

**REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 07110309 (England and Wales)**

**REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1134456**

**Report of the Trustees and  
Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024  
for  
British Society of Soil Science  
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**



**BRITISH SOCIETY  
OF SOIL SCIENCE**

**British Society of Soil Science**  
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**For the Year Ended 31 December 2024**

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**British Society of Soil Science**  
**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS**  
**For the Year Ended 31 December 2024**

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**TRUSTEES**

Dr J A Hannam  
Dr D B Lascelles (until 31 December 2024)  
Dr P D Hallet  
Mr D Lambeth  
Mr A Sarkar

**COMPANY SECRETARY**

Mr Andrew Morris (from 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024)

**REGISTERED OFFICE**

Building 42a, Cranfield University  
Cranfield, Bedfordshire  
MK43 0AL

**REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER** 07110309 (England and Wales)

**REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER** 1134456

**Patron**

HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO (until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024)

**Office Staff**

Mr Andrew Morris	Executive Director (From 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2024)
Ms N Coles	Senior Administrative Assistant (until 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2024)
Mr D Simms	Communications, Marketing and Events Coordinator
Ms C Wangari	Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper
Mr Max Silver	Membership Administration Apprentice (from 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2024)
Ms Adrienne Golding	Business Development Manager (from 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2024)
Mr Ed Hinman	Policy and Public Affairs Manager (from 4 <sup>th</sup> November 2024)

**Editorial Team**

European Journal of Soil Science

Professor J Dungait	Editor
Professor Gerard Heuvelink	Deputy Editor
Professor Olaf Schmidt	Deputy Editor
Dr Mark Farrell	Deputy Editor
Professor Hailong He	Deputy Editor (until 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024)
Dr Dan Evans	Social Media Coordinator
Dr. Andrew S. Gregory	Deputy Editor (from 27 <sup>th</sup> November 2024)

Soil Use and Management

Dr Deyi Hou	Editor (until 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024)
Dr D O'Connor	Deputy Editor
Dr A Unc	Deputy Editor
Dr J Webb	Deputy Editor
Dr F Nicholson	Social Media Coordinator

**British Society of Soil Science**  
**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS**  
**For the Year Ended 31 December 2024**

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**Independent Examiner** HB Accountants  
Plumpton House, Plumpton Road  
Hoddesdon, EN11 0LB

**Bankers** Co-operative Bank  
PO Box 250  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 6WT

**Website** [www.soils.org.uk](http://www.soils.org.uk)

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Association History**

The British Society of Soil Science (BSSS) was founded in 1947 and is an established international membership organisation and charity committed to the study of soil in its widest aspects. The society brings together those working within academia, practitioners implementing soil science in industry and all those working with, or with an interest in soils.

Research on soils and enhanced understanding and engagement with soils is essential for agricultural, landscaping, construction, remediation, conservation and archaeological projects, as well as policy direction on critical topics such as climate change.

We promote research and education, both academically and in practice, and build collaborative partnerships to help safeguard our soil for the future. This includes hosting side events at SB60, COP29 and COP16 where practitioners and policy maker met to discuss the critical global issues relating to soil including; managing soils sustainably, preserving its ecosystem, and mitigating against climate change.

Anyone with an interest in soil is welcome to become a member and attend our conferences and webinars, receive complimentary access to our two scientific journals, the European Journal of Soil Science and Soil Use and Management and a host of other benefits.

### **Association Governance**

#### **Governing document**

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

BSSS is governed by a Board of Trustees, all of whom signed a declaration of acceptance of office as a Trustee at their first meeting as a Trustee following their appointment. The declaration included any particular responsibilities of the individual Trustee.

#### **Recruitment and appointment of new trustees**

Trustees should usually be appointed for a minimum of three and a maximum of six years. Trustees who have, or are due to reach, the end of their term, shall retire from office at the next General Meeting. The society may by ordinary resolution appoint a person who is willing to act to be a trustee either to fill a vacancy or as an additional trustee.

No person may be appointed as a trustee:

- unless that person has attained the age of 18 years; and
- unless that person or being a corporation, its duly authorised representative has completed an application for membership in a form approved by the trustees;

or in circumstances such that, had he already been a trustee, he would have been disqualified from acting under the provisions of Article 23.

#### **Induction and training of new trustees**

Induction:

All trustees are required to sign a declaration of acceptance of office as a trustee at the first meeting of the trustees following their appointment. Such declarations may set out particular responsibilities to be undertaken by an individual trustee.

Training:

By virtue of electing independent trustees to the Society's board of trustees, the Society intends to ensure suitably trained and experienced individuals are recruited to the board of trustees.

The ability to recruit personnel with the required experience, skills and expertise required by the Society enables the trustees to reduce the necessity of additional training required by newly appointed trustees. The necessity for additional skills and training is reviewed internally on a regular basis by the board of trustees.

Depending on the experience of newly appointed trustees the board may provide induction training in this respect, if deemed necessary. The level of experience and participation with the Society sought in the trustees during the recruitment process reduces the level of induction training normally required.

Throughout 2024 the Trustees, Executive Director and Membership and Charity Administrator attended training on Financial Skills for Trustees delivered by The National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

### **Wider network**

The Society is a member of the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) which is a global union of soil scientists. The Society will be working closely with IUSS over the coming years as society's Past President Dr Bruce Lascelles is the president elect for IUSS. Society members receive complimentary membership of IUSS as part of their BSSS subscription.

The Society also has paid memberships with the Royal Society of Biology and the Science Council amongst other organisations.

### **Related parties**

BSSS has been located at Cranfield University since 2009 enabling the society to collaborate with leading experts from the Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute, as well as utilise facilities ranging from its world-class soil labs to the UK's largest Land Information System (LandIS) and World Soil Survey Archive and Catalogue (WOSSAC).

It is important to note that the Society is recognised as a tenant by the University, the BSSS office staff are employed through the University and all of their costs are charged back to the Society.

### **Risk management**

The trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

The trustees have a risk management strategy which comprises:

- An annual review of the risks the charity may face;
- The establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified in the annual risk review; and
- The implementation of procedures to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

The current risk register takes particular note of the financial and data management issues. The society is financially supported by the publication of its two journals and so the success of the journals is highlighted as an important risk management area. Public liability remains a crucial area and insurance policies are reviewed annually to ensure adequate cover is in place.

### **Advisory Council**

BSSS retains an Advisory Council which holds delegated responsibility from the Board of Trustees as detailed in the company By-laws. During 2024, the Council consisted of 17 members, as follows:

Jack Hannam	Trustee and Chair
Nikki Baggailey	Scottish Soil Discussion Group Chair
Chris Cantle	Northern Soils Network
Eleanor Reed	Professional Practice and Development Chair
Lynda Deeks	South West Soil Discussion Group Chair
Jenni Dungait	Editor, European Journal of Soil Science
Marcelo Galdos	South East England Soil Discussion Group Chair
Andrew Morris	Executive Director – from 5.02.2024
Iain Gould	Midlands Soil Discussion Group Chair – until 06.09.2024
Paul Hallett	Trustee
Deyi Hou	Editor, Soil Use and Management – until 31.12.2024
Bruce Lascelles	Trustee - until 31.12.2024
Kara Marsden	Welsh Soils Discussion Group Chair
Mark Nason	Ordinary Council Member

Lois Phillipps	Outreach Committee Chair
Danielle Roche	Early Careers Committee Chair
Ashish Malik	Ordinary Council Member

The Council is informed by the following standing committees, each of which have their own Terms of Reference:

- Early Careers Committee
- Education Committee
- Grants & Awards Committee
- Professional Practice Committee
- Publications Committee

### **Association Membership**

At 31 December 2024, BSSS represented 931 members and 5 corporate members; including 42 chartered scientists. Members of BSSS hail from around the globe with members in 42 countries.

BSSS members stretch far and wide across the globe with members in 42 countries. At the end of 2024, 63.9% of our members were male, 34.8% female, 0.3% gender non-conforming, and 0.1% non-binary with 0.6% preferring not to say. Amongst our Early Career members, 39.4% of were male, 51.2% female, 0.3% gender non-conforming, with 1.03% preferring not to say.

During 2024 there were nine categories of membership:

### **Fee-Paying Members**

- **Early Career Member**  
Open to all registered students of soil science and related disciplines, plus graduates with a recognised degree in soil science or related disciplines but with fewer than five years' professional experience.
- **Associate Member**  
Open to anyone with an interest in soil science who does not meet the criteria for any other category of membership.
- **Technical Member**  
Open to skilled and experienced administrative staff engaged in soil science research, government, NGO and commercial activities, but who are not eligible for full membership.
- **Full Member (M.I. Soil Sci.)**  
Open to scientists and other professionals with a minimum five years' experience in soil science research or application.
- **Fellow (F I Soil Sci.)**  
Fellow is awarded to members who have achieved a level of responsibility and professional expertise with national and international recognition.
- **Corporate Member**  
Corporate membership is awarded to companies within the sector who wish to demonstrate to their staff and customers that they care about soil and are building a collaborative partnership to help safeguard our soil for the future. Each member must pass due diligence conducted by the Professional Practice and Development committee.

### **Non-Fee-Paying Members**

- **Retired Member**
- **Life Member**
- **Honorary Member**

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Public benefit**

The Charities Acts 2011 requires all charities to explain in their Annual Report how their activities provide benefit to the wider public, or sections of it, in achieving their aims. In 2023, the mission and vision for the Society were reviewed. Developed by Board and member consultation, these documents set the Society's direction of travel specifically:

- Our mission is to support and promote the discovery of new knowledge of soils and their role in global sustainability.
- Our vision is to ensure sustainable soils for people and planet.

We will achieve our mission and vision by:

- Promoting scientific study and discovery of new knowledge about soil and ensuring it is accessible to a wide audience.
- Influencing policy and legislation through evidence-based advocacy.
- Supporting our members to develop and continue professional and academic excellence.

### ***The Challenge We Face***

- To achieve our mission and vision, the Society must address key challenges including:
- Ensuring a sufficient skills base and engagement to deliver sustainable soil management.
- Driving research, evidence collection and professional excellence whilst experiencing the impacts of changes to academic publishing, income and attitudes to work.
- Promoting soil health in the face of geo-political uncertainty, a growing population and changing social attitudes in a world of technological innovation.

Our mission and vision alongside a seven-point, five-year strategy focuses our efforts and activities.

The British Society of Soil Science (BSSS) is the UK's leading body in the area of Soil Science with a global reach. We strive to secure the future of soils by promoting an enhanced understanding of the critical importance of soils in delivering the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals and supplying knowledge, through our science, to support efforts to halt and repair soil degradation. We aim to make a positive difference in the sustainable management and long-term security of soils that is critical to solving the environmental and societal challenges we face today. We achieve our mission through the creation, dissemination and translation of knowledge. Specifically:

#### **1. Seeking to publicise the key issues for the soil science community**

**By 2025**, we will have delivered a clear legacy from the World Congress including a wider range of active stakeholders and increased resources available to members and non-members. We will use our journals and website as mechanisms to deliver this. We will have become a key contact for UK media on soil-related issues and our science and guidance notes will have expanded into valuable resources for members and stakeholders.

**By 2030**, our journals will be recognised as two of the leading international journals relating to soil. We will have become a key contact for international media on soil-related issues and we will expand our guidance and science notes to provide context for an international audience. Our website will include greater guidance and information aimed at scientific and non-scientific audiences.

#### **2. Promoting change through knowledge exchange across all aspects of soil science**

**By 2025**, we will be continuing to provide evidence-based information to policymakers at a national level and have become a contact for governments and stakeholders on soil science issues. We will provide dedicated forums for our members to discuss policy and best-practice issues, allowing us to develop recommendations combining academic and practical perspectives.

**By 2030**, we will be providing evidence-based information to policymakers at an international level and will take a pro-active approach in responding to international consultations. International stakeholders will seek out our dedicated member forums as advisory groups across the breadth of soil activities.

#### **3. Hosting conferences and meetings focused on soils**

Using the knowledge and experience we develop from delivering the World Congress, we will deliver an international and interdisciplinary activity by 2025. The activity will recur on a cyclical basis and will establish the Society as a key player in the dissemination of soils-based knowledge globally.

**By 2030**, the international and interdisciplinary activity will be delivered for a second time and have developed in size and reach. The activity will attract a broader, international audience with support from major stakeholders.

#### **4. Supporting and encouraging the education of soil science**

**By 2025**, we will have delivered a clear legacy from the World Congress including a wider range of active stakeholders and increased in-person and digital resources available to members and non-members. This, alongside increased outreach and engagement work, will lead to an increased awareness of the importance of soil amongst a wide range of communities.



**By 2030**, we will have delivered large-scale outreach programmes, which aim to increase awareness of soil to audiences which can have a demonstrable impact in its care. As a result, the Society will also be recognised by educators and those already engaged in environmental matters, as a reliable source of information.

#### **5. Inspiring the future generations of soil scientists**

**By 2025**, we will have developed a clear education and training pathway demonstrating the routes into soil science. We will have understood the gaps that exist and developed new courses and content for those within the sector, where the content does not exist. We will continue to work with external bodies to influence the soil science taught at all levels of the curriculum.

We will continue to provide our Early Careers members with the opportunity to network with their peers face-to-face and virtually, and provide support to help them make the transition into Full membership.

**By 2030**, we will continue to promote the education and training pathway to members, students and those interested in working with soil. We will work closely with other professional and external bodies to embed soil content into peripheral qualifications, to ensure anyone who works in any context with soil, has the skills to do so.

We will recruit Early Careers members from a wider range of specialisms to encourage collaboration. This will support our members' career opportunities whilst encouraging interdisciplinary working.

Throughout our 10-year vision, we will encourage Society membership as a mechanism to support training and development at all career stages.

#### **6. Ensuring high standards of professional practice for those working with soils**

**By 2025**, we will require a minimum number of hours of CPD to be provided by Full and Fellow members each year. This will be closely linked to the CSci requirements to encourage more members to obtain CSci status in addition to Society membership. As a result, our members will be well-respected and highly visible as experts in all aspects of soil and its management.

We will update our corporate membership category to allow organisations to demonstrate the value of membership via outcomes aligned to the Society's mission.

**By 2030**, our membership and number of CSci registrants will grow and strengthen as our professional standards are seen as a mark of expertise and are in demand from clients. Our clear education and training pathway will have led to an increase in the number of qualified soil experts and with industry clients specifying our members for soils work. Our external-facing activities will have led to an increase in membership across non-practitioner grades and we will have introduced tangible benefits to encourage membership amongst the non-scientific community.

#### **7. Leading on the social and environmental responsibilities of a contemporary society**

**By 2025**, the Society will have a thorough understanding of its environmental impact across all aspects of its operation and have a clear plan in place to reduce and offset its impact. We will continue to encourage inclusion within our membership by providing diverse role models at events and in our case studies.

**By 2030**, the Society will be a 'carbon positive' organisation, having minimised its environmental impacts and provided practical support to projects which outweigh any negative operational impacts. Our positive approach to diversity and inclusion will have led to a demonstrable increase in diversity across our membership.

Our Council set a number of key actions and activities to support us on our journey to achieve our strategy.

#### **Seeking to publicise the key issues for the soil science community**

##### **Our Strategy said:**

We will raise the profile of the important soil issues via our two prestigious journals, European Journal of Soil Science (EJSS) and Soil Use & Management (SUM), our bi-annual member's newsletter (the Auger), our new website, an enhanced social media presence and by hosting regional, national and international conferences. We will actively engage with the media by responding quickly to enquiries, providing factsheets and policy notes ensuring we are acknowledged as the UK's leading authority on soil science.

**What we set out to achieve:**

- Re-introduce Soil Matters as an annual print publication to members
- Launch a podcast series to highlight the research in our two journals
- Conduct a strategic review of both EJSS and SUM
- Produce a minimum of one guidance note on a relevant topic
- Produce one Science Note on a relevant topic
- Review and update existing guidance notes
- Respond to relevant UK and international consultations

**Our 2024 Achievements:**

- Jan – Published Soil Matters
- Feb – Jess Potts – Apprenticeship week blog
- Feb - EJSS paper wins Pedometrics award
- Feb – President Jack Hannam gives expert witness testimony to the Canadian Senate
- March – Reflections on COP 28 blog published
- March – Launched EJSS 75th anniversary plan
- March – EJSS Special Issue: Multidisciplinary Soil Science for Sustainability
- March – EJSS Special Issue: New Horizons for Acid Sulfate Soils Research
- April - Open Farm Sunday discussion webinar
- May – EJSS Special Issue: European Healthy Soils Conference 2023: From Proceedings to Actions
- June – Engaged with partners re key aligned messaging for the General Election
- June – EJSS Special Issue: Soil Physics and Healthy Cropland Cultivation
- June - EJP SOIL Special Issue: Climate-Smart Sustainable Agricultural Soil Management for the Future - Volume 2 (EJSS)
- June - Wageningen Soils Conference Special Issue: Soil Solutions for A Sustainable World (EJSS)
- June – EJSS Special Issue: Addressing the 10 pedometrics challenges
- July – HRH Duke of Gloucester meeting
- July - Guardian - Green and Ethical Checklist / Plastic Free July
- July – SUM most read article of 2024: Are soil carbon credits empty promises? Shortcomings of current soil carbon quantification methodologies and improvement avenues by Xavier Dupla
- Sept – Held journal strategy meeting London
- Oct - Secured funding for podcast from the University of Southampton
- Oct – Responded to the Grey Belt Enquiry
- Oct- Supported CL:AIRE’s Definition of Waste: Code of Practice revision in conjunction with the Environment Agency
- Oct – Past President Bruce Lascelles elected as President Elect for IUSS
- Oct- EJSS Russell Review - Soil carbon stewardship: Thinking in circles H. Henry Janzen
- Nov - Appointed Policy and Public Affairs Manager
- Nov – Reviewed existing editorial teams for EJSS and SUM
- Dec – Appointed SUM new Editor in Chief
- Dec – Celebrated EJSS 75th anniversary at Annual Conference in Cardiff
- All Year - Promoted both journals via regular In Case you Missed it articles in our members’ e-newsletters
- All Year - Continued to promote our grant and award winners with case studies online and in our members e-newsletters

**Our Impact**

- The EJSS Impact Factor was 4 and ranked 13/49. The SUM Impact Factor was 5 and ranked 10/49.
- SUM published 162 articles, including 14 review articles, 1 invited paper and 3 commentaries.
- EJSS published 166 articles, including 7 special issues and a Russell Review on soil carbon stewardship.
- Submissions during 2024 for the European Journal of Soil Science increased by 34% compared to 2023, and by 25% for Soil Use and Management.
- Full text views increased by 14% to 473,800 for EJSS and by 18% to 304,500 for SUM.
- In 2024, the society's social media followers continued to grow. Post impressions on LinkedIn grew by 7.5% to 301,923. Our social channels now provide us with direct access to 25,600 organisations and individuals overall.

### **Case Study: Speaking at the Canadian Senate**

On 29 February 2024, Prof. Jack Hannam gave evidence to The Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry at the Senate of Canada on their study into soil health. It was fantastic for Jack and the Society to receive an invitation as a witness to provide advice and recommendations into this key study. Jack spoke online alongside Penny Wensley, the former Australian National Soil Advocate, and Don Lobb a Canadian farmer who had been advocating for soil health for many years. It was a very thought-provoking session with the committee keen on hearing testimonies and taking advice on best practice from a wide range of leading experts on the subject. Jack gave the following recommendations to the committee:

1. Support more transdisciplinary research in soil science
2. Develop an overarching policy for soil in Canada
3. Ensure tailored information is available to farmers to enable a transition to regenerative agriculture.

The Senate is the Upper House in Canada's bicameral parliamentary democracy. It unites a diverse group of accomplished Canadians in service of their country. The Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has the mandate to study matters related to agriculture and forestry generally.

This event enabled the Society to contribute to an international study on soil and enhance our reputation as a leading body on this subject. Through this, we took another step to achieving our Vision; to ensure sustainable soils for people and planet. Through evidence-based advocacy and knowledge exchange, we hope to influence policy and keep soils high on the agenda in highlighting their role in global sustainability.

### **Promoting change through knowledge exchange across all aspects of soil science**

#### **Our strategy said:**

We will seek to support knowledge exchange in soil science through targeted engagement with industry, policy makers, government and educators. We will promote soil science across a range of disciplines using our website, social media and newsletters, with reference to the appropriate scientific research published in our Journals. We will make the latest knowledge available to a wider community audience and provide a forum for debate and to develop new partnerships. We will also monitor government progress in developing new policies and ensure we feed into this process.

#### **What we set out to achieve:**

- Add a minimum of two more case studies to the Invest in Soil series
- Exhibit at events aimed at professionals, including Contamination Expo
- Strengthen relationships with policymakers, allied organisations and interest groups
- Seek accreditation with UNCCD
- Agree how to engage with SB 60, COP 29 and COP 16

#### **Our 2024 Achievements:**

- March- President Jack Hannam presented on a CA4SH webinar Creating an Enabling Environment for Soil Health Post-COP28
- March - BSSS members featured on an expert panel after first screening of six inches of soil
- March – Dr Lizzie Sagoo features in LEAF and Open Farm Sunday events
- March – Achieved CSO accreditation with UNCCD
- April – President Jack Hannam speaks at BSAS President's Session: A deep dive into the role of livestock in our economy and ecosystems
- April – President Jack Hannam features in Agriculture 2050 podcast 'Let's Talk Soil Health'
- June – Exhibited at Groundswell
- June – Attended SB60
- September – Exhibited at Contamination Expo and hosted multidisciplinary panel event on 'Soils critical to Brownfields first: Soil Health in the context of land remediation'
- November – Attended COP 29 and hosted side event with key partners promoting the importance of soil health on natural carbon sequestration and the role of soils in achieving net zero emissions, biodiversity co-benefits, and policy options to scale sustainable practices.
- December - Attended COP 16 and hosted side event with key partners debating the importance of soil use and management to promote resilience and adaptation amidst land degradation, rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss.
- ALL YEAR - Retained our membership of and contributed to membership bodies including the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, Science Council and Society Publishers' Coalition (SocPC)

### **Our Impact**

- Hosted a multi-disciplinary panel session at Contamination Expo to in excess of 100 delegates
- Hosted a multi-disciplinary side event at COP29 in Baku with partners spanning five continents, featuring 4 per 1000 initiative, 4 Paws, South Asian Forum for the Environment, Escolhas Institute, Ecological Christian Organization, Africa Centre for People, Institutions and Society (ACEPIS)
- Hosted a multi-disciplinary side Event at COP16 in Riyadh with partners IRD, Alliance of Biodiversity International, UNCCD, 4 Paws
- Secured 6 new sponsor relationships for Annual Conference

### **Case Study: Holding Side Events at UN COP events**

In November 2024, Jack Hannam, and Executive Director, Andy Morris, travelled to Baku for the 29th Conference of the Parties. This was the fourth year BSSS has attended the COP climate summit under our official non-governmental organisation (NGO) observer status.

During the conference, COP29 provided particular focus on the food and agriculture sector — an area often sidelined in climate discussions despite its central role in global livelihoods and its vulnerability to climate change. This sector is both a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and one of the hardest hit by climate impacts like droughts, floods, and heatwaves. A key theme at the conference was highlighting the fundamental role of farmers as key agents of climate action which represents an opportunity to drive concrete climate solutions through agrifood systems. This could be achieved through bold, data-driven climate plans and adequate ‘climate funding’.

BSSS were delighted to contribute to these discussions through our own Side Event on ‘Invest in Soil Health – fostering the future of climate change mitigation and adaptation’. We welcomed speakers from Africa, South America, India and Europe for a diverse panel discussion around soil health, regenerative and innovative approaches, and how to leverage finance to achieve a just transition whilst championing collaboration for COP29.

The panel discussed the role of soil in different RIO conventions (climate, desertification and biodiversity), and examples of regenerative agriculture in different parts of the world. This included some unintended consequences of adopting some practices such as no till, innovative practices using grow bags and floating platforms, integrating local knowledge systems and private finance.

The expert panel featured:

- Prof. Jacqueline Hannam, BSSS President (Chair)
- Paul Luu, 4p1000 Initiative
- Dr. Dipayan Dey, South Asian Forum for Environment
- Dr. Carolina Nascimento, FOUR PAWS
- Juliana Luiz, Escolhas Institute
- Isaac Kabongo, Ecological Christian Organization
- Salome Owuonda, Africa Centre for People, Institutions and Society (ACEPIS)

We continued these conversations in the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Following our Annual Conference, we hosted a Side Event at COP16 on 10 December which brought together speakers from around the world to discuss effective soil use and management to promote resilience and adaptation in the context of expanding land degradation, rising global temperatures, extreme weather events and large biodiversity loss.

This panel included:

- Prof. Jacqueline Hannam, BSSS (Chair)
- Jean-Luc Chotte, IRD
- Olga Andreeva, UNCCD
- Lusleged Tamene Desta, Alliance of Bioversity International
- Sophie Aylmer, FOUR PAWS

By fostering interdisciplinary exchange around the complexities of soil governance, this session sought to catalyse action towards building resilient and regenerative soil systems that can support future generations and sustain planetary health.

“Whilst the discussions at both conferences cover the whole spectrum of sectors, it is reassuring to see the more prominent positioning agriculture and food security in the global climate agenda. Through discussions,

partnerships and initiatives, we are continuing to highlight the importance of soil in mitigating climate change and will continue to reinforce this message at future conventions. It is essential that we unite voices across the sector and facilitate these positive discussions which will lead to greater action and support. This is essential in securing the future sustainability of the planet and our food source.” Andy Morris, BSSS Executive Director

Looking ahead, further work is now being undertaken with a policy position statement being drawn up across the society's convention partners for publication in 2025. Engagement in these events have also enabled new relationships being formed across the UK, EU and South American country pavilions in conjunction with allied organisations such as FAO and World bank, culminating in a plan for deeper engagement and advocacy at COP 30 being held in Brazil, November 2025.

### **Hosting conferences and meetings focused on soils**

#### **Our strategy said:**

We aim to grow participation in our regional and annual meetings. We will act to develop communication pathways with a wide range of stakeholders and use our meetings to foster debate in the latest scientific and practical issues in soil science. Working with the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) and other international societies, we were committed to delivering the best possible World Congress of Soil Science in Glasgow in 2022 and ensuring this provides a comprehensive legacy for the Society and its members.

#### **What we set out to achieve:**

- Host face-to-face Regional Group events and meetings
- Continue our free-to-attend Zoom into Soil series, partnering with external organisations as relevant
- Deliver an in-person Annual General Meeting, partnering with Natural England
- Deliver our Annual Conference in Cardiff, alongside a tours and outreach programme
- Plan a Soil Judging competition
- Deliver sessions at IUSS and SB60
- Support the delivery of Eurosoil 2025

#### **Our 2024 Achievements:**

- Jan – Delivered Zoom into Soil: the role of the surface and subsurface on climate in a post-COP28 world
- Feb – 2023 Conference recordings released
- Feb – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar : European Journal of Soil Science and EU-funded soil projects
- March – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: The Benefits of Natural Processes
- April – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: Contaminated Soils and the Impact on Human Health
- May- Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: Carbon Sequestration
- May – Exhibited at IUSS hosting an all-female panel session on ‘Soil Health for People and Planet; Leveraging policy, integrating governance, expanding collaboration’
- June – Hosted SB60 side event with partners highlighting soil's vital role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- June – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: Sustainable Farming
- June – Welsh Soil Discussion Group (WSDG) held Annual Meeting at Aberystwyth University
- July – Delivered Early Careers Zoom into Soil webinar: Soils and Water
- July – Delivered AGM in conjunction with Natural England's Soil Health conference
- September – Northern Soils Network (NSN) held joint event with the Ecological Continuity Trust at Newcastle University
- September – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: Agricultural Land Classification
- October – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: Soils critical to brownfields first
- October - South East England Soil Discussion Group (SEESOIL) held their Annual Meeting at Kingsclere Estates Ltd
- November – Delivered Zoom into Soil webinar: International Governance on Soil
- November – Welsh Soil Discussion Group (WSDG) held online webinar and discussion event
- December – Delivered BSSS Sustainable Soils for People and Planet Annual Conference Cardiff
- ONGOING - Supported the delivery of Eurosoil 2025



### **Our Impact:**

- Across all of our Zoom into Soil webinars, 89% of attendees stated that the content was good or excellent and 71% of attendees said that they would use the knowledge learnt as a result of the sessions in their future work
- Over 1136 people attended our seven webinars and they have been viewed almost 4,000 times on YouTube
- 70 delegates attended across our 4 regional events for 2024
- 189 delegates from across 4 continents attended our Annual Conference which comprised of:
  - 1 policy session, 2 discussion panel sessions, 2 keynotes, 25 oral presentations across 5 themes, 8 quickfire presentations, 55 posters, 6 parallel sessions, 2 scientific and 1 cultural tour.
- 100% of responders rated the content as Good or Excellent
- 100% of responders said they gained new knowledge as a result of attending the conference.
- 84% of responders said they will be able to put the new knowledge gained for the conference into practice.
- 100% of responders rated the tour experience as Good or Excellent - 94% of responders rated the conference venue as Good or Excellent
- The conference also enjoyed a good mix of member, non-members and early careers in attendance totaling:
  - 30% of attendees were Full/Fellow/Technical members
  - 42% of attendees were Early Career members
  - 3% of attendees were Associate members
  - 25% of attendees were Non-Member delegates

### **Case Study: BSSS Annual Conference**

We were delighted to welcome members, sponsors and supporters to a sold-out Annual Conference at Glamorgan Cricket Club in Cardiff at the start of December. If you attended, thank you for supporting the event; we hope you enjoyed the conference and found it useful. It was fantastic to see so many delegates from across the UK and further afield at the event and participating in the sessions. We hope that the conversations and learnings from the conference will spur further research and development within soil science.

The conference featured a rich programme including: a Policy session, 2 panel sessions, 2 keynotes, 25 oral presentations, 8 quickfire presentations, 55 posters, 6 parallel sessions, an Art and culture exhibition, Venue tours, an Early Career Networking event, Scientific and Cultural Tours, and a talking soil bench.

### **Keynote Sessions**

We were delighted to hear from several expert speakers and panels within soil science and its allied disciplines. Following opening remarks from Naomi Matthiessen, we kicked off the conference with a policy session around land use and planning with representatives from all the devolved nations including DEFRA, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and AFBI (NI). Later on we had a session around soil health and sustainable agriculture featuring Abi Reader, NFU Cymru Deputy President, Richard Anthony from Tythegston Farm, and Dr Non Williams from Farming Connect. To close the first day, we had a session around soil health in planning and Environmental Impact Assessment featuring Martina Girvan from Arcadis, Aydin Zorlutuna from Arcadis, and Mark Nason from CIEEM. Day 2 began with our Invited Speaker, Prof. Dave Chadwick from Bangor University who spoke on Soils, Greenhouse Gases and Mitigation. Later in the day, we had our technology keynote from Jack Connolly from Manchester University who spoke about the Signals in the Soil project.

### **Parallel Sessions**

This year, we added to the programme by featuring parallel sessions for delegates to hear from industry experts in interdisciplinary sectors. This included: Soil Health Monitoring for Climate Adaptation from Royal Eijkelpark, PFAS 'Forever Chemicals' – Search, Capture & Destroy from CPL/Puragen, Celebrating 75 Years of the European Journal of Soil Science from Jenni Dungait, Environmental science careers outside of academia from Marta Cattin, How does peer review work and how to get involved from Gareth Jenkins, and Forest Soils – A Vital Carbon Store curated by the Institute of Chartered Foresters featuring Dr. Elena Vanguelova, Dr Andrew Weatherall MICFor, and Clive Thomas FICFor.

### **Oral and Poster Presentations**

We were pleased to showcase 55 posters and hear from 25 oral presentations within the themes of: Soil Health, Soils for Net Zero, Nutrient and Water Management, Technology and Innovation, and Soil, Social Science and Culture. It was fantastic to see and hear about all the new and innovative research being conducted by BSSS members and supporters alike. Each poster and presentation helped us to explore the wider conference theme of 'Sustainable Soils for People and Planet', and we look forward to hearing developments from this over the coming year.

### **Art and Culture Room**

A new theme that the conference explored was 'Soil, Social Science and Culture' and as part of this, we were delighted to feature an Art and Culture room at the venue for delegates to engage with. This featured paint demos, artworks, films, ceramics and 'Singing Compost'. Many thanks to all the exhibitors and contributors including: Daro Montag, Phil Lambert, Paul Granjon, Anna Colin, Ros Gray, Jo Pearl. If you are interested in seeing more, you can see some of their work at the upcoming Soil Exhibition at Somerset House in London from 23 January.

### **Gala Dinner**

On Wednesday 4 December, we held our Conference Gala Dinner at Cardiff Castle. Following a drinks reception in the Library, we were led into the Undercroft where we were treated to a three course meal and fabulous music and singing as part of the Welsh Banquet Experience. The opening remarks were provided by special guest, Prof. Steve Ormerod, Deputy Chairman of Natural Resources Wales. We also presented our Outstanding Society Contribution Award (OSCA) which this year went to Past-President, Dr. Bruce Lascelles.

### **Tours**

On Friday 6 December, we went on our scientific and cultural tours. The scientific tours took place at Castell Nos and Crymlyn Bog. At Castell Nos, delegates heard about the site's history, the peat resources and restoration, the Lost Peatland Project, and other research activities at the site. At Crymlyn Bog, delegates learnt about the site's soil and peat resources, the ongoing LIFEquake project, and other current initiatives. Many thanks to Natural Resources Wales for their support in the organisation of the tours. Our cultural tour, led by Cardiff Bay Tours, took us through the highlights of Cardiff. During the conference, we were also pleased to include a venue tour and presentation at Glamorgan from BSSS member, Alex Vickers, and Head Groundsman, Robin Saxton.

### **Supporting and encouraging the education of soil science**

#### **Our strategy said:**

We will support the education of soil science across a wide range of individuals and age groups. We will provide information and resources to teachers, farmers, agronomists, growers, industry and land managers and the public via grants, outreach events, training courses and teaching materials.

#### **What we set out to achieve:**

- Support the development of the Natural History GCSE, T Level in Agriculture, Land Management and Production and work with relevant apprenticeship groups to ensure soil is considered as part of the syllabus
- Attend external outreach events including Open Farm Sunday
- Engage with British Science Week
- Host a session at the British Science Festival
- Become and accredited adviser to IFATE

#### **Our 2024 Achievements:**

- March – Updated educational posters for outreach events
- April - BSSS awarded IFATE advisor status
- April – My soil mates educational posters launched in English and Spanish
- April – Open Farm Sunday Outreach event held
- June – BSSS members attended local Open Farm Sunday events, to highlight the importance of soil
- June – Exhibited at the Lincolnshire Show to over 4000 delegates
- July – EPOA application submitted
- September – Grant funding received from Chapman Charitable Trust to expand the soil loan box scheme

- October – Engaged with the Geographical Association to seek funding to launch a pilot scheme aimed at delivering soil literacy in schools in Northamptonshire
- November - Responding to curriculum review with partners to with asks of government to embed soil literacy in the national curriculum
- November - Working with Geographical Association to develop campaign to improve education of soil science in schools using loan boxes
- ALL YEAR - Promoted the scientific work of our members across our social media channels, alongside soil-focused articles and documentaries aimed at the general public

**Our Impact:**

- 6 Physical loan boxes were hired, reaching over 390 people
- 3 soil science loan boxes were donated to Crymlyn Bog Peat Site, Castell Nos Site and Christ the King Primary School as part of our Annual Conference legacy
- Received a £3000 grant from the Chapman Charitable Trust to further advance our outreach efforts and create more loan boxes
- Delivered a CPD session in collaboration with LEAF at the Lincolnshire Show
- Engaged with schools and members of the public at the Lincolnshire Show in the ‘Super Soils’ education marquee
- Delivered an outreach activity using the loan box to a class at Christ the King Primary School in Cardiff as part of the Annual Conference

**Case Study: Highlighting the importance of soil at the British Science Festival**

On 12 September 2024, volunteers of the Society headed to the Docklands Campus at the University of East London for the British Science Festival. The society hosted a drop-in session titled ‘Digging Deeper into Soil’ which formed a series of experiments for attendees to discover the land we stand on and how we can preserve this important sub-surface world.

The festival is Europe’s longest standing science Festival and aims to connect people with scientists, engineers, technologists and social scientists. The programme featured free events for the public including: talks, workshops and drop-in events.

We were pleased to engage with lots of school groups and members of the public to educate them on the importance of soil and inspire them with the work that we do. We also used the resources from one of our loan boxes which included the soil texturing, super sponges and the jam jar experiment. The most popular aspect of our stand was the microscope which was connected to a big screen so attendees could see soil and all the organisms up close.

Engaging with the box helps to address the lack of mainstream education in soil science, which is a result of soils not being covered by the national curricula, limiting public recognition of the importance of soils. Through our community engagement via events, we have seen a demonstrated appetite for educational materials relating to soil science from educators and related organisations.

Dr Lizzie Sagoo, President Elect at the British Society of Soil Science who exhibited at the British Science Festival said “The soil science loan boxes are a fantastic way to cultivate a curiosity in our natural world and hopefully inspire the next generation of soil scientists! I have used the loan boxes with years 3-5 at four different primary schools over the last year. The boxes include all the material needed to deliver a practical session on soil science to children. They come with different types of soil and material needed for the jam jar experiment and the super sponges experiment where children can compare how much water different types of soils can store. The children enjoy looking at the different types of soil and doing the experiments. You don’t need to be a soil scientist to use the loan boxes! The information sheets provide everything you need to run a session. As well as schools, they could also be used with other community groups such as Cubs or Brownies, or events like Open Farm Sunday.”

**Inspiring the future generations of soil scientists**

**Our strategy said:**

We will continue to support the development of early career (EC) members working in soil science. We will fund a biennial conference dedicated to ECs and give them prominence at our Society Annual meeting. Through our education committee, we will support teachers and engage in community projects to inspire the next generation of soil scientists.



**What we set out to achieve:**

- Provide a minimum of one PhD placement opportunity
- Publish a minimum of three interviews with soil scientists at various stages of their career
- Host an Employer Networking Session for Early Career members at our Annual Conference in Cardiff

**Our 2024 Achievements:**

- January - Spotlighted the career progression of Lucy Gilbert, Agricultural Land and Soil Lead for HS2
- March – Commenced planning for 2025 Soil Judging Early Careers event
- May – Spotlighted the career progression of Marta Cattin, Soil Protection Advisor for the Environment Agency
- June – BSSS presents award at Cranfield graduation
- July – Zoom into Soil webinar on Soils and Water led by Early Career members, Lisa Donovan and James Dowers
- September – Early Career member grade review to offer more extensive benefits
- November – Duke of Gloucester Overseas Collaboration Award for low to middle income countries ratified
- November – Brian Chambers soil fund allocated to support soil judging entries
- December – Marta Cattin holds careers workshop at Annual Conference
- December - Gareth Jenkins from Wiley holds a journal peer review workshop at Annual Conference
- December – Dedicated Early Career networking and drinks reception held
- All Year - Published six issues of the Early Career members' newsletter, Eye to the Horizon

**Our Impact:**

2024 saw continued engagement with our Early Career members which included our training provision equipping our Early Career members with future fit skills, extensive engagement at our Annual Conference and spotlighting their work through oral and poster presentations. The engagement across these outputs totalled:

- 20 – Early Career members attended Working with Soil courses
- 62 – Early Career members attended the Annual conference
- 17 oral presenters from the Early Career member grade presented at the conference
- 7 Early Career members chaired sessions at the Annual Conference
- Average open rate of 57% and average click rate of 17% for Eye to the Horizon

**Case Study 1 - Early Career Engagement in Annual Conference**

Last December's conference was a huge success, especially with so many Early Career presenters involved covering an impressive 17 out of 25 oral presentations and a wide range of topics. We also hosted an early careers specific networking evening, giving our members a great chance to explore future opportunities from those in the industry, as well as catch up with fellow EC members.

62 Early Career members attended the Annual Conference with circa 30 presenting research posters to a diverse audience. We also had 7 Early Career Committee members chairing the oral presentation sessions.

During the conference, we held dedicated sessions for Early Career members around career progression and how to effectively engage with the peer review process for academic journals. It was fantastic to see that a large percentage of the delegates were early career members, and the growth in early career presenters who were featured on the main stage, side events and poster sessions.

In 2024 we continued to refresh the committee where we welcome 5 new members.

**Case Study 2 – Award Winners and Grant Recipients**

BSSS is proud to sponsor a prize and trophy for a number of awards within academic institutions, which are presented to students based on criteria set with each one. The 2024 award winners each received two years' Society membership as part of their prize:

- Harry Edwards - Best undergraduate final year dissertation on a soil related subject at Harpur Adams
- Joel Andrews - Best postgraduate final year dissertation on a soil related subject at Harpur Adams
- Charlotte Griffiths - Best student in Soil Science at Royal Agricultural University
- Julia Stephanie Scope, Rawan Alsehli - MSc Dissertation Award at University of Reading
- Alex Waterer - Undergraduate Award at Lancaster University
- Arjun Babu - Most Promising Soil Scientist at Cranfield University
- Victoria Murray, Jessica Bush - Outstanding performance in a soil science-based MSc project at University of Aberdeen

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- Rosa Emilia Saari - Outstanding performance in a soil science-based Honours or MSci project at University of Aberdeen
- Flora Reid - Outstanding Performance in a Soil Science Based MSc Project at SRUC
- Andrew Butler - Outstanding Performance in a Soil Science related project at University of Nottingham

**Grant recipients**

The following grants were awarded in 2024, supporting members and organisations to develop soil science skills. Case studies from grants given are regularly published on our website. Find out more about the activities we have been supporting at: [www.soils.org.uk/education/case-studies/](http://www.soils.org.uk/education/case-studies/).

NAME	GRANT	AMOUNT
Rahul Yadav	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Munisath Khandoker	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Urmi Ghosh	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Shachi Pandey	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Mahboobeh Fallah	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Christina Van Midden	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Luke Ramsay	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Julija Fediajevaite	Early Career Conference Grant	£490
Ernest Afriyie	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Luigi Marfella	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Francesca Darvill	Early Career Conference Grant	£500
Beth Wallace	Brian Chambers Soil Fund	£2,500
Joseph Jones	Brian Chambers Soil Fund	£250
Shreyansh Singh	Brian Chambers Soil Fund	£500

**Ensuring high standards of professional practice for those working with soils**

**Our strategy said:**

We will provide dedicated training courses such as our Working with Soils series, as well as industry focused events in support of Continued Professional Development, providing high professional standards and assisting with maintaining Chartered Scientist registration.

**What we set out to achieve:**

- Survey the membership to help identify the current position of training and qualifications in soil science and propose how any gaps could be filled
- Finalise the End Point Assessment Organisation application for the Level 7 Soil Scientist Apprenticeship
- Deliver a number of Working with Soil training courses.

**Our 2024 Achievements:**

**Working With Soil Courses**

- April – A Practical Introduction to Soils in Great Britain Course at Shuttleworth College
- August – A Practical Introduction to Soils in Great Britain Course delivered in conjunction with the National Trust to Fenland Soil employees at Welney Wetland Centre
- September - A Practical Introduction to Soils in Great Britain Course at Harper Adams University
- November – Introduction to Agricultural Land Classification Course at Cranfield University
- Membership Body
- March – Launched member survey to understand areas of work, levels of education in the member base, salary bands, skills gaps and appetite to gain chartered status
- September – Completed the strategic review of the EC member grades to offer essential CPD to early career members and a fellow mentoring scheme

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- October - Approved six new Society Fellows:
  - Gill Shaw
  - Nicholas Willenbrock
  - Paul Newell Price
  - Paul Williams
  - Richard McDowell
  - Shiveshwar Pratap Singh

**Future skills**

- May developed relationships and partnership with other bodies such as NFU, IES, LI CIEEM
- July - Finalised application to become EPAO
- September – scoped future CPD provision including podcast ideation and unearth your potential CPD series
- October – Scoped two new work with soil courses ‘Soil and Flood Catchment’ and ‘Soil Habitat Relocation and Biodiversity Net Gain’

**Professional registration**

- December - Reviewed 168 new membership applications during 2024 and 2 new Chartered Scientist registrations

**Our Impact:**

- In 2024 we enjoyed an increase of 65% in new full members joining the society.
- In 2024 we enjoyed an increase of 92% in new associate members joining the society.
- 100% of delegates rated the technical content of our Working with Soil courses as good or excellent.

**Case Study: Working with Soil courses**

We delivered four training courses in 2024 as part of our Working with Soil programme. We held three Practical Introduction to Soils in Great Britain courses at Shuttleworth College, Welney Wetland Centre and Harper Adams University, and one Introduction to Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) course at Cranfield University. 61 people in total attended the courses that were held between April and November.

Two key aspects of our long-term strategy are supporting and encouraging the education of soil science and ensuring high standards of professional practice for those working with soils. We are pleased to be fulfilling this strategy and continuing to provide soils training and education to BSSS members and partners in the industry.

In 2024, we two of our tutors, Dick Thompson and John Hollis, delivered a bespoke practical course to 11 Fenland Soil delegates at Welney Wetland Centre. This was a fantastic opportunity for the Society to collaborate with one of our partners and deliver bespoke training to provide up to date knowledge and enable them to take this learning into their work.

**Leading on the social and environmental responsibilities of a contemporary society**

**Our strategy said:**

We will provide leadership in the areas concerning the socio-economic responsibilities of a modern Society. We will ensure all members have equality of opportunity, irrespective of age, race, disability, sex, religion or other protected characteristics. We will ensure our activities are planned with issues of equality, inclusion and diversity at the forefront of all decision making and that we act environmental responsible and achieve carbon neutrality where possible.

**What we set out to achieve:**

- Review our Society vision and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure they remain fit for purpose
- Ensure we have up to date Terms of Reference and policies
- Establish an ED&I working group

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**Our Achievements:**

**Equality Diversity and Inclusion**

- March – Celebrated International Women’s Day by spotlighting a diverse cohort of early career members:
  - Danielle Roche
  - Christina Van Midden
  - Jessica Brook
  - Kirsty Charles
  - Izzy Lloyd
  - Jess Potts
  - Liv Hoyland
  - Jaylie Ryan
  - Catriona Willoughby
  - Tanya Trott
  - Okelani Aworabhi
  - Sophia Bahddou
  - Rosy Scholes
  - Megha Kaviraj
  - Annette Raffan
  - Marta Cattin
  - Samantha Kehoe
- November – ED&I committee champions confirmed
- December – ED&I working group established

**Strategy and Investment**

- April – Promoted part time Administrator and Bookkeeper to Charity and Membership Administrator
- May - Updated vision and strategy and created a two-year work plan
- July – Held board strategy day to consider future challenges and priorities for the society
- August – Recruited Business Development Manager and Membership Administration Apprentice
- September – Began drafting strategic member comms plan
- September – Established strategic work plan for 2025/26
- November - Reviewed society’s ethical investment strategy and appointed a third sector expert Independent Financial adviser

**Membership**

- September - Reviewed Society Terms of Reference and policies
- October – Refreshed and recruited new committee members bringing all committees to head count
- December – Held EGM to ratify new committee chairs election,
- December - Presented our Outstanding Society Contribution Award (OSCA) to Past-President, Dr. Bruce Lascelles, for all his work and dedication to the Society and the sector
- December – welcomed the youngest member in the society's history, ahead of the 2025 membership year

**Legacy**

- December – Featured the UK’s first talking soil bench at the BSSS Annual Conference and installed this at Cardiff’s Bute Park for two months
- December – Donated 3 loan boxes to Castell Nos and Crymlyn Bog peatland project and Christ the King Catholic Primary School

**Our Impact:**

Over the events and CPD programme the society enjoyed the following demographics in terms of presenters and chairs:

**Zoom into Soil**

- 9 Female Presenters
- 11 Male Presenters
- 2 Female Chairs

#### **Annual Conference**

- 10 Female Presenters
- 13 Male Presenters
- 7 Female Chairs
- 4 Male Chairs
- 18 female oral presenters
- 14 male oral presenters

#### **Case Study - UK's First Talking Bench**

Last year, Dr Dan Evans, Lecturer in Soil Science at Cranfield University, introduced the UK's first 'Talking Soil Benches.' These benches, which feature an integrated speaker system, are designed to share a sequence of informative audio tracks. Commonly placed at sites of public interest or along nature trails, Talking Benches offer visitors an engaging way to learn about the local environment. In this case, listeners embark on an intriguing journey to discover the fascinating soils beneath their feet.

In December 2024, one of the two Talking Soil Benches currently installed on the Cranfield University campus went on location to Cardiff. Its first stop was the Glamorgan Cricket Club, to greet delegates arriving for the British Society of Soil Science Annual Conference. As well as a celebration of World Soil Day, users were able to listen to an eco-acoustic recording of an earthworm, provided by Soil Acoustics Limited, a new venture launched by Baker Consultants Ltd.

After the BSSS Annual Conference, the Talking Soil Bench was transferred to Bute Park, close to Cardiff Castle, providing the public with a unique opportunity to learn about soils, as well as some of the activities that took place at the conference. Over its period at Bute Park, the Talking Soil Bench was used by over 150 users. That brings the total number of listens since the launch of the Talking Soil Bench to just under 1,000 since September 2024. Looking ahead to 2025, plans are in place for the Talking Benches to embark on a mini tour across the UK.

To support our strategy, we will undertake the following activities in 2025:

#### **Seeking to publicise the key issues for the soil science community**

- Launch a podcast series to highlight cutting edge research
- Create a Policy sub-committee
- Respond to UK Land Use Framework government consultations
- Produce a Whitepaper on a relevant topic
- Continue to raise the profile of the society journals
- Launch a cross sector working group focused on creating a Soil Health Charter
- Secure a new Patron for the Society

#### **Promoting change through knowledge exchange across all aspects of soil science**

- Expand the case studies to the Invest in Soil series
- Seek funding to expand the Podcast series
- Exhibit at events aimed at professionals, including EGU, Groundswell, Rhizosphere and Eurosoil
- Strengthen relationships with policymakers, allied organisations and interest groups
- Stand for election as a nominated CSO for UNCCD
- Raise the society's profile at COP 30

#### **Hosting conferences and meetings focused on soils**

- Host face-to-face Regional Group events and meetings
- Continue our free-to-attend Zoom into Soil series, partnering with external organisations as relevant
- Deliver an in-person Annual General Meeting, partnering with Natural England
- Deliver our Annual Conference in Manchester, alongside a tours and outreach programme
- Deliver sessions at COP 30, Eurosoil, Rhizosphere and EGU

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**Supporting and encouraging the education of soil science**

- Attend external outreach events including Open Farm Sunday and regional shows
- Engage with British Science Week
- Host a session at the British Science Festival
- Expand our soil loan boxes
- Engage with a school's pilot delivering soil loan boxes in inner city areas
- Develop relationships and secure MOUs with End Point Assessment Organisations
- Scope course accreditation offering to UK education partners

**Inspiring the future generations of soil scientists**

- Launch Unearth your potential Early Careers CPD webinar series
- Launch New Duke of Gloucester Overseas Collaboration Award
- Deliver Soil Judging Event
- Host the bi-annual EC Conference
- Publish a minimum of three interviews with soil scientists at various stages of their career
- Develop a Public Affairs strategy

**Ensuring high standards of professional practice for those working with soils**

- Deliver a number of Working with Soil training courses
- Launch Continued Professional Development (CPD) recording mechanisms
- Scope steps for the Society to become a chartered body
- Design two new Work with Soil courses
- Complete member segmentation project

**Leading on the social and environmental responsibilities of a contemporary society**

- Review ways of working for all our committees
- Appoint ED&I representatives across all committees and board
- Complete ED&I audit and detail areas of improvement and next steps
- Launch ED&I Working group
- Implement ethical investing plan

**FINANCIAL REVIEW**

**Financial position**

The tangible fixed assets net book value of £3,526 (2023 - £1,860) and intangible assets net book value of £13,680 (2023 - £16,416) remain comparable with the prior year.

The balance sheet position shows an increased net current assets position to £763,923 (2023 - £654,228). Cash at bank and in hand decreased slightly to £486,392 (2023 - £488,180) and there was an increase in debtors to £374,179 (2023 - £288,706). Creditors due within one year as at the balance sheet date have decreased to £98,596 (2023 - £125,377).

At the year end the Society has freely available reserves of £1,308,820 (2023 - £1,180,900) which excludes tangible fixed assets and intangible assets. Given the Society's current level of general expenditure of £481,536 (2023 - £491,983) this would allow for approximately 33 months (2023 - 29 months) of continuing operations without further freely available reserves needing to become available. As at the year end the Society had restricted funds totalling £15,643 (2023 - £15,850). The total funds of the Society have increased to £1,341,669 (2023 - £1,215,026).

**Financial performance**

The Society's principal funding sources continue to be income received in respect of publications produced, membership subscriptions, admission fees to meetings and conferences, fees for the provision of training courses and the supplementary investment income. Total incoming resources in the financial year amounted to £645,928 (2023 - £583,687).

Expenditure in the year totalled £509,402 (2023 - £515,893). Direct costs were £221,631 (2023 - £237,092), grants paid were £8,740 (2023 - £17,307). Support and governance costs were £278,260 (2023 - £260,065).

The net incoming resources for the year amounted to £126,643 (2023 - £59,474).

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**Investment performance**

The Society has obtained banking and other interest from bank and building society accounts held amounting to £15,631 (2023 - £18,947).

The Society was also in receipt of distributions from its investment portfolio of £48,481 (2023 - £27,197), representing a 9.00% (2023 - 5.03%) return on capital invested into the fund at the beginning of the financial year.

The investment portfolio has had capital losses of £10,131 (2023 - £8,320 loss), representing a 1.87% loss (2022 - 1.53% loss) return on capital invested into the fund at the beginning of the financial year.

**Investment policy and objectives**

Due to the level of reserves held by the Society the trustees have adopted a policy of spreading bank balances with a variety of banking institutions in order to provide a higher level of protection from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) should a bank or building society that the charity deals with were to become insolvent.

The trustees have also elected to invest a proportion of funds into an M&G investment trust "Charifund" in order to further diversify the risk of funds held by the charity. The trust is a well-diversified portfolio of approximately 100 holdings, mainly high yielding UK company shares. While the trust will generally have a bias towards stocks that are out-of-favour with investors, the fund manager seeks to identify good quality companies with attractive dividend growth prospects.

**Reserves policy**

The trustees have set a reserves policy, which requires:

- Reserves be maintained at a level which ensures that The British Society of Soil Science core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty; and
- A proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form.

The trustees seek to maintain a level of reserves by holding bank balances and by investments, which can be sold to release cash. Reviews of cash holdings and investment valuations are considered throughout the year. The calculation of the required level of reserves is an integral part of the organisation's planning, budget and forecast cycle. It takes into account:

- Risks associated with each stream of income and expenditure being different from that budgeted;
- Planned activity level, including grant giving;
- Organisation's commitments; and
- Outsourced staffing obligations.

**Current levels of reserves**

Continuing concern over the future stability of academic publishing, changing currency exchange rates and the continuing impact of the global recession suggest that there is significant insecurity over this major source of income for the Society. Therefore, the trustees have elected to hold a minimum of 12 months operating costs (includes staffing, sub-contracted staffing, on-going project and grant giving obligations) as easily accessible cash deposits. These cash reserves will be held in rolling guaranteed fixed deposit accounts separate from any additional investments held by the Society. The current 12- month operating reserve is £300k.

The level of reserve held is calculated and monitored every 12 months by the Treasurer Trustee (or Executive Officer) and any amendments required are ratified by the full Board of Trustees in line with the Society's articles of Association. This policy is reviewed annually.

**Going concern**

The trustees do not consider there to be any material uncertainties about the Society's ability to continue and therefore consider the charity to be a going concern. The financial statements are therefore prepared under this basis.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 13 May 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Prof Paul Hallett – Trustee