



## **Minutes of the BSN Annual General Meeting**

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024

**Time:** 5:45pm - 6:30pm (BST)

**Location:** Union Kirk, 333 Union Street, Aberdeen AB11 6BS

**Attendees:** Neil Evans (President), Michelle Bellingham (Treasurer), Paula Brunton (Deputy Treasurer), Rebecca Dumbell (Communications Secretary), Kate Ellacott (General Secretary), Isadora Clivatti Furigo (Deputy Communications Secretary), Gisela Helfer (Grants Secretary), Preeti Jethwa (Meetings Secretary), Nicole Morrissey (ECR Representative), Roni Robbins (Minutes), Karen Spencer, Sue Thorn (CEO) and current members of BSN. The meeting was quorate.

### **1. Apologies for absence:**

Apologies have been received from Jane Robinson.

### **2. Approval of the minutes of the 2023 AGM.**

Minutes approved without edits.

### **3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. President's report**

Neil Evans noted that it had been a busy year for the BSN. He reiterated the significant benefits the Society derives from its journal, which generates income crucial for supporting its members. Neil also highlighted recent changes within the editorial team, noting the departure at the end of 2023 of Perry Barrett and Julian Mercer (FMN Strand) and, at the end of 2024, of Robert Millar (TCN Strand) from their roles as Journal Editor-in-Chief. Their commitment to ensuring the publication of high-quality papers has been instrumental in the journal's success. The Board of Trustees would like to record their thanks for all their efforts. Mike Lehman (FMN) took over as Editor-in-Chief of the FMN strand from January 2024 and Wouter de Herder has agreed to assume the role of TCN Editor-in-Chief from 2025. Mike has already initiated a series of new projects, and we eagerly anticipate the exciting developments ahead for the journal under their leadership.

Neil noted the changes to the Board of Trustees, with Jo Lewis, Karen Spencer, Nicole Morrissey and Chinedu Udeh-Momoh all stepping down. Neil expressed gratitude for their time and efforts in supporting the Society. A warm welcome was extended to the new trustees, Daniel Brierley, Jeff Davis, Jessica Chadwick and Limei Zhang.

There were specific thanks to Nicole Morrissey at the end of her tenure as ECR representative. Nicole has successfully ensured that the ECR group was well represented

at all Trustees meetings and that their needs remained a primary focus of the Society's objectives. The Trustees are looking forward to working with her replacement, Jessica Chadwick, along with the new deputy ECR, Miguel Ruiz Cruz.

The Ordinary Resolution to reappoint as members of the Advisory Board: Jane Robinson, John Russell, Stafford Lightman, John Morris and Joe Herbert was passed unanimously.

## **5. Treasurer's report (including to receive the 2023 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts)**

Michelle Bellingham presented an overview of the Society's finances, comparing income and expenditure between 2022 and 2023. Overall, expenditure in 2023 was lower as the Society only supported a stand-alone event in the past year as opposed to hosting the ICN in 2022. However, this also resulted in reduced income from meeting events. Membership income remained stable with a slight increase observed. Expenditure in areas other than annual events was consistent with previous years.

Grants continued to be awarded to members, though the total amount was less than in 2022 due to fewer travel grants being awarded for the Exeter conference compared to the ICN Glasgow event. A small discrepancy between the Treasurer's report and the Grant Secretary's report was noted, as some awardees claim their grants in years following the award year.

JNE generated an income windfall in 2022 and 2023, but conservative budgeting will continue as this trend may not persist. Following the Society's VAT registration, a VAT refund was received in 2023. The value of the Society's investments has increased, prompting the Trustees to review future requirements. Due to this increase in income, the Trustees are setting up a charity account to enable savings accounts at multiple banks.

Michelle concluded by thanking Sue Thorn, on behalf of the Society, for her hard work and effort on the finances.

## **6. Membership Secretary's report**

In the absence of Matei Bolborea, Neil Evans presented the Membership Secretary's report. Membership has grown to 645 members, representing a 6.4% increase over the previous year. The Society maintains strong international representation, particularly in the USA, with 42% of members now residing outside the UK. There has also been a small uptake in complimentary memberships for individuals from low-income and lower-middle-income countries, as well as for members on career breaks.

## **7. Meeting Secretary's report**

Preeti Jethwa presented her report, announcing that the next BSN meeting will be held in Bradford from Monday, September 1st to Thursday, September 4th, 2025, as a

standalone event. The next ICN event will take place in Japan in 2026. Due to the high cost of attending this meeting, there is a proposal to organise a small ECR event in 2026. St Andrews has been proposed as a host city for the BSN Annual Meeting in 2027. Preeti encouraged members to suggest potential host cities and to get in touch if they are interested in organising a meeting on behalf of the Society.

#### **8. Grants Secretary's report**

Gisela Helfer presented her report, noting that the grant awards panel is currently reviewing the grant application process. Members who have received a grant within the last five years will be sent a survey to help shape the future of the process. With the increase in membership, application numbers have risen significantly, leading to a reduced success rate. Success rates varied, from 6% for Academic Support to 41% for Undergraduate Student Laboratory Experience Grants. Gisela expressed thanks to the members of the grant panel, mentioning that each grant is now reviewed by three members before a panel meeting is held. The goal is to increase the number of reviewers for each grant.

To ensure fairness, the new rules that were introduced last year are now firmly established: members can only receive funding once every two years, and only one application per lab can be funded per cycle. Grant recipients continue to be encouraged to publish in JNE.

#### **9. EDI Secretary's report**

No report presented in Chinedu Udeh-Momoh's absence.

#### **10. ECR report**

Nicole Morrissey presented the report, highlighting the success of the early career researchers (ECR) event held in Exeter in 2023, which saw significant participation and discussions. The ECR event at the current meeting also received positive feedback. The ECR Sub-committee's suggestion to use different coloured badges for ECRs was well received by delegates. The relaunched mentoring scheme will open again for applications in September 2024.

The ECR Subcommittee is currently seeking new members to ensure strong representation within the Society. Exciting webinars are being planned, including a collaboration with the PANS ECR group. Nicole expressed her enjoyment and the valuable experience gained during her tenure as ECR representative. She extended her best wishes to Jessica Chadwick and Miguel Ruiz Cruz for the upcoming year.

## **11. Communications report**

Rebecca Dumbell presented her report highlighting efforts to support members, particularly early career researchers (ECRs), and placing greater focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The Society web page averages 522 visits per month, with our grants information page predictably ranking among the most visited. Engagement remains strong across all Society social media platforms, with increases noted across the board: quarterly newsletters (833 subscribers, up 57%); Twitter (X) account (1745 followers, up 9%); Facebook followers (1600, up 9%); and we are expanding our presence on LinkedIn (404 followers). Rebecca closed by expressing her thanks to Isadora Clivatti Furigo and Agnes Becker for their contributions to Society communications support.

## **12. Journal Secretary's report**

Mike Lehman presented Dave Grattan's report on his behalf. Mike expressed his enthusiasm for joining the senior editorial team and highlighted the journal's continued growth. He noted a significant rise in open access papers, increasing from 28% in 2021 to 58% in 2023. The move to open access necessitates an increase in submissions to the journal. Mike emphasised that the editors and Journal Secretary are actively meeting to develop a strategy to sustain the journal's success. He also introduced a new ECR/Editorial Mentorship scheme that is soon to be implemented.

## **13. Notification of election results for Trustees**

Daniel Brierley, Jeff Davies, Jessica Chadwick and Limei Zhang were the successful candidates.

## **14. A.O.C.B**

Formal thanks were given to retiring trustees: Jo Lewis, Karen Spencer and Chinedu Udeh-Momoh