

**British Phycological Society Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 28th January 2025**

Reports from Sub-Committee and Society Representatives

Algal Applications Committee

The remit of the Algal Applications Committee covers all aspects of applied phycology from biotechnology through to the use of algae as bioindicators and the production of algal biomass for *inter alia* biofuels, food, feed, nutritional supplements, and various other products of commercial value.

Applied Phycology continues to gain significant momentum and this is reflected in the BPS Annual Meetings. In 2025 the AAC aims to contact what the non-academic community (commercial companies, public agencies and regulatory bodies that use or consider algae in their work) would find useful from the BPS and what they are willing to offer BPS. This could range from suggestions for special sessions at future BPS Annual Meeting, contributions to webinars or one-off BPS meetings focussed on an applied phycology topic, summer projects for BPS Student Members etc. We will also liaise with BPS student members to gauge interest in careers or skills focussed webinars.

Please contact g.malin@uea.ac.uk if you have any ideas for the AAC.

Awards and Training Committee

The Awards and Training Committee oversees the British Phycological Society bursaries and awards programmes and it is Chaired by the Immediate-Past President. All the current BPS Council Ordinary Members are members of this committee, and they help to judge applications (between 4-6 members plus the Chair looked at each round of applications), In the May-Nov 2024 rounds, 16 applications were successful, totalling £35,585.54 of the nominal budget of £50,000. Awardees were from both the UK and overseas, reflecting the international composition of our membership. The Project awards for 2024 -25 are supporting research in the UK (4) and Italy (1) and student presentations in Canada (5), Greece (1) and the Philippines (1) as well as 4 awards for presentations at the 2025 winter meeting. Equal opportunities monitoring for Awards and Training applications show the majority of applicants self-identified as white, heterosexual, and female, but there was some diversity in our application pool. There was some evidence of differential outcomes considering ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation with better outcomes for white, female and non-heterosexual categories.

Education and Outreach Committee

A BPS-badged exhibition "Harnessing the power of algae for new natural products and a cleaner and more sustainable world" has been selected for inclusion at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition (01-06 July 2025). The exhibition will have both micro and macroalgae themed activities. Please contact Dan Franklin for more information and if you'd like to discuss getting involved.

Biodiversity and Conservation Committee

In 2024 we reverted to the pre-Covid practice of a full-day in-person meeting which was held on 16th December at the Natural History Museum (NHM). This was much more interactive than an online meeting and raised more ideas than we had time to discuss fully during the day. Consequently, we intend during 2025 to have online meetings to discuss specific topics and to bring all together finally in one full day in-person meeting later in 2025.

Algal identification courses

Freshwater.

- Two of the now well-established freshwater id courses, initiated by the BPS and run annually by Dave John and Alan Pentecost, took place in summer 2024 with the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA) as 4-day courses. Because of the small lab facility at the new FBA site the venue was changed to the University of Cumbria, Ambleside Campus, which can take 20 students per course. Not yet decided if a course will be able to run in 2025.
- Charophyte Identification – course was run by Nick Stewart for one week at Bangor. There may possibly be one day spin-offs from this held around Britain, including one in Scotland, stimulated by BSBI interest that the Bangor course generated.

Marine

- The regular BPS seaweed id course run by Francis Bunker with Juliet Brodie and Chris Maggs in Plymouth ran in 2024 but moved from the MBA to the Plymouth University Marine Lab which was a successful improvement. In 2025 the course will be 20-25 May and Dan Franklin will promote this on BPS social media.
- It has not been possible owing to other staff commitments to run taxonomy courses at the NHM in 2024 but a need has been identified for a course on red coralline identification and we will discuss this further in 2025.

Seaweed Field Meetings.

These are not primarily identification courses but have been held since the foundation of the BPS to generate fuller survey records of parts of the British coast and enable people involved in this, both amateur and professional, to come together and share expertise. The last one held in 2023 at the Scottish Oceans Institute at St Andrews University was very successful and you can see a summary of the data produced in a poster presentation at this meeting at Hull. We have discussed two possible venues for the next one:

- *Oban* based at the SAMS lab. We have not previously covered this area with a BPS field meeting. There are problems with distances to shores and possible costs for lab use but we will investigate.
- *Galloway* was the site of a previous BPS field meeting in 1976. The area is not well-surveyed but there is renewed seaweed interest with active conservation groups who have possible plans for a small laboratory and general marine interest heightened by oyster seeding activities. Martin and Clare met Galloway conservationists at 2 meetings in 2024 where this possible field meeting was mooted.

Martin Wilkinson and Clare Scanlan are investigating these two possibilities and we would appreciate any suggestions for venues from the membership.

A problem that can arise with planning such meetings can be laboratory costs which raises a point about whether outward facing BPS committees (Biodiversity & Conservation and Education & Outreach) should have a committee budget to help such activities. A detailed proposal for this is not given just now but the committee would like to produce a detailed suggestion to the next council meeting.

Publications

Brown Seaweeds (Phaeophyceae) of Britain and Ireland by Robert Fletcher, was published by Pelagic Publishing on 17 September 2024. This completes the series *Seaweeds of the British Isles* which was one of the initial aims of the BPS at its foundation. This is a special occasion for which we should possibly hold a launch event. This particular volume is monumental in content and approach and we should express great thanks to Juliet Brodie who did enormous work in editing drafts of this title. The high price of £100 reflects the content of this 806-page work but BPS members can get a 30% discount by quoting BPS30 when ordering from pelagicpublishing.com (see details of this in announcements at end of *The Phycologist* no. 104 Autumn 2024).

Seaweeds of Denmark in two volumes by Ruth Nielsen was translated into English by Juliet Brodie and Ruth and is proving to be very useful to those who need help with difficult British seaweed id. It can be obtained from the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.

Sadly, Ruth died during 2024.

Charophytes of Europe is a massive work of 1,100 pages, recently published by Springer of which Nick Stewart was an editor.

The Freshwater Algal Flora of the British Isles which was strongly funded by the BPS is now in its 2nd edition and continues to sell but copies no longer contain a DVD of images which can now be downloaded from the CUP website.

The *Desmid posters* are now out of stock but available from NHBS as print on demand.

Seaweeds of Britain and Ireland, Seasearch Guide, 2nd edition, by Francis & Anne Bunker, Juliet Brodie and Chris Maggs has been reprinted but the publishers have not this time incorporated any name changes.

A draft colour photo guide to freshwater algae aimed at people carrying out river surveys has been produced by Dave John, Richard Lansdown and Martyn Kelly.

The BPS species recording website, www.bpsalgalrecords.com does not appear to be used effectively. There were queries about the verification scheme and the link to NBN and some said they had difficulty logging in. There was a discussion about improving this and the use of the site and Juliet and Jo will be investigating aspects of this, with a possible suggestion that BPS might need to appoint someone to be in charge of data.

Maerl beds are an important habitat. B&C committee member Angie Gall, who represents Natural England, has recently carried out a major survey of maerl beds in St Austell Bay and the damaging effects of mussel farming, scallop trawling and desalination discharges. The carbon capture activity of maerl is also currently under assessment. There will be a maerl forum in Cornwall in spring 2025. BPS could inform people of maerl concerns leading to a suggestion by Dan Franklin that we could have factsheets on maerl both in printed format and on the BPS website. Seaweeds are an unprotected resource and it was suggested that such factsheets could also be used for our other conservation problems.

Red List Monitoring of species under threat

The IUCN red list criteria are still inappropriate for seaweeds although we managed a submission 3 years ago which included partly subjective practical observations of many members of our committee. Chris Yesson and Juliet Brodie are considering ways to improve seaweed red list assessment.

IUCN now has a specialist seaweed group which is working on a global red list for kelps. Juliet Brodie is a member of this.

Big Seaweed Search run by the NHM now has offshoots running in other countries around the world and continues in the British Isles. The problem that arose a few years ago with the Marine Conservation Society, who laid off many staff who were active with it, has now improved with dedicated MCS staff, publicity and collaboration.

Kelp monitoring

Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme is a DEFRA programme to understand the value of our natural assets. The Environment Agency is running the freshwater, estuarine and coastal aspects of it and has established a kelp group which hopes to have a national kelp monitoring programme. However, it seems that this will be restricted to England and not include Scotland or Wales where the EA is not the active agency. We will investigate this.

Dave John provided information on Operation Kelp which was a massive underwater citizen science survey of British kelp forests devised in the 1960s by David Bellamy in association with the British Sub Aqua Club utilising several hundred amateur divers. We can see how a useful survey might be carried out from this but unfortunately, so far, nobody has been able to find out what has happened to the huge mass of distributional and biomass data collected. These data could be of great help to those now looking at the effects of climate change on survival of our present kelp forests.

NHM jointly with Zoological Society of London has started a citizen science monthly kelp monitoring programme as part of the Coastal Health project and 150-170 people have signed up for it.

Education & Outreach. Dan Franklin, Chair of BPS E&O Committee attended our December meeting and we discussed ways in which our two committees could collaborate although we have clearly defined different functions.

Future meetings

As explained earlier we will hold several online meetings to deal with specific topics in 2025. We should consider how we can contribute to the (ReMeMaRe) Restoring Meadow Marsh and Reef initiative of the Environment Agency which includes a kelp restoration component headed by Pippa Moore. Are there further seaweed restoration approaches that we should be considering? The most obvious aspect of climate change affecting our shore ecology is the die back of kelp forests. But we should discuss what further problems may arise for our coastal flora owing to climate change and how the BPS should respond. With growing commercial use of algae we need to consider if conservation problems may arise with which we could help.

FEMS Representative

Anne D. Jungblut represented BPS at the Annual General Meeting of the FEMS Council, held 12-13 September 2024 in The Hague (The Netherlands) which included a celebration of FEMS's 50th anniversary. Prof Antonio Ventosa (University of Seville) took over the presidency of FEMS in 2024 from Prof Hillary Lappin-Scott (Warwick University), and three new members were elected to the Board during the AGM. The new board members are Evelyn Doyle (University College Dublin), Cecilia Flocco (Leibnitz Institute DSMZ) and Michael Sauer (BOKU Wien). FEMS offers grants for research and training, industry placement, meeting organizers, meeting attendance and FEM congress attendance: https://fems-microbiology.org/about_fems/network-and-activities/grants/. FEMS Conference on Microbiology will take place in Milan, Italy, 14-17 July, 2025: <https://www.femsmicro.org/topics>. The conference topics are Eco Innovation, Health Horizons, Biotechnology and Engagement & Growth. Deadline for abstracts is 24 January 2025 .

FEPS Representative

Jason Hall-Spencer attended the Federation of European Phycological Societies Council Meeting on 18 Sept 2024 in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Two amendments to the FEPS constitution were made...

1. cancellation of individual memberships
2. deadline for the payment of membership fee moved from 31/1 to 30/6.

The next FEPS Council meeting (2025) will be in Poland as plans start for the 9th European Phycological Congress which will be in Krakau in 2027. The 42nd International Conference of the Polish Phycological Society will be held from May 27 to 30, 2025.

Elzbieta Wilk-Wozniak was elected as the new President of FEPS, taking over from Peter Kroth and Andreas Holzinger was elected as the new secretary, taking over from Dagmar Stengel.

A new journal called *Phycology Journal* is now affiliated with FEPS with Burkhard Becker (a previous president of FEPS) as Editor-in-Chief. Here is a link to the new journal's website <https://phycologyj.biomedcentral.com/>

Jason Hall-Spencer transported six BPS microscopes from the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth to the Freshwater Biological Association in the Lake District.

RSB Representative

Little to report since last Council meeting, but Saul Purton is keen to strengthen the link between BPS and RSB through engagement by BPS members with RSB activities. These include training courses, outreach and policy activities, funding opportunities, guest lectures, etc. Also, there is a need to raise the profile of BPS as a RSB member organisation by ensuring that our events are advertised on the RSB website. Saul will also investigate whether there is value in BPS becoming a member of RSB's Strategic Partner Group.