

Information for Local Secretaries on meeting organisation

1. General information

1.1 Timings and duration of meetings

- Traditionally, the Society holds one Spring Meeting, two Summer Meetings and one Autumn AGM and 'paper reading' Meeting.
- Spring and Summer Meetings are normally one week long, with Summer meeting Week 1 immediately followed by Week 2 (giving sufficient time to travel between the two destinations). However, this does not have to be the case. If organisers only have time to organise shorter meetings or if they wish to concentrate recording efforts in a small area, then long-weekend, or even weekend meetings can be organised.
- Spring Meetings are usually held between late March to mid-April, usually avoiding the Easter weekend. The Spring meeting needs to be early enough for Council to approve necessary documents in time for them to be mailed out with the May issue of Field Bryology. Starting and finishing day is not fixed but it may be wise to set these dates in a way that makes it easier to book accommodation (which is normally booked from Friday to Friday).
- There is no set timing for the Summer meetings (end of June/ July) and occasionally there has been a second Autumn recording meeting organised instead of (or as well as) a Summer meeting.
- The AGM and Autumn 'paper reading' meeting is usually held between early mid-September and the first week of October, as it needs to be held well ahead of the Charity Commission annual report deadline of 31st October.

1.2 Sites

- As a general rule, permission from the landowner to record on site must be sought.
- In the case of Spring Meetings, as numbers attending are usually very high, it may be necessary to find more than one site a day, so that participants can be split into smaller groups. This is particularly important for sensitive sites where trampling can be an issue.
- On very large sites participants can split into groups to ensure that all different parts of the site are surveyed.
- Insurance. The BBS has Public Liability Insurance of £5,000,000, which is required by some landowners to allow access to their sites [eg Forestry Commission]. The Meetings Secretary can supply a copy of the current year's certificate if it is needed. Note that its validity is dependent on appropriate risk assessments being carried out, see below. Everyone needs to be clear that this is third party insurance only, covering the BBS in case of damage to land or property visited. It is *not* personal accident cover for participants.

1.3 Accommodation and base

- Participants usually book their own accommodation.
- The Local Secretary will need to find a room in a village hall or other local facility where the participants can set up their microscopes and identify specimens in the evening. Obviously, the

room needs to be secure and lockable. The cost of the room will be covered by the Society, and the cost will be recovered by charging participants a reasonable admin fee.

- During Spring Meetings, a room will also need to be booked for Committee meetings and for the Council meeting, which usually takes place on the Saturday. The room for the Council meeting needs to accommodate approx. 20-25 people and its cost is covered by the Society. It could be the same room as the microscope room, if this is suitable for this purpose. Committee meetings need to be held the day or days before the Council meeting, in the afternoon/evening. There are 3 committees and, normally, meetings last approx. 1 1/2 hours for each committee.
- Occasionally an outdoor-pursuit-type centre or large self-catering cottage is booked for the participants to share and act as a base. However, in this case, it is essential that the Local Secretary communicates with the Meetings Secretary and Treasurer about costs. The cost of accommodation and the amount participants will need to pay as a deposit to secure a place will therefore be worked out in advance and a suitable notice will be posted on the website, so that participants are aware of costs before committing to participating.

1.4 Health and Safety

- The Local Secretary needs to prepare a risk assessment for the excursions, based on the BBS general risk assessment, but identifying any extra hazards which the Local Secretary is aware of (ie, if sites are in the uplands or if there are known hazards such as unfenced mines etc.).
- The Local Secretary then will email all participants the risk assessment and a copy of the BBS Safety Code, asking participants to email back confirmation that they have read and understood both documents. Alternatively, the Local Secretary can get participants to sign these documents on arrival. A copy of the BBS Safety Code and a generic risk assessment which can be modified to suit the specific meeting can be found here:

<https://rbg-web2.rbge.org.uk/bbs/About/safety.htm>.

- At the beginning of a field meeting it is advisable to circulate a piece of paper on which all participants write their mobile number. The list of number should be kept by the meeting leader. If the participants are split into groups, there should be a list for each of the groups. Participants can also make a note of the meeting leader's telephone number. This list will be used to contact any participants who may become detached from the main group, to ensure they are safe. After the meeting the list should be disposed of carefully.

1.5 Other information for participants

- Usually, the Local Secretary finalises the programme between a month and a couple of weeks before the meeting, and the programme is sent to the participants by email.
- Any Local Secretary who is uncertain of the format of one of these programmes can ask the Meetings Secretary for a copy of a previous programme to use as a template.
- The programme should also give the location of the daily meeting place and of the microscope room.

1.6 Write-up for Field Bryology

- The Local Secretary, with the co-operation of the participants, will produce a write-up about the meeting to be published in Field Bryology – please check previous years' write-ups in FB for guidance on what to write.

1.7 Support for Local Secretary

- The Meetings Secretary is available to advise the Local Secretary on all the above issues, so please keep in touch by email/phone.

2. Specific guidance for Autumn Meetings

The Autumn Meeting is held for 3 days (at least for members of the Council and/or Committees) and consists of Committee and Council meetings on the Friday, an indoor 'paper reading' meeting on the Saturday followed by the Annual General Meeting of the Society, and an excursion on the Sunday.

The schedule is as follows:

- Friday afternoon: Committee meetings to be held between 1 pm and 6 pm. There are 3 committees and, normally, meetings last approx. 1 1/2 hours for each committee. The room for the committee meetings doesn't need to be very large, it should accommodate approx. 10-15 people max.
- Friday evening: Council meeting - 7.30 pm to 10.00pm. Organiser will need to book a room for 20-25 people for the Council meeting.
- Saturday all day: 'Paper reading' meeting. This is held in a room which needs to have projectors etc. and hold 35-50 people maximum
- Sunday – approx. 9.30 am until 3 pm: excursion. The organiser will need to arrange an excursion for those who wish to have a day in the field after the AGM.

The organiser will need to find speakers for the Saturday meeting, with the assistance of the Meetings Secretary. Speakers can be from all backgrounds: university students, academics, 'professional' and amateur bryologists, staff from Natural England/ Natural Resources Wales/ Scottish Natural Heritage, or anyone who has anything interesting to say about bryophytes and beyond.

The paper reading meeting finishes at 4 pm and normally the AGM is held at 4.30pm. Please allow 1 and ½ hour between the start of the AGM and the time premises have to be vacated.

It is usual to arrange a communal dinner in a nearby restaurant for Saturday evening (people will book with you if they want to attend).

The Local Secretary will also need to prepare a risk assessment for both the Saturday indoor meeting and the Sunday excursion and send it to participants (see paragraph 1.4 Health and Safety at page 2 above).

The Local Secretary will need to prepare a write-up of the meeting which will be published the following year in the November issue of Field Bryology. It is customary to ask the speakers for an abstract of their talk and a photograph, which will be used to inform the write-up.