

International Society for Plant Pathology

Report to ISPP from an Associated Society for 2008 - 2013

Name of Society: British Society for Plant Pathology

Established: 1981

Web address for Society: [www.bspp.org.uk](http://www.bspp.org.uk)

Name of person preparing report: Roger Williams: Secretary, BSPP

Nominated officers: Is the list on the ISPP website correct? Yes

Society contact: Roger Williams, Secretary, BSPP. Email address: [secretary@bspp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@bspp.org.uk)

Report for 2008 - 2013

Membership in 2008 was 646 members, in 2009 621 members, in 2010 645 members, in 2011 631, and in 2012 647. Membership is drawn from more than 50 countries.

Society activities and publications: Detailed up-to-date information on the British Society for Plant Pathology is available on its website at [www.bspp.org.uk](http://www.bspp.org.uk) including information on forthcoming meetings, conferences and workshops, information on Society membership, information on the Society's Travel Fund, Bursary Fund and Fellowship Schemes, services for members, and any recent reports commissioned by the Society.

The British Society for Plant Pathology provides five main strands of support for the science. (1) We oversee and ensure the quality of the journals Plant Pathology, Molecular Plant Pathology and New Disease Reports. This is important in its own right, and incidentally provides an income stream through profit-sharing arrangements with the publishers. We use this income for the remaining

strands of activity (2) We provide support for training in the form of summer studentships in research labs for undergraduate and MSc students, grants to support PhD students or established scientists to visit other labs for specific training or research purposes (3) We partially support travel by members to conferences and other laboratories for scientific purposes. (4) We engage in outreach, seeking to lobby for stable government support for plant pathology and allied specialisms and to inform and enthuse the public. (5) We organise conferences intended to facilitate networking and discussion on specific topics of scientific or general interest.

The journals of the British Society for Plant Pathology: Plant Pathology, Molecular Plant Pathology, and New Disease Reports are respected and have clear niches. They have an informed specialist refereeing process which is probably less random and more rigorous than more generalist journals, and they allow more efficient content browsing than very broad journals. Developments in open-access and new start-ups will require us to adapt in future, but at present they still serve a function. Prizes are awarded each year for the best "student" papers published in Plant Pathology and Molecular Plant Pathology. A Society Newsletter, containing information on members and their activities, is issued free to members each quarter.

The Society holds an annual Presidential meeting at which papers on a topical plant pathology theme are presented. The meeting includes competitions for the P H Gregory prize for the best presentation by a post graduate speaker and the John Colhoun prize for the best poster. The Society also supports a number of conferences and meetings relevant to the interests of its members, including occasional meetings of regional plant pathology groups. The Society aims to attract high numbers of student and post graduate members to its meetings and special registration arrangements are usually in place for younger members.

Members of the Society frequently contribute to meetings, workshops and exhibitions organised by others, including events aimed at the general public, and in this way promote plant pathology and the Society's activities.

Support for travel runs at about £30k per year, for fellowships and studentships around £50k and conferences around £10-20k, and has continued at this level during the period under discussion. Outreach has recently seemed more important and several new activities are under way. In particular we surveyed teaching of plant pathology at undergraduate and MSc level in UK universities during 2012. The outcome was alarming for future capacity - there is almost no formal teaching of the principles of applied pathology and surprisingly little teaching of the molecular pathology which is developing so rapidly. We were "fortunate" that the release of this document coincided with a local political crisis over chalara dieback of *Fraxinus*, a very common woodland tree, and we achieved good press coverage and access to government. We have also employed a part-time worker specifically to develop and improve ways of publicising the science to the general public (to

generate public support for state support of the science) and children (to increase the chances of individuals developing a career in the area).

The British Society for Plant Pathology is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a registered UK Charity and annual returns of its business activities are made each year to both Companies House and the UK Charity Commissioners. A high proportion of the Society's annual income is used in support of its services to members.

The British Society for Plant Pathology is managed by a Board which meets quarterly to plan for the Presidential Meeting, to oversee awards for Travel grants, Bursaries and Fellowships, to agree the policy for the Society's publications, to agree the annual budget and, generally, to manage the Society's affairs. The Board also discusses and develops new ideas and initiatives to promote plant pathology and support plant pathologists.

The Board of the Society comprises a President, who chairs its meetings, a President Elect, a Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Programme Secretary, Membership Secretary, and six members elected by the membership. The Senior Editors of the Society's publications, Plant Pathology, Molecular Plant Pathology, New Disease Reports and the Newsletter, together with the Society's Web Manager usually attend Board meetings to report on progress.

Internationally, we wish to develop purposeful links as widely as we can, though as a small society we have moderate capacity to do so. We work as part of the European Federation of Plant Pathologists and we have growing bi-lateral links with American Phytopathological Society, including the exchange of speakers at conferences and an experimental programme of video-link discussions.