



**SCOTTISH
POLICY
GROUP**

BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vision and Strategy

2022-2024

Ecology covers a range of disciplines. The British Ecological Society Scottish Policy Group defines ecology as:

“the scientific study of the distribution, abundance and dynamics of organisms, their interactions with other organisms, (including humans), and their physical environment.”

Aims of BES-SPG

- 1. Supporting ecologists to understand and get involved in policy making, and support policy makers in understanding ecology.*
- 2. Promoting the use of ecological knowledge as part of a multidisciplinary approach to policy making.*
- 3. Providing robust ecological evidence.*

Background

The Committee has just celebrated its 10th birthday. When the BES-SPG started this was a new idea for BES, with no similar group present in any of the other devolved countries. During these first 5 years the committee have been identifying ways of working, finding out what does and does not work and how it can work with both BES members and policymakers.

The BES-SPG is now widely known and our activities have expanded during this time. In April 2016 the committee thought it appropriate to review our aims and activities to assess a) if we were fulfilling our aims; b) what, if any, activities we wanted to drop; c) what activities we could do better to fulfil our aims; d) if there were new activities we should do; and e) where we wanted to be in 5 years' time. The result of this was the 2016-2021 strategy document. This document was reviewed in 2019 by the Committee.

As we look forward to 2022 we recognised the need to revise and update our vision and strategy. The Committee decided as we are now well established a three-year strategy would be more appropriate and allow us to stay in line with the overall BES strategic outlook. The Committee held its workshop on the 7th of June to determine this new outlook for 2022-2025. The workshop was split into three main parts which have been summarised below.

Part 1: Assessment of Previous Strategy

The Committee assessed the previous vision and strategy document. This entailed a discussion of the previous points and activities, and it was determined whether it is an activity we should continue, or it was an activity that we should drop. We also discussed the previous document in terms of successes and challenges.

This discussion has been saved as an internal document alongside the mid-way revision that was completed in 2019. Both these documents provided context for the Committee to consider the priorities for the vision and activities for the next three years.

Part 2: Assessment of Current Activities

The Committee completed an assessment of our current activities. This was done via a scoring exercise and SWOT analysis. The group assessed our main activities, Pie and a Pint events, policy guides, policy training, parliamentary shadowing and consultation responses. This was saved as an internal document and provided context for elements we need to work on and consider moving forward the next three years.

Part 3: Where do we want to be in the next 3 years?

The Committee then split into pairs to consider their vision and activities for SPG over the next three years. The main points for consideration alongside other points discussed have been summarised below. Our strategic aims (above), visions and suggested activities (below) are all in line with the BES strategic plan 2020-2023.

Committee Visions

- Contributing to the BES policy agenda and ‘proactive policy topics’
- Maintaining and building the profile of SPG as a valuable resource.
- Having bigger impact in terms of making change at a policy-level.
- Increasing the diversity of ecologists and people involved with SPG.
- Strong membership that we are providing resources and support for focusing on engagement benefitting the membership
- Closer links with a more diverse range of communities in Scotland, other nations in the UK, EU and internationally.
- People coming to us with their ideas for existing or new events
- Climate change and biodiversity loss are going to be key big themes over the next 3 years (and beyond!). As a group we want to ensure we are contributing to consultations/events/etc in relation to these two big topics.
- Targeting membership: the BES has 645 contacts who have listed themselves in Scotland as their primary region. We only have 200 on our SPG mailing list. The aim for the next 3 years is to get a better handle on how active our members are.
- Have a system in place to measure impact, e.g. downloads, how our work has been referenced.
- The outcomes of this group inform the BES strategy and the work of the devolved nations.

Activities

We will continue our core activities, PAAP, Policy Training, Parliamentary Shadowing and Consultation responses in light of our SWOT analysis. Below are new suggested activities or ones that we can incorporate into our existing work.

(AIM 1, 2 & 3) Strategic horizon scanning in December/January

This happened at the start of 2021 when we agreed our programme of activities for the year. However, making this process more strategic and in direct connection with BES legislative scanning process would contribute to all three of our strategic aims. It could also allow us to streamline and plan for multiple benefits for our activities and set key meeting dates.

(AIM 1) Shadowing opportunities with other Scottish organisations

With the success of our parliamentary shadowing scheme we considered we would like to extend this opportunity to other organisations across Scotland. This will be a new activity for SPG.

(AIM 1 & 2) interact more with the Scottish media.

As this is a new activity for SPG. We aim to have at least one news item in the Scottish media and one magazine e.g 'The Holyrood' with the aim of raising the profile of SPG/ecology. The Chair of SPG interacting with BES media officer, opportunities for interaction will arise through this.

(AIM 2) Pie and a Pint that engages local policy makers and councils

We aim to hold at least one Pie and a Pint event that engages local councils and policy makers. This will foster diverse connections and increase the SPG network.

(AIM 1 & 2): Establishing new/diverse connections in other parts of Scotland for our PAAP tour events.

We aim to hold events at least 2 other locations in Scotland. This would have benefits for diversity and knowledge exchange. It will also create new connections across Scotland for SPG.

(AIM 1 & 2) Having an international guest speaker events when appropriate (especially when virtual).

We aim to invite international guest speaks to our events when appropriate. Especially in a virtual context. This contributes to knowledge exchange and diversity.

(AIM 2) Connect with BES Special Interests Groups (SIGs), Committees and Staff.

Explore the potential of holding joint events with SIGs and other Committees e.g REED network, LGBTQ network, PEWG, Education Committee. For example, if they need policy training SPG could help. It also facilitates cross promotion and support within the organisation.

(AIM 3) Broadening beyond general terrestrial focus of our work.

We aim to hold at least one PAAP that has a marine focus. For example, this could be held in a place such as Oban. We should also tie in the marine element into our event and work where appropriate.

(AIM 1) Added benefits to SPG Committee Members.

We aim to consider further what extra benefits we can provide for our SPG Committee members. For example, guaranteed opportunity to have a shadowing, or training course. Also shadowing another

committee member. This is something we would need to explore further as a group to see what options are available to us.

(AIM 1) SPG Committee attending other events as representatives.

This will extend the contacts of SPG and spread networking opportunities across the Committee. This is a new activity for SPG so we would need to see how this progresses. Going forward we need to keep this in mind as events come up.

(AIM 1 & 3) Rebuilding post COVID- rebuilding connections, networking, relationships.

This is an important activity for SPG over the next three years, as connections are harder to foster and develop in an online setting. As we move to a post COVID setting. We would like to establish deeper connections with relevant organisations in Scotland. Generally building relationships and contacts over the course of this Scottish parliament.

(AIM 2) Smaller training events at MSc courses/workshops.

As this is a new activity for SPG we aim to hold at least one small training event as part of an MSc course over the next three years. These events could be shorter in duration for example 2hrs max.

(AIM 1) The NatureScot Ecology students conference.

This expands the SPG network and connecting to young ecologists