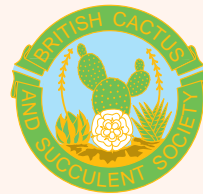


British Cactus & Succulent Society



BCSS Futures Project Progress – June 2008

One year after the project was approved, Roland Tebbenham gave a presentation to the Executive meeting held at Leicester on 12 April 2008. The slides are reproduced here to inform all Members of the highlights of the feedback collated from Members and branches. They should give readers an understanding of the opinions and suggestions concerning various aspects of the BCSS organisation and activities. The slides were grouped to cover the principal elements included in the surveys.

All this information is now being used to bring about improvements to the Society management and activities. Indeed some actions are already under way; including Website improvements, CactusWorld developments, 2008 Show planning, and 2010 Convention planning. Further aspects are to be reviewed as outlined in the last slide, as follows:

- Society Image & Objectives
- Promotional Materials & Outreach
- Use of the Internet and electronic technologies
- Library Facilities & Management
- Practical support for Branches
- Organisation & Continuity, including Zone structure
- Links with International Organisations & Special Interest Groups

For three of these activities, project teams are about to be set up, requiring volunteers from Members, to carry out further work, produce detailed proposals and implement agreed actions. See below for details.

The Futures Team plan to continue work on the project, inviting help from officials and Members with particular skills or interests relevant to the particular aspects of our hobby or the Society.

***The BCSS Futures Team – contact Roland Tebbenham by telephone:
01327 352139, or email: rltebbenham@lycos.co.uk***

Team members: Graham Charles, John Ellis, Ian Priestley, David Quail, Ray Stephenson and Roland Tebbenham

BCSS Futures Project – volunteers needed

Some of the ideas which Members have put forward to improve the effectiveness of the BCSS and to enhance its services to Members will require significant amounts of further project work to bring them to fruition. In order to achieve results as soon as possible, a number of small action teams of perhaps four or five people are to be set up in key areas, and volunteers are now needed for the following three projects, which have been defined as having immediate priority, and further teams may be set up later.

- Effective marketing and promotion of the BCSS.
- Digitisation of the slide library, addition of more talks to the library and enhancements to the talks offered (eg use of Powerpoint, addition of audio/video etc)
- Digitisation of items in the main library, primarily BCSS Journals and, where agreed, those of other Societies, and making them accessible to Members.

To volunteer, or for further information, please contact Roland Tebbenham on 01327 352139 or by email at : rltebbenham@lycos.co.uk giving details of your time availability and any relevant skills or experience offered.

Members' interests

1

2

Q1 - PLANTS

What are your major plant interests?

546 (20%) UK members ...

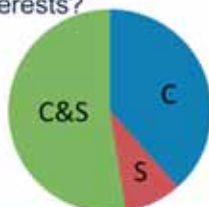
38% [207] – Mainly Cacti

9% [51] – Mainly Succulenti

52% [286] – Both C&S

with 2 left blank

A few Members indicated interests in other plant groups: Alpines, Bulbs, Carnivorous Plants, Cycads, Gesneriads, Orchids and Trees ...



Q2 FAVOURITE CACTI

The Top Genera ...

208 MAMMILLARIA

182 REBUTIA [+AYLOSTERA, MEDIATELOBIVIA, SULCOREBUTIA, WEINGARTIA]

119 GYMNOCALYCIUM

119 ECHINOPSIS [+LOBIVIA]; INCLUDES ECHINOPSIS HYBRIDS [13]

85 PARODIA [+NOTOCACTUS]

74 ARIOCARPUS

73 ASTROPHYTUM

63 ECHINOCEREUS

59 FEROCACTUS

56 TURBINICARPUS

55 ERIOSYCE [+ISLAYA, NEOPORTERIA]



3

4

Q2 FAVOURITE SUCCULENTI

The Top Six Genera ...

101 LITHOPS

100 HAWORTHIA

78 EUPHORBIA

75 ALOE

49 AGAVE

46 ECHEVERIA

The Top Six Families ...

213 ALOACEAE

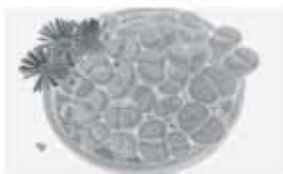
176 MESEMBRYANTHEMACEAE

160 CRASSULACEAE

82 EUPHORBIACEAE

50 AGAVACEAE

45 ASCLEPIADACEAE



Q2 NON-GENERIC THEMES

Members recorded other interests:

21 Caudiciform Plants

9 Columnar Cacti

6 Miniature Cacti

5 Mexican Cacti

4 Cristate Plants

Also members commented that their interests had changed from time-to-time



5

1

Q3 COLLECTION SIZES & Q4 ENVIRONMENTS

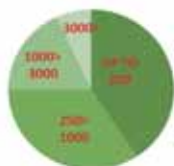
Of 539 UK Members

219 / 41% - up to 250

185 / 34% - 250 to 1000

98 / 18% - 1000 to 3000

37 / 7% - more than 3000



ENVIRONMENT	No.	%
GREENHOUSE	270	50%
GREENHOUSE + OTHER	212	39%
WINDOWSILL	29	5%
CONSERVATORY	28	5%
ALL	4	~1%
COLD FRAME	1	<1%
BEDDED OUT	0	

BCSS membership & benefits

Q5 HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THE BCSS?

458 returns, 84% response – ten top sources

Source of Information	# / Prop
Society show or flower show stand	128/28%
From a member or friend	121/26%
An article or advert in a magazine	52/11%
Online (Internet)	42/9%
Rejoined after a lapse	30/7%
Nursery/Garden Centre/Botanic Garden	26/6%
Attended meeting/in a previous Society	25/6%
Read books on Cacti & Succulents	24/5%
Saw a poster in library, shop, etc	22/5%
From a BCSS publication or leaflet	12/3%

BCSS Membership & benefits

2

Q5 WHY DID YOU JOIN THE BCSS?

491 returns, 90% response - six top reasons

Reason to join BCSS	No. / %
Wanted to know more	300/61%
Meet like-minded people	81/17%
Access to plants and seeds	44/9%
Friendly and helpful members	40/8%
Meetings/Shows/Trips	21/4%
Receive CactusWorld	20/4%

3

Q6 MEMBERSHIP DURATION

Of 546 UK returns ...

Years	No.	SVY%	MDB%	RR%
<5Y	101	18%	28%	14%
5>10Y	84	15%	14%	23%
10>20Y	73	13%	22%	12%
>20Y	288	53%	36%	31%

SVY% - The proportion of survey returns

MDB% - Proportion in 2007 Members database

RR% - Return Rate from membership group

4

Q7 SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

ORDER OF IMPORTANCE/VALUE

ACTIVITY	BY NUMBER	BY SCORE
CactusWorld Journal	1	1
Branch Meetings	2	2
Local Shows	3	3
Seed Distribution	4	4
Book Publishing	5	6
National Shows	6	5
Conservation	7	7
Society Website	8	8
Bradleya Yearbook	9	10
Zone Meetings	10	9
The Forum	11	12
National Conventions	12	11

5

Q7 SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

What is needed to make the lower-ranked activities more appealing to you?

106 Returns, 19% Response – six top reasons

Comments	No. / %
Need more time available	50/47%
Need Branch or other activities closer to me	31/29%
Need more plain English info to help novices	16/15%
Reminders of benefits & publication contents	9/8.5%
Need different dates/venues for National Events	7/6.6%
Need more Zonal activities	7/6.6%

Branches & Zones

1

Q9 and Q10 BRANCH SUMMARY

- 62% of survey responders attend monthly Branch meetings four or more times per year
- Non-attendees are busy with work, caring or other commitments, or are too far away, aged, infirm, or disabled
- Interests (other than monthly meetings) are: shows & displays, outings & open days, sales & swaps, and social activities
- Recent changes for better and for worse were roughly equal
- Changes are needed; the ideas were collated and will be compared to the feedback to the Branch Survey instrument. (See Branch feedback in later slides.)

2

Q11 and Q12 ZONE SUMMARY

- Zone activities are valued by many members, including:
 - Rallies, Conventions & Symposia
 - Shows & Displays
 - Visits & Open Days
 - Sales & Promotion Events
 - Quizzes & Meetings of other Branches
 - Other Members said that their Zone is too diffuse or inactive, they are too far away, or they are unaware of Zone activities
- Question?**
- Do we need a Zonal (Regional) Tier of the Society?
 - If so, then what should the focus be ... ?
 - Internal – organising conventions & open days, or
 - External – organising local society promotion

Branches & Zones

3

Q13 WOULD YOU HELP?

If the Society wished to introduce new Branch or Zone based activities, would you be able/willing and have the time to support these activities?

310 Returns, 57% of Responders

85% say YES, 15% say NO

CATEGORY	No.	% [310]	% [546]
Weekday	41	13%	8%
Weekend – 1 day	74	24%	14%
Weekend – 2 days	20	6%	4%
Possibly	18	6%	3%
Any	110	35%	20%
No	47	15%	9%

Conservation activities

1

Q20 CONSERVATION – SUMMARY

- ❑ Conservation is considered an important Society activity
- ❑ Conservation activities influence people to join us
- ❑ The CSSA recognised our efforts
- Members recorded more than three times as many likes compared to dislikes [242:67]
- The ideas advanced included:
 - greater emphasis on ex-situ conservation
 - more involvement of the membership
 - improved reporting of outcomes



Use of Information technology

1

Q14 MEMBERS' USE OF IT - SUMMARY

Overall:

- ❑ 22% [118/547] of Members said 'NO' to both Q14b & Q14c. Hence these Members have no internet access (either at home or elsewhere) ... hence ...
- ❑ 78% of survey responders have internet access (either at home or elsewhere)
- ❑ 90% of responding Members with up to five years service, [92/102], have internet access
- ❑ 76% of responding Members with more than five years service, [337/445] have internet access

2

Q15 SOCIETY USE OF IT

How can the BCSS improve its usage of IT? For example, should we continue to produce a paper based Journal, and if so over what timeframe(s)? Alternatively, should we switch to fully electronic media, accessible only via the internet; or should we offer both?

536 comments were recorded, the six most significant themes are listed below ...

THEME	COMMENTS	No.	%
CactusWorld	Maintain Journal on paper	374	69%
Promotion	Use websites as marketing tools	52	10%
Information	Publish all info on website	43	8%
Publications	Put CW [& index] on web for searches	33	6%
Contact	Extend BCSS Announce email	13	2.5%
Forum	Develop the Forum (non specific)	12	2.5%

CactusWorld & Bradleya

1

Q16 CACTUSWORLD - SUMMARY

- ❑ CactusWorld is our Society Flagship
- ❑ Though 69% of the Members who responded to the survey want CactusWorld to be retained on paper; some said we should experiment with parallel electronic delivery and/or a search capability as additional services included in the standard membership fee
- ❑ Members recorded nearly twice as many comments as likes compared to dislikes [433:225]
- ❑ Many ideas were advanced for additional content
- ❑ The Newsletter section proved controversial with opinion divided on inclusion [80] or exclusion [56]

2

Q23 BRADLEYA – SUMMARY

- ❑ Bradleya is a world-class publication
- ❑ The 25th Anniversary issue was highly praised
- ❑ Members recorded nearly twice as many likes compared to dislikes [109:63]
- ❑ 20% of the Members who responded to the survey do not purchase Bradleya because either they find it too technical, or they are not interested in the majority of the articles
- ❑ Some ideas were advanced for additional content, mostly wanting more technical pieces

Electronic services

1

2

Q17 & Q18 ELECTRONIC SERVICES - SUMMARY

- ❑ **64%** [275/431] **WOULD NOT** pay for search facilities, though **57%** [196/345] **WOULD** like them for CactusWorld & Bradleya
- ❑ **71%** [280/397] **WOULD NOT** pay for IT services
- ❑ **61%** [233/381] **AGREED** the Society should publish on CD/DVD
 - ELECTRONIC BACK-ISSUES OF CACTUSWORLD
 - IDENTIFICATION OF SELECTED GENERA/GROUPS
 - RECORDS OF LOCAL/NATIONAL SHOWS, EMPHASISE PLANTS IN FLOWER
 - FIELD TRIPS WITH COMPARISONS OF PLANTS IN HABITAT & IN CULTIVATION
 - GROWERS SHOWING PLANTS IN THEIR COLLECTIONS
 - NATIONAL CONVENTION PRESENTATIONS
- ❑ **55%** [212/383] **WOULD**, or **MIGHT**, pay more for materials published electronically

Q19 BCSS WEBSITE & FORUM - SUMMARY

- ❑ The Website & Forum are our windows in the electronic world and must provide effective promotion/interaction.
- ❑ Members recorded twice as many likes compared to dislikes [124:61].
- ❑ Many ideas were advanced for improvements by way of additional services and content.
- ❑ Branch Websites extend our reach locally. They offer many opportunities to engage and inform Members and non-members alike.
- ❑ We need to determine whether some electronic services should be restricted to Members, either within the standard membership fee or at additional costs.

National events

1

2

Q21 NATIONAL SHOW – SUMMARY

- ❑ The National Show is a key Society activity that can stimulate Members' interests and promote our hobby to non-members.
- Members recorded nearly three times as many likes compared to dislikes [221:78].
- The most significant changes suggested are to:
 - move the show around the UK,
 - improve its promotion to the general public,
 - stage it over two days and
 - include more special interest displays/groups.

Q22 NATIONAL CONVENTION – SUMMARY

- ❑ The National Convention is a key Society activity that offers Members opportunities to meet, to hear key players in our hobby from around the world, and also extend their knowledge.
- ❑ Members recorded more than three times as many likes compared to dislikes [80:25].
- ❑ The most significant changes suggested are:
 - expand the range of activities on offer
 - offer different packages to attract more members.

Promotion & advertising

1

2

Q24 SOCIETY PROMOTION

Do we promote our Society and its Aims enough?

358 Returns, 66% of the UK survey responses.

RESPONSE	No.	%
YES	116	32%
NO	242	68%
Blank (no opinion recorded)	188	--

109 of 242 people who said 'NO' (about 20% of the UK survey responders) recorded suggestions for improvements. These were collated into principal themes ...

[1] Image & Publicity [2] Activities

(Detailed data were provided to the F&GPC members in a summary report in Feb-2008)

Q24 SOCIETY PROMOTION SUGGESTIONS [1]

IMAGE & PUBLICITY – HIGHLIGHTS

- Easy starter plants for modern lifestyles, conservatories and cold greenhouses – suitable for all ages.
- TV & Radio coverage, RHS & BBC magazine articles.
- 'Global Warming News' – links to/from conservation bodies.
- Eye-catching posters & handbills on growing C&S.
- Promote all shows, exhibitions and events regionally.
- Junior 'Young Spiky Club', link into RHS Schools Initiative.
- Promote C&S as a National Curriculum resource.
- Family membership offer.
- Integrate activities with internet materials.
- Develop a BCSS screensaver.

Promotion & advertising

3

Q24 SOCIETY PROMOTION SUGGESTIONS [2]

ACTIVITIES

- Set a promotion budget and appoint a promotion team.
- Run a 'National Cactus Day' – encourage all Branches to stage shows, displays, sales, and information.
- Co-operative links with Specialist Societies, University Departments & Botanic Gardens.
- Promotional stand at RHS Wisley.
- Sponsor demonstration plots in botanic and municipal gardens.
- Access to schools with 'growing packs', painting competitions, gifts for children: plants, badges, data packs, stickers etc.
- Organise 'bring and buy' sales and continental nursery tours.
- Stage a photo competition at the Convention.

Have you any more ideas?

If you have any further thoughts, ideas or suggestions on how we can improve our Society and its services to Members, or on what you particularly like or dislike, it is not too late to let us have your views.

Likewise please let us know if you have any special skills or, just as important, some of your time available to devote to improving our Society.

Please contact Roland Tebbenham, whose details are on the first page.

BCSS – the future

1

Q25 BCSS – VIEWS OF THE FUTURE ...

Where in your view is the Society heading in the future?
191 Returns, 35% of the UK survey responses

TOP TEN COMMENTS	No.	%
Decline as existing members age	73	38%
Fewer Branches, maybe more independent?	45	24%
Fewer Members, but more dedicated	43	23%
Need to build engagement with Virtual Members	28	15%
Risk of destruction by the internet/nerds	26	14%
Better image to attract and retain newer Members	21	11%
Exploit internet & Forum to engage more Members	20	10%
BCSS must embrace new technology	11	5.8%
National events more important as Branches decline	9	4.7%
Focus on Conservation	7	3.7%

2

Q26 NEW BCSS ACTIVITIES

What new activities would you like to see the BCSS doing/providing?

Particular responses to this question were from fewer than ten members; they have all been logged as ideas for consideration

Principal Themes:

- Organisation & central support
- National events
- Plant-related
- Society services
- Other aspects

3

Q27 BCSS CHANGES – SUMMARY

- Members recorded more than two and a half times as many recent changes for the better compared to changes for the worse
- Ratio was 224:88
- Changes needed
 - Organisation & processes
 - Image & objectives
 - Activities

ASPECT	Diff
Publications	+199
Internet	+31
Activities	+18
Consultation	+10
Finances	+9
Member Services	+4
Promotion	-8
Membership & Branches	-46

4

OTHER SURVEY ACTIVITIES

Three other survey instruments were distributed ...

SURVEY	Returned	%
Branches	49/86	57%
Zones	11/18	61%
Society Officials	33/38	87%

- Branch survey – poor response rate, summary report prepared, recommendations to be circulated [highlights follow ...]
- Zone survey – very mixed results, being collated; some zones are very active, others are moribund.
- Officials' survey – good response, results reported to F&GPC; clarity of roles, principal interactions & back-up provisions.

Branch survey output

1

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT - NATIONAL

- ❑ Review & restate BCSS objectives & role.
- ❑ Review BCSS management:
 - structure, officials, meetings, communication with branches.
- ❑ Review current Zonal structure:
 - if necessary revise or abolish it.
- ❑ BCSS Treasurer to monitor Branch accounts:
 - identify those with consistently declining assets and discuss assistance before branch closure becomes inevitable.
 - also review suggestions of financial assistance to branches and consider what might be afforded.
- ❑ Branch Secretaries' packs –
 - replace missing packs, define update policy, date contents clearly,
 - include promotional materials based on consistent 'house-style'.

2

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – PROMOTION

- ❑ Websites:
 - BCSS should consider paying grants to Branches that maintain up-to-date web sites to promote branch activities and the society.
 - Means of assisting the design/uploading of web pages should be sought to help those branches without the technical skills.
- ❑ Promotional Literature:
 - Copies of all handouts produced by Branches should be acquired with a view to improving the range of Society literature available.
 - Selected literature should be provided to Branches at no more than the cost of printing.

3

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – EVENTS

- ❑ Where practicable, national events/meetings should be rotated to venues in accessible locations around the UK.
- ❑ Otherwise they should be centred near to the geographic membership centre – [52°30'N; 1°17'W] in a triangle bounded by Leicester, Rugby & Tamworth.
- ❑ National officials should visit Branches: not only as speakers, but in particular to canvass Branch opinions and to facilitate sharing of good practice & feedback.

4

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – PEOPLE

- ❑ Branches should ensure that all 'passive' members are made aware of Branch activities.
- ❑ Branches should contact all their lapsed Members to urge rejoining and gain feedback about why they decided not to renew.
- ❑ Branches should ensure that all new Members and visitors are made welcome (by everyone), but are not overwhelmed or made to feel intimidated.

5

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – ACTIVITIES

- ❑ Branch programmes should include 'variety', in terms of both subject content & format, and successful formats should be shared with other Branches.
- ❑ Branches must be open-minded about trying new ideas and new means of public interaction, successful ideas should be shared.
- ❑ Meeting venues should be reviewed periodically & the option of moving considered, weighing cost savings against potential disadvantages.

6

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – SPEAKERS

- ❑ Branches should encourage their more knowledgeable members to become Speakers.
- ❑ New Speakers should be encouraged, with the BCSS offering them assistance, guidelines and perhaps training sessions.
- ❑ Branches should consider the viability of purchasing digital projection equipment (potentially part-funded by lottery grants).
- ❑ Speakers could be encouraged to allow digital presentations to be made available through the 'slide library' to enable broader availability.

Branch survey output

7

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – CO-OPERATION

- ❑ Branches should share successful practices and ideas with regard to events and activities.
- ❑ Where practicable, the organisation of joint events (e.g. outings) should be considered, to improve viability and foster contact.
- ❑ Branches and Special Interest Groups should be encouraged to develop links by hosting special meetings, shows, or staging displays to increase participation around the UK.

8

BRANCH SURVEY OUTPUT – SUMMARY

- ❖ Questionnaires naturally attract some negative feedback; however many branches clearly acknowledged the need for change at all levels within the Society.
- ❖ Branches do need to share good practice and mechanisms to encourage this are urgently needed.

Thanks to Branch Secretaries &
Committees

In conclusion

WORK IN PROGRESS

- ❑ *Your responses are being used.*
- ❑ *Some actions are under way – examples: Website improvements, Cactus World developments, 2008 Show planning, 2010 Convention planning*
- ❑ *Aspects to be reviewed ...*
 - *Society image & objectives*
 - *Promotional materials & outreach*
 - *Use of the internet and electronic technologies*
 - *Library facilities & management*
 - *Practical support for Branches*
 - *Organisation & continuity, including Zone structure*
 - *Links with international organisations & Special Interest Groups*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



*FUTURES TEAM FELLOW MEMBERS –
GRAHAM CHARLES, JOHN ELLIS, IAN PRIESTLEY, DAVID
QUAIL, RAY STEPHENSON*

*SOCIETY OFFICIALS –
EDDY HARRIS, DAVID KIRKBRIGHT, TONY MACE, ROY
MOTTRAM, DAVID SLADE*