



BNHS Policy on prioritising the use of funds (Jan 2025)

Background

BNHS rules give Council the power to use Society funds in ways which meet the objects of the Society. This includes the running costs of the Society, publication of journals, and publication of books. Funds can also be spent on one-off items such as projects and equipment, including expenditure by sections and affiliated groups.

The Society may also give grants to individuals or organisations. The Society has a grant scheme available to individuals for a specified project (requires an application, no defined ceiling) and the Theed-Pearse Award available to organisations (up to £500 per year). These are to be approved by the Scientific Committee and by Council. However, the Society can give donations to organisations outside of these schemes.

The amount available for use of funds is limited by the reserves policy, which provides for £93k of reserves (including £3k for provision of small grants). The Society's investments exceed £93k by a few thousand pounds but the Society has also maintained a current account balance of just over £20k in the last two years. This means that there are potentially free reserves which could be available for other purposes.

In the longer term, continued use of funds beyond day to day expenditure is only possible if reserves are replenished through investment reserves.

Objects of the Society

- (a) The Society shall promote the study of all branches of natural history especially in relation to the county of Bedfordshire.
- (b) The Society shall maintain and publish records of the occurrence and distribution of the flora and fauna of the county
- (c) The Society shall do all that it can to protect the flora and fauna of the county and shall collaborate with other bodies in the conservation of areas of particular natural history interest.

Procedural Principles for Use of Funds

- All expenditure should meet at least one of the objects of the Society;
- Any expenditure should not jeopardise the integrity of the financial reserves that have been agreed by the Finance Committee and ratified by Council;

- Donations to outside organisations (outside of the Grant scheme and the Theed-Pearse Award) are not limited to any particular time of year, but must be approved by Finance Committee and lastly by Council;
- Annually at its first meeting of the year, Council (in consultation with Scientific Committee and Finance Committee) should consider whether there are any projects conducted by external groups or other items of expenditure to be prioritised for use of funds.

Prioritisation

When use of funds is proposed for purposes beyond normal operational funding (including publication of journals) or the Grant Scheme or Theed-Pearse award, the following factors should be taken into account. These apply whether funds are for use by BNHS, its sections or affiliated groups, or an outside body.

- 1) Whether the proposed expenditure is for a purpose that wholly meets the objects of the Society;
- 2) The impact of the funding – given that the amount of funds available to spend is fairly small, priority should be given to projects which are likely to have high impact (in terms of the Society's objects) for the funds available.
- 3) The highest priority for expenditure is likely to be funds to facilitate the monitoring or recording of species' populations or environmental factors within Bedfordshire, for example through provision of expertise, workforce, technology or equipment (which may or may not be owned by BNHS).
- 4) Projects which promote greater awareness and engagement of the public in the study of natural history in the county may be funded if likely to result in lasting benefits
- 5) Funds may be donated for the purchase of land, waterbodies or buildings within Bedfordshire but such a purchase must contribute directly towards the objects of the Society. Given the scale of funds available to BNHS, this is likely to be of lower priority.