



Minutes of the BSN Annual General Meeting

Date: 1 September 2025

Time: 4:00pm - 5:00pm (BST)

Location: University of Bradford, Richmond Road, Bradford, BD7 1DP

Attendees: Neil Evans (President), Michelle Bellingham (Treasurer), Dan Brierley, Jeff Davies (Deputy Grants Secretary), Rebecca Dumbell (Communications Secretary), Kate Ellacott (General Secretary), Isadora Clivatti Furigo (Deputy Communications Secretary), Gisela Helfer (Grants Secretary), Preeti Jethwa (Meetings Secretary), Miguel Ruiz Cruz (ECR Representative), Roni Robbins (Minutes), Sue Thorn (CEO) via Zoom and current members of BSN. The meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies have been received from Paula Brunton and Kevin O'Byrne.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 2024 AGM.

Minutes approved without edits.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. President's report

Neil Evans reported that the Society had experienced another successful year. The *Journal of Neuroendocrinology* continues to generate a significant income, which remains critical to the Society's activities and future development. Neil added that the Fundamental and Mechanistic strand continues to perform well under the guidance of Prof. Mike Lehman and Prof. Bob Goodman and the Translational and Clinical strand has developed strongly under the leadership of Prof. Wouter de Herder and Dr Kristi Alexandraki. It was noted that the Journal's impact factor had increased during the year, reflecting its ongoing success. Neil encouraged members to consider the Journal as their primary outlet for publications. The introduction of an Early Career Researcher Editorial Board was also highlighted as a key initiative, providing valuable training opportunities and experience for the next generation of editors.

Neil further reported on the requirement to appoint an external examiner of the Society's accounts as Mr Elliot Harris, who had served in this role for several years, has now retired. Following a review of the applications to tender, *Price Bailey* was identified as the preferred candidate. *Price Bailey* had already been engaged in managing the Society's VAT returns and was therefore familiar with its financial operations, enabling a smooth transition into the new role.

The Ordinary Resolution to appoint *Price Bailey* the external examiner of the Society's accounts was passed unanimously.

Neil noted the changes to the Board of Trustees, with Matei Bolborea, Jessica Chadwick and Preeti Jethwa all stepping down. Neil expressed gratitude for their time and efforts in supporting the Society. A warm welcome was extended to the new trustees, Mino Belle, Monica Imbernon and Miguel Ruiz Cruz, as well as to the incoming deputy ECR representative, Joao Paolo Cavalcanti de Albuquerque.

5. Treasurer's report (including to receive the 2024 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts)

Michelle Bellingham presented an overview of the Society's financial performance, focusing on the 2024 accounts with projections for 2025 and beyond. It was noted that the Society remains in a strong financial position despite wider economic challenges, providing a sound basis for future activities.

The Society's reserves increased from just over £1 million in 2023 to over £1.2 million in 2024. The required reserve, set by the Trustees, stands at £900,000. Funds in excess of this level will be directed towards member support through grants and other initiatives.

With respect to income, membership income rose as a result of both growth in membership numbers and timing differences in subscription payments. Income from the Aberdeen Conference was lower than that of Exeter in the previous year, as some accommodation income from Exeter was allocated to Aberdeen. Journal income decreased by 8% compared to 2023; however, this reduction was smaller than anticipated, and overall income remains strong. Bank interest and miscellaneous income increased, in part due to a VAT return.

Expenditure was slightly higher than in 2023, largely due to an increase in grants awarded to members. Expenditure on the *Journal of Neuroendocrinology* was lower than budgeted, as some funds will be carried forward into 2025. Additional costs were incurred for recruitment, HR and payroll set-up, and professional fees associated with the appointment of a new staff member. Committee expenses were also higher, mainly due to a dedicated Strategy Board meeting convened to review the Society's long-term planning.

Investments performed positively, increasing in value by £15,000 to £288,000. Total assets at year-end stood at £1.2 million. A new Flagstone account was opened to diversify funds across high-interest savings accounts, thereby strengthening financial security and improving returns.

Looking ahead, deficit budgets have been set for 2025–2027 in order to reduce reserves to the required level, in line with charity regulations. The current Bradford meeting is forecast to run at a small deficit of around £14,000, consistent with previous conferences. The *Journal of Neuroendocrinology* remains the Society's major source of income, with an emphasis on increasing the number of high-quality papers to prepare for a future open-access publishing model. It was further noted that gains and losses on investments are not included in annual budgets, as they fluctuate year on year and do not underpin core expenditure.

No questions were raised, and the report was accepted. Michelle concluded by expressing, on behalf of the Society, sincere thanks to Sue Thorn for her hard work and effort in managing the Society's finances.

6. Membership Secretary's report

Matei Bolborea presented an overview of membership trends and benefits. It was noted that the Society continues to grow, with increasing membership numbers reflecting its strong reputation and appeal. Members were reminded of the benefits of membership, including free access to the *Journal of Neuroendocrinology*, eligibility to apply for Society funding, prizes and awards, reduced registration fees for conferences and events, opportunities to network, and access to a range of online resources via the Society's website.

Membership composition was reported as follows: academics represent 35% of members, postgraduate students 29%, and postdoctoral researchers 26%. Since 2013, the Society has

seen significant overall growth, particularly in the postgraduate and undergraduate categories. Gender distribution was highlighted, with a notable imbalance at the Academic level, where 62% of members are male and 36% female, reversing at other career stages.

Geographically, the majority of members are based in the United Kingdom (375 members), followed by France, the United States, and New Zealand. Membership in low-income countries has also grown, with 21 members in Nigeria and others distributed internationally.

It was reported that membership fees will increase in the coming year: £10 for academics and £5 for postdoctoral researchers. Fees for postgraduate students, research technicians, and undergraduates will remain unchanged. The Membership Secretary acknowledged that the increases are modest but necessary to ensure long-term financial sustainability, particularly in anticipation of reduced income from the Journal. Members raised questions about the rationale for fee increases given the Society's current healthy financial position. It was explained that gradual increases were considered more prudent than a larger adjustment at a later stage, particularly as journal income is projected to decline. Suggestions were also made regarding differential fee structures, such as applying higher increases to academic members than to postdoctoral researchers, introducing multi-year memberships to support financial planning, and exploring potential sponsorship opportunities. These proposals will be reviewed further by the Committee before the membership fee increase is finalised.

The Society also welcomed several new honorary members, Dr Perry Barrett, Professor Fran Ebling, Professor Ashley Grossman, Professor Megan Holmes, Dr Preeti Jethwa, Professor Julian Mercer and Professor Bob Millar, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the field and to the Society.

7. Meeting Secretary's report

Preeti Jethwa began by offering thanks to Gi and the rest of the Local Organising Committee for organising an excellent meeting thus far. She confirmed that the next main meeting will be the *International Congress of Neuroendocrinology* (ICN), to be held in Japan. In recognition of the higher costs associated with attending, adjustments to travel grants are under consideration to ensure members are appropriately supported.

For those unable to travel to Japan, an Early Career Researcher (ECR) meeting will be held in Manchester in September 2026, providing networking opportunities and maintaining engagement with the Society's activities.

Looking further ahead, it was confirmed that the 2027 BSN Meeting will be hosted at the University of St Andrews, with thanks extended to Professor Karen Spencer for offering to host the meeting.

In closing, Preeti Jethwa noted that this was her final year on the Board after a decade of service, and she expressed her gratitude to members and colleagues for their support during her tenure.

8. Grants Secretary's report

Gi Helfer reported on the Society's grant activity and recent changes to support structures. Following a detailed review in December, the Committee examined current funding allocations and identified opportunities to improve accessibility and effectiveness for members.

Key updates include:

- Early Career Researcher (ECR) Travel Grants: Increased to £200 for UK members and £450 for non-UK members to better support attendance at annual meetings.

- International Conference Travel Grants: Raised to £1,000, although there will be no dedicated grant in the upcoming year, with funds instead directed toward supporting attendance at the ICN meeting in Japan.
- Project Support and Research Visit Grants: Both increased to £1,000.
- Undergraduate Laboratory Experience Grants: Increased to £3,000, particularly to benefit the students directly.

The Committee also streamlined funding categories:

- The Academic Support Fund has been replaced with dedicated project support grants for both academics and ECRs, with a simplified application process.
- The BSN Symposia Grant has been discontinued, with all symposia now funded through JNE, allowing the Society to concentrate funds on member support.

Applications have increased in line with membership growth, and resources including online guidance and feedback are provided to applicants to improve success rates. In 2024, a total of 71 awards were distributed across the different grant categories.

Members were encouraged to reapply for grants if initially unsuccessful, as feedback is provided and often leads to subsequent success.

9. EDI Secretary's report

Limei Zhang, the newly selected EDI Secretary, presented her report on initiatives to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within the Society. She highlighted several key priorities:

- Women in Science: Plans are underway for a pre-meeting satellite event at the next annual meeting, focusing on challenges and opportunities for women at all career stages, including graduate students, postdocs, and senior academics. Topics will include balancing family and career responsibilities and supporting career progression in science.
- Mentorship and Networking: The EDI Committee aims to serve as a bridge for members from underrepresented regions, providing mentorship opportunities and access to senior scientists.
- Regional Chapters: Proposals are being considered to establish chapters in underrepresented regions, such as Africa and Latin America. These regional chapters would facilitate smaller in-person meetings, which would then feed into the main annual meeting, enhancing global participation and engagement.

Limei expressed enthusiasm for developing these initiatives over the coming year and thanked members for their support.

10. ECR Representative's report

Miguel Ruiz Cruz provided an update on recent ECR activities and initiatives following Jessica Chadwick standing down from the role as ECR Trustee earlier this year. He reported that the ECR Event held the previous day received positive feedback, and thanked the panelists for sharing their valuable insights and experiences, contributing to a successful event. Miguel reminded members that the ECR Mentorship Scheme is now open and encouraged participation. He also confirmed that planning is underway for the ECR Event to be held in Manchester on 2–3 September 2026. Finally, Miguel welcomed the new deputy ECR Representative, Joao Paolo Cavalcanti de Albuquerque, who has recently assumed this role.

11. Communication Secretary's report

Rebecca Dumbell provided an overview of the Society's communications activities over the past year. Rebecca highlighted the key functions of the communications team:

- Member Engagement: Maintaining the Society's website, writing blogs, and managing multiple social media accounts to keep members informed of news, events, and opportunities.
- Supporting Initiatives: Promoting early career researchers (ECRs), equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), and the Society's various schemes through targeted communications.
- Annual Infographic: Producing an end-of-year infographic summarising grant successes and other Society activities.
- Content Creation: Publishing blogs and interviews with members to showcase achievements, including lab notes and personal experiences.
- Social Media Expansion: Managing platforms including Blue Sky, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, and now Instagram. The Society has seen increased engagement, particularly when highlighting member successes. Future plans include podcasts in collaboration with the Society's journal.

Rebecca encouraged members to engage with the Society's social media channels and highlighted the importance of member contributions to content through tagging and sharing. She emphasised the ongoing efforts to monitor and optimise interaction across platforms and to continue supporting members through accessible, informative communications. 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. He highlighted the Society's journal achievements over the past year:

- Impact Factor and Rankings: The journal's impact factor increased from 3.3 to 4.1, placing it ahead of comparable journals in endocrinology and neuroendocrinology. Quartile rankings also improved, with the journal now in the 1st quartile for neuroscience and top of the 2nd quartile for endocrinology and metabolism, positioning it strategically for future publisher negotiations.
- Readership and Engagement: Article views increased by 18% in 2024, surpassing the Wiley average of 7.5%, with the majority of traffic coming from Wiley Online. Increased views are translating into higher downloads and citations.
- Submissions and Publications: Submissions have risen by over 50% so far this year, with a 40% increase in articles published. Importantly, the acceptance rate has decreased, maintaining the journal's high standards.
- Special Issues and Meeting Support: The journal strategically aligns content with supported meetings, such as the Neurobiology Of Grief International Network (NOGIN), ENEA Workshop and 5th World Conference of Kisspeptin. Currently, 11 special issues are in development, 7 linked to meetings and 4 commissioned independently, with a strong focus on collaborative efforts across the Society's various strands.
- Early Career Editorial Board: The program provides early career researchers with editorial experience, including co-editorship of special issues. Virtual workshops and in-person sessions support training in scientific publishing and open access.

- **Strategic Contributions:** Mike emphasised that the journal's success reflects long-term strategic planning, teamwork, and the Society's collective effort, including contributions from editorial staff and support teams. He also noted the importance of clinical content, particularly guidelines, in boosting citations.
- **Global Reach:** The journal is the official publication of seven neuroendocrine societies, reinforcing its international impact while remaining the flagship journal of the BSN.

Mike concluded by thanking the editorial team, Society staff, and members for their contributions, highlighting the journal's role in advancing the Society's mission and supporting the next generation of researchers.

13. Notification of election results for Trustees

Mino Belle and Monica Imbernon were the successful candidates.

14. A.O.C.B

Formal thanks were extended to retiring trustees Matei Bolborea, Jessica Chadwick, and Preeti Jethwa for their service. Neil Evans also announced that he is stepping down as President and welcomed Kate Ellacott as the new President of the BSN. He expressed gratitude for the support of the trustees, staff, and members, highlighting the significant behind-the-scenes work that ensures the smooth running of the Society. He concluded by thanking everyone for their contributions.

In her first act as President, Kate Ellacott formally thanked Neil Evans for his outstanding service during his term, particularly for his leadership throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There being no further business, the meeting was formally closed.