

6 April 2020

Dear British Lichen Society Members,

In these unprecedented times, I would like to offer you an update on the British Lichen Society's response to the pandemic, but also offer you some good news and a little call-to-arms.

The safety and well-being of our members and their communities is our utmost priority. Therefore I regretfully inform you that we are temporarily suspending all face-to-face meetings, including Council, Committee and Field meetings and excursions with immediate effect.

The field meeting in May to North Harris has been cancelled; detailed planning for the recording meeting to Bredon Hill is currently on hold; and the situation regarding the field meeting in July to Aberdare is under review, this depending upon Government advice. It is the intention to try, perhaps in 2021, to hold all of the meetings that were planned for 2020. Members booked onto cancelled meetings should expect to be contacted by the field meetings secretary regarding any reimbursement of payments.

Although face-to-face meetings have been suspended, during this time the important business of the society will continue, informing and inspiring the public through development of educational materials and social media; advising on issues of conservation importance; collating, cleaning, maintaining and sharing data; and general running of the society.

While I have your attention, I'd like to highlight some important achievements of the Society and to which members of the BLS contributed, some of which were reported in the recent AGM in Edinburgh, and some which are even more recent successes:

- Our **new Senior Editorial team at the Lichenologist** is in place, and the **new format of the journal** has been launched, including **advance publication online** - a move which should speed access to research and improve our impact;
- Funds to support **travel grants for the International Association of Lichenology meeting**, now rescheduled for August 2021, are still set aside;
- Thanks in part to a response from the BLS, survey work and public evidence, **important dune heath communities were protected from development** at Coul Links in Sutherland;
- New **Sites of Special Scientific Interest guidelines** developed in collaboration with the nature conservation agencies have been published and adopted, resulting in **4 important lichens sites with new protection** including 2 new SSSIs notified for lichens;
- The **back issues of the Bulletins have been digitally scanned** and we are working to make them available to members;

- Updates are underway towards the production of **The Lichens of Great Britain and Ireland, 3rd Edition** - more than half of the treatments have been drafted;
- More than **30K new records of UK lichens** have been added to the database in 2019; and
- Our field meetings and other events have generated 482 person-days of survey effort, not to mention a lot of fun, training and socialising, and thousands more have been touched by social media.

The list above is by no means complete, and I'd like to recognize all the hard work - voluntary, unpaid, and often behind the scenes - by the officers, council members, trustees, committee members and dedicated enthusiasts alike in making it all a reality.

Let me also thank you for your support of the BLS and for your understanding and participation. Council next meets via videoconference in mid-May, and I will send an update when the situation becomes clearer.

Although we have to suspend large gatherings, please remember that you may still continue to go out by applying recommended [social distancing policies](#), and send records in! Or if you are staying in looking for activities, you can always turn your hand to learning a new skill: [using recording spreadsheets](#) perhaps! Go outside if you can and take up the earlier twitter challenge of finding the lichen (ten lichens?) nearest your door. A little bit of nature goes a long way to counteract the worries and stresses of current challenges, and it is precisely those common lichens for which the BLS database always needs more records.

With best wishes, and hoping that everyone stays safe and well,

Becky

Rebecca Yahr, BLS President