonstrated strong impact and relevance, with 91% of respondents rating their likelihood of recommending a future BGEN conference as 8–10 out of 10, and 74% rating the conference's contribution to their professional development at the same level. Delegates particularly valued the quality of keynote contributions from Andy Middleton, Dr Isabel Gilbert, Dr Yvonne Howard-Bunt, and Dr Paul Smith, alongside a diverse programme of practical workshops, lightning talks and facilitated discussions addressing climate education, inclusion, evaluation and community engagement.

Gross income from the conference was £8,605 - £4,969 (expenses) = £3,636 net profit.

The conference played a significant role in strengthening professional capacity and sector connectivity, with delegates highlighting both practical learning and the value of peer exchange. One attendee described it as *"an inspiring and thought-provoking conference with ideas I can genuinely take back into my work"*, while another noted *"the rare opportunity to connect deeply with others facing similar challenges in education and engagement"*. The immersive setting at the National Botanic Garden of Wales further supported learning, reflection and networking, and the thoughtful addition of social events, including a conference dinner, a conference quiz, and a pizza night added to the quality of the delegate experience. Overall, the conference clearly advanced BGEN's charitable objectives by supporting high-quality education practice, fostering collaboration, and building a confident, connected professional community focused on climate action and social impact.

We thank the National Botanic Garden of Wales for their sponsorship and hosting of the conference.

Our next conference will be held online on Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th January, 2026.

4. Structure Governance and Management

Throughout 2025, BGEN has conducted a review of its governance including its policies and procedures. This work is ongoing, but the following policies and processes have been reviewed and brought up to industry standard:

- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-bullying and harassment policy
- Investment policy
- Complaints policy
- Financial controls and security processes.

Board working groups are also reviewing its expenses policy and financial controls and security processes are being re-reviewed, due to a new Treasurer being elected.

A full list of policies and processes which need developing or reviewing is now in operation and will be used to determine the priorities in 2026.

Following on from a strategic away day, the Board is developing a new strategic plan for BGEN.

Constitution Changes

The following constitutional changes were voted on by members at the 2026 AGM, following Trustee approval in the November 2025 Board Meeting:

- Amendment to Clause 5 – trustees will be covered by indemnity insurance as standard – Approved in January 2026 AGM.
- Amendment to Clause 11.5 – quorum is redefined from 25 individuals, to one-tenth of BGEN membership and non-member trustees – Approved in January 2026 AGM.
- Amendment to Clause 15.1 – reduction in acceptable trustee absence before seat is considered vacant from six months to three months – Approved in January 2026 AGM.
- Amendment to Clause 16 – inclusion of a maximum length of service for Board Trustees – Approved in January 2026 AGM.

The approved constitution will be shared with the Charity Commission, along with this Annual Report.

5. BGEN Board

5.1 BGEN Board Meetings:

All Board meetings were held online to maximise Trustee participation:

- 8th January 2025 – Focus on final preparations for the February Conference, including ticket sales, workshop allocation, evaluation planning and the Gail Bromley Award soft launch. Governance priorities discussed, including annual Charity Commission return and a full review of policies. Membership pricing and value reviewed, with agreement to consider options post-conference. Treasury update confirmed credit card access and signatory changes. AGM arrangements confirmed to be held indoors due to weather considerations.
- 12th March 2025 – Review of Conference outcomes, with positive feedback on venue, catering and marketing, and clear recommendations for more practical sessions in future. Financial report confirmed the Conference made a surplus. Agreement that future in-person conferences should be hosted further north. Membership fees agreed to remain unchanged for the year. Two governance policies approved, and Board structure changes agreed ahead of maternity leave cover. Strategic Away Day planning initiated.
- 13th May 2025 – Treasurer Trustee recruitment progressed following formal resignation of the Treasurer. Financial position confirmed as stable with reserves maintained. Training and coffee morning programme expanded and promoted via social media. Early planning began for the 2026 Conference, including theme development and speaker recruitment. Digital audit workstream launched, and preparations for the Strategic Away Day continued.
- 30th July 2025 – Policy development progressed with Safeguarding, Complaints and Anti-Harassment policies drafted for review. Training and event marketing reported as performing well, with strong engagement and email open rates. Conference planning advanced with a panel-based format agreed and keynote speakers identified. Governance discussions included trustee re-elections, recruitment

to the Governance workstream and AGM planning. Digital roadmap and Microsoft licensing work progressed.

- 25th November 2025 –Finalisation of 2026 Conference programme and confirmation of strong early ticket sales. Continued growth in training and coffee morning attendance noted. Treasury discussions focused on reviewing organisational membership pricing and approving amendments to the Investment Policy. Safeguarding Policy approved and Safeguarding Officers appointed. Recruitment of new Trustees agreed, alongside constitutional changes to Board terms and maximum length of service, both approved for AGM submission. Preparations for AGM and Annual Return confirmed as a key priority.
- The AGM for 2026 was confirmed for Thursday 29th January, as part of the BGEN Conference.

5.2 BGEN Board Members:

Since our last Annual Report, we have had two AGMs (February 2025, and January 2026). Below is a summary of resignations, re-elections, and elections of BGEN Trustees.

Resignations: Felicity Gaffney (2025), Wadzanayi Mavhura (2025), Sarah Garry (2026), Susie Kelpie (2026), Rupert Bannister (2026)

Re-election: Sarah Webley (2025), Helen Miller (2026)

Election: Isabel Gilbert (2026), Sara Blair-Manning (2026), Seb Stroud (2026), Megan Harvey (2026), Jess Joyson (2026), Eduard Snoeren (2026)

BGEN Board (correct as of January 29th, 2026):

Trustee Name	Workstream	Appointed	Status
Lauren Baker Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum	Chair Governance, Communications and Treasury	January 2024	Active
Sophie Muskett Royal Horticultural Society	Vice Chair	January 2024	Paused (Maternity Leave)
Helen Miller BGCI	Conference (Lead) and Treasury Acting Vice Chair	January 2026	Active
Sarah Webley	Training and Conference	January 2025	Active
Ruth Godfrey University of Leicester Botanic Garden	Training and Conference	January 2024	Active

Rupert Bannister	Communications	January 2024	Paused (To be reviewed Easter 2026)
Nia Crouch Forestry England	Training and Conference	January 2024	Active
Isabel Gilbert University of Worcester	Governance	January 2026	Active
Sara Blair-Manning Birmingham Botanical Gardens	Governance	January 2026	Active
Seb Stroud University of Leeds	Training and Conference	January 2026	Active
Megan Harvey Reading Room	Communications (Lead)	January 2026	Active
Jess Joyson Royal Horticultural Society	Communications	January 2026	Active
Eduard Snoeren	Treasury (Lead)	January 2026	Active
Kirsten Corrie, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh	Training and Conference	January 2024	Active (Invited Member)

The BGEN Board is supported by Samantha Bowden as BGEN Coordinator (started 15th October 2024), PushLogic (website) and Sandy Openshaw (bookkeeper).

6. Communications and Membership workstream

The Communications & Membership work stream has focused on rebooting their work in 2025. A big focus has been on reflecting on the brand for BGEN, and elevating our digital presence.

We facilitated the first strategic away day for the network, where Trustees came together at the Birmingham Botanic Gardens to discuss BGEN's purpose: refining our objectives and defining what we want to achieve for our members in 2026. This will form the foundation of BGEN's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

We also began to audit our communication channels; reflecting on areas such as our social media, website and email marketing. You may have noticed an uplift in our online presence this year, as we become more active online. We aim to continue this trajectory into 2026 with more exciting communication projects to come, many of which provide members with the opportunity to become more actively engaged in the network.

Finally, a large part of our work has been behind the scenes: the often unrecognised but vitally important processes that are required to keep communications going and ensure we start off strong in 2026. This includes developing improved internal file sharing systems, setting the ground works for improved membership contributions to our communication activities and outlining clear messaging for BGEN's outputs. We are very excited to kick off 2026 and encourage everyone to keep an eye out for opportunities to engage with us!

7. Reference and administrative information

Charity name:	Botanic Gardens Education Network (BGEN)
Charity Registration Number:	1103482
Registered Office:	c/o BGCI, Descanso House, 199 Kew Road, Richmond, TW9 3BW

Trustee Selection:

BGEN is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from its members and a small number of non-members as per our constitution.

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 finishes if they wish to restand. Trustees cannot stand for more than two terms in total, a maximum of 6 years, pending extraordinary circumstances as per our constitution.

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

Financial Review and Accounts for financial year 2024/25

The Treasury Workstream is pleased to present the Financial Statements for the financial year spanning 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The year 2024/2025 has marked a period of significant transformation, characterised by substantial changes and the development of an ambitious vision to enhance the relevance and value of our offerings to our membership base. To realise this vision, BGEN has made strategic and sensible investments in essential equipment and appointed a remunerated member of staff to bolster the various workstreams and strengthen our external communications.

Reserves Policy

Reserves represent the portion of charity's unrestricted funds that may be deployed freely in furtherance of any of the charity's purposes. BGEN maintains free unrestricted reserves for the following purposes:

- To establish a prudent level of working capital that safeguards the continuity of our work, thereby ensuring the stability of the network, its programmes, employment and ongoing operations.
- To provide adequate funding for seizing unexpected opportunities and meeting non-recurring expenses that will enhance long-term organizational capacity, including staff development, research and development, and investment in equipment and supporting materials.
- To provide appropriate cover for risks including unforeseen expenditure, one-off unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss of income or funding, and uninsured losses

The Board of Trustees reviews these criteria in light of BGEN's strategy and Annual Plan to determine the appropriate target level of free reserves required to fulfil these objectives.

The Board of Trustees may, from time to time, designate funds from free reserves for significant project expenditure or the replacement of major assets.

Operating Reserves are not intended to compensate for a permanent loss of funds or to bridge any ongoing structural budget deficit. Rather, it is envisaged that Operating Reserves will be deployed and replenished within a reasonably brief timeframe. The Reserve Policy is implemented in harmony with BGEN's other governance policies and is designed to support the goals and strategy articulated in BGEN's Financy Policy and strategic and operational plans.

Treasurer's Report

A new Treasurer, Eduard Snoeren, assumed office in July 2025. Eduard's remit encompasses the strengthening of financial processes and procedures, and the provision of more frequent and comprehensive financial information to the Board.

BGEN continues to maintain a simplified 'Receipts and Payments' accounting system, which records actual monetary flows within accounting for accruals – namely, income earned or expenses incurred but not yet settled financially.

Financial Summary for the Year

Total income for the year declined by 19% (current year £13, 673; prior year £16,295), whilst total expenditure decreased by 16% (current year £15,383; prior year £16,728). Consequently, the charity recorded a net deficit of £1,071, in contrast to the small surplus of £567 in the previous year. This outcome reflects the substantial reduction in training day income and advertising revenue.

Income derived from training activities contributed merely £130 during the financial year (prior year £3,370), representing a decline of 96%. The Board has already addressed this and improvements have been since from April 2025, which will be reported on in the following annual report.

Conversely, membership income demonstrated encouraging growth, increasing by 32% to £4,840 compared with £3,650 in the preceding year. Conference income similarly rose by 25% to £8,605 from £6,895, while advertising revenue contributed only £95 compared with £2,330 in the previous year.

The financial year 2024-2025 concluded with reserves of £21,064 held in the BGEN back account.

The accounts received approval from the Board in January 2026. We now respectfully seek member's formal adoption of these accounts at the forthcoming AGM, enabling their subsequent filing with the Charity Commission.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Board, the Treasury Group, our Bookkeeper and Coordinator for their invaluable support throughout the past year.

- Eduard Snoeren, BGEN Treasurer



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Botanic Garden Education Network

NC (if any)
1103482

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/04/2024		31/03/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Training Days	130	-	-	130	3,370
Membership	4,840	-	-	4,840	3,650
Conference	8,605	-	-	8,605	6,895
Adverts	95	-	-	95	2,330
Grants	-	-	-	-	-
Other Income	3	-	-	3	50
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	13,673	-	-	13,673	16,295
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	13,673	-	-	13,673	16,295
A3 Payments					
Administrator	6,716	-	-	6,716	10,017
Computer & Software	405	-	-	405	675
Bookkeeping	1,261	-	-	1,261	1,671
Bank charges & Interest	182	-	-	182	393
Conference expenses	4,969	-	-	4,969	2,591
General expenses	108	-	-	108	97
Training Day expenses	-	-	-	-	199
Office equipment	1,103	-	-	1,103	-
Consultancy & Professional	-	-	-	-	85
Sub total	14,744	-	-	14,744	15,728
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	14,744	-	-	14,744	15,728
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 1,071	-	-	- 1,071	567
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	22,135	-	-	22,135	-
Cash funds this year end	21,064	-	-	21,064	567

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				
		21,064	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	21,064	-	-
	(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				
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Laptop	617	-	-
	Mobile phone	486	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Creditors	555	-	
		-	-	
		-	-	
		-	-	
		-	-	
		-	-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	

Special thanks to Sam Bowden, BGEN Coordinator, for their dedication, determination and invaluable coordination of all network activities and support to the Board.

Thanks to our Board of Trustees for their work and commitment this past year, and to all our members for their continuing participation and support in so many ways, to help advance BGEN's mission and objectives.