

Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES)

Report of the trustees for the year ending 31 December 2020

1. Charity reference and administrative details

Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES) is a registered charity in England and Wales (registration number: 1187828) since 7th February 2020. It is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), whose only voting members are its charity trustees – ‘Foundation’ model constitution.

Address: 10 Redshank Close, Haverhill CB9 0PB, Suffolk, UK

Current trustee names: Anneloes Martinsen (chair), Lee Norman Fletcher, David Cammaerts

Trustees who joined and/or stepped down during 2020: Jasmine Canham, Olive Jayne Burchill, Matthew Willkins, and Robert John Colgan.

Website: <https://www.beeanatureguide.org.uk>

2. Charity structure, governance, and management

The CIO’s governing document was first approved on 7th February 2020 and last amended on 2nd October 2020.

At the end of 2020, BEES was governed by three passionate and dedicated trustees and could rely on the help of four other volunteers. Trustees were selected based on affinity, skills and experience, and passion for our cause. The chair holds a long-term friendship with one of the other trustees sharing the same passion and desire to create a network of nature guides throughout the UK. The relationship between trustees and volunteers within the organisation is genuine, friendly, and positive.

Because the charity was in its first year, working meetings were organised almost every week to keep track of progress and tasks to perform. Decisions were made by the quorum (per our governing document, the quorum is two charity trustees, or the number nearest to one third of the total number of charity trustees, whichever is greater, or such larger number as the charity trustees may decide from time to time).

Across 2020 the organisation had up to seven trustees on its board. Our youngest founding trustee, Jasmine stepped down from her duties after a year and a half of dedicated work setting up the charity because she wanted to pursue her studies at university. Her input is still valued and as such she remains involved within the organisation in an advisory capacity. Three other trustees joined in the course of 2020 but voluntarily stepped down within a short timeframe. They were selected based on skills, knowledge, and experience (as evidenced by their CV) after applying for trustee positions we posted on Environmentjob, a well-known advertising website (<https://www.environmentjob.co.uk/jobs>). Two of them quickly realised that there was



more work to carry out than they had expected and they stepped down by mutual agreement. The third one, joined as Treasurer and unfortunately had to step down due to unforeseen professional issues.

What have we learned?

We have all learned from this challenging year. We had to learn to work remotely and hold meetings online most of the time, which sometimes makes communication between team members harder than it should be. We have also learned from the process of selecting new trustees. We did not have policies and procedures for the induction and training of trustees in place. Trustees were sent the charity's governing document to read and advised to look at "the Charity trustee: what's involved (CC3a)" document from the Charity Commission. We are currently working towards improving our policies and procedures in that regard, including allowing a month period of reflection after their induction for new trustees to understand how the charity is governed, structured, managed, what are its charitable objectives and how to achieve them, and give them the opportunity to withdraw their application if needed before being appointed.

3. Charity's objectives and activities in the year

Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES) is a small charity aiming to grow national awareness and knowledge of nature and environmental issues through adult education: training and supporting all who love and are interested in nature to become skilled nature guides and go on to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with their friends, families, colleagues, and communities.

As described in its governing document, the objects of BEES are: "For the public benefit, to advance the education of the public in all the aspects of nature and environmental protection".

To do so, we planned to launch the first low-cost nature guide training course programme in the UK, starting in Suffolk and Norfolk, in September 2020, accessible to all adults aged 18 and over. The course programme will run over 2 up to 3 years: a first year of theory and practical courses covering numerous facets of the natural sciences from ecology to astronomy, mycology to Earth sciences, and practical skills in leadership, nature guide methodology, first aid, and map reading; and a second (up to third) year to practice their newfound knowledge to foster confidence and leadership skills (further details about the course programme is available on our website <https://www.beeanatureguide.org.uk/the-course>).

Although new to the UK, this training model has been successfully pioneered by our partners in Belgium, the *Cercles des Naturalistes de Belgique* (CNB), registered charity in Belgium, since 1975. They have trained about 10,000 ambassadors for nature so far. Our course programme also receives the support of the British Naturalist's Association (BNA), a registered charity since 1905. We are excited to bring this training method to the UK and help to develop and support a growing community of nature guides.

Our planned activities for 2020 were as follows:

- Developing a website to attract members of the public, potential funders, and other organisations, and to promote our upcoming activities.
- Preparing the course content for each topic (22 different subjects).
- Looking for teachers to teach each individual topic.
- Looking for venues to carry on our course programme.



- Advertising for the course programme (hard advertising and online advertising) and recruiting participants.
- Looking and applying for grants to support our activities. We believe that financial circumstance should not be a barrier to environmental education and try to ensure the course is kept as financially accessible as possible. As such, the fee to enrol on the course (currently £320), does not cover the full operating costs of running the programme. The charity relies on fundraising and donations to make up the remainder. No profit is made from running the course and the fee offers substantial value for money given its breadth and depth, and combination of theoretical and practical training.
- Scheduling and launching the first training course programme, with a start date in September 2020 for Suffolk and Norfolk.

Statement by the charity trustees: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at the end of 2020, the charity did not meet its objectives nor comply with its duty to have due regard to guidance on public benefit as published by the Charity Commission.

4. Charity's achievement and performance

Due to the difficult times, we have all been through during the pandemic in 2020, we had to take the hard decision to postpone the start of our course programme from September 2020 to January 2021. This meant we could not deliver all our charitable objectives planned for 2020.

What did we do during 2020?

One of our volunteers created a professional-looking website and we started advertising, in magazines and online using our Facebook page. By the end of 2020, visits to our website were increasing and 70 people registered their interest in the course programme by filling out our registration form on the website. By the end of 2020, 23 members of the public registered their interest and then finalised their place on the course by paying the course fees either at the end of 2020 or early January 2021. By mid-January 2021, another 31 people visited the website and filled out the course registration form. In total and by mid-January 2021, 101 members of the public registered an interest in our course programme and the charity officially had 26 participants on the course to make up our very first cohort. This interest was very encouraging and promising for a first year of such educational programme. It showed the necessity and importance of having an accessible course programme about biodiversity and natural sciences, especially in these times of climate change and urgency of protecting our natural heritage for us and future generations.

We spent the second half of the year creating and adapting the course programme to follow the government health guidelines at the time. To facilitate the learning during social meeting restrictions, one of our trustees developed an online learning platform from scratch using Moodle, a well-known educational course management system (CMS). This platform has been designed not only for online teaching sessions but also for self-training, including continuous access to session recordings, handbooks and other publications, for interacting with participants and teachers through our BEEHive forum, and with the ultimate objective to develop a network of ambassadors for nature.

We worked on the course content material. One of our volunteers helped by translating the course material received from our partner charity in Belgium from French into English. The trustees then started reviewing and adapting the content to the British wildlife, law and natural environment, and improving the course



content to create a high-quality educational programme. We maintained our partnerships with the CNB and the BNA, by meeting with them. We are grateful to have received some feedback from one of the BNA trustees to improve the course content of some subjects.

We started recruiting and increasing our pool of teachers for the course and we scheduled the first training programme to start in early 2021.

We applied for grants (such as grants from the National Lottery and the Steel Charitable Trust) which were unsuccessful amid the wave of COVID-19 pandemic related stresses on all charities. We will look at diversifying our fundraising strategy in the coming years to generate a more stable base of resources to support the charity.

All trustees and volunteers worked hard during 2020 to ensure the charity could deliver a course programme of high standards and quality which was as accessible as possible to the adult public in 2021. We did launch and start the first nature guide training courses in Suffolk and Norfolk in January and February 2021 respectively, which will be detailed in our Trustee Annual Report 2021.

Future plans?

Our main plan is to settle and establish the course programme in Suffolk and Norfolk. However, we have long-term aims to expand and cover the whole of the UK. We will work towards developing partnerships and collaborations with other organisations and individuals to create a pool of teachers, venues, and volunteers in other counties necessary to establish and make the course programme accessible to members of the public in other regions of the UK.

Short-term objectives for 2021 are to deliver our nature guide training course to our first cohort of participants in Suffolk and Norfolk in 2021, to make the course programme a success from start to finish. This includes:

- Finishing the content of the course material for all the subjects.
- Preparing, formatting, and printing out all the handbooks.
- Organising and scheduling the theory and practical sessions for all the subjects.
- Asking for and receiving feedback from our participants and teachers to continuously improve ourselves and the course programme.
- Recruiting skilled volunteers to help the charity develop and meet its long- and short-term objectives.
- Working on developing our social visibility and fundraising strategy.

5. Financial review

It is worth mentioning that the charity was created just a few weeks before the first lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This global crisis impacted on the development of the charity and prevented the charity to meet its objectives and reach its financial target for 2020. Therefore, we did not have the income we had planned.

The charity earned £2,063.48 during 2020 (see our BEES Receipts and Payments Accounts 2020). Our principal sources of income in 2020 were loans from the trustees and the course fees. The loans provided by



the trustees came from personal savings and have been earned through lawful employment. It has been agreed, in meeting minutes, that the loans will become donations after two years if the charity cannot afford to pay them back. The course fees accounted for 43% of the charity's income at the end of 2020.

We used £1,171.06 to pay for the operating costs of our website and our online learning platform, and for advertising.

At the end of 2020, we had £892.42 left on the bank account.

We have a Reserve Policy in place stating that no funds should be held in reserve until all costs relating to present charity activity (i.e. relating to the current course cohort) are paid. The charity is currently in its infancy and therefore has very little funds to go towards a reserve. At the end of 2020, we were holding £350 as designated funds (for ongoing website and online learning platform server fees) and classed by us not as reserve funds.

Annual Report Approved by the trustees



Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES)
Registered charity in England and Wales - no. 1187828

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Notes:

1 - Loans provided by the trustees come from personal savings and have been earned through lawful employment