

## Strategic Priorities

### AAB 2017 & 2018

President, Professor Christine Watson

As I look forward to two years as President of AAB my aim is to ensure that the AAB is reaching its potential in terms of providing a forum for applied biology which is attractive to both academia and industry and to all generations of scientists from research students to retired members. It is also extremely important that we ensure the continuation of our successful conference programme and the further development of our journals. Like other UK membership organisations the AAB faces significant challenges in delivering our aims in an efficient and cost-effective manner which allows us to run conferences that the academic community can afford to attend. ESA 14 (run in 2016) has broadened our visibility to European scientists and we need to continue to build on that new constituency. In addition to There are 3 areas that I plan to focus on in the next 2 years:

- Improved efficiency in the AAB Office
- Increasing diversity within the AAB
- Developing improved linkages between AAB and other relevant UK and European membership organisation

#### Improved efficiency in the AAB Office

The last year has been a difficult period in the AAB Office due to illness and resignations. While the office is small, our staff are our greatest asset and I hope that in the next two years we can improve the processes and procedures that will make AAB a better place to work and a more efficient office. This will in turn help us to run more successful conferences, with larger numbers of delegates and improve our reputation as an organisation that organises excellent conferences and meetings. The new content management system (Cevent) and the appointment of a new office manager are key to this. We also need to work on developing our website. We are also in the process of appointing a new treasurer and that person will have a key role to play in helping us to get the office functioning well. The *appointment of a new Treasurer and an Office Manager* will indicate progress here.

#### Increasing diversity within the AAB

We need to focus on retaining and increasing our membership and part of that is thinking about what makes membership of the AAB attractive to both researchers and consultants. A diverse community adds to the richness of our working environment and we need to consider what we can do to increase diversity. I am using diversity here in a broad sense not only to include representation of those with protected characteristics (gender, disability, race, religion etc) but also in relation to the balance between researchers and those active in the

industry. I would specifically like to target a better representation of early career researchers (ECR) on Council and on the Group Committees as well as actively seeking to encourage ECR to attend meetings and submit papers to our journals. To this end I plan to appoint an ECR representative to Council and would encourage each of the Group Committees to do the same within the next two years. I do not want to set targets for other forms of diversity but I would like to encourage all Conveners to take a look at the balance of members on their Group Committees and take diversity into consideration when appointing new members. In addition at November Council each year we will identify one meeting where we will have a special focus on attracting ECR, for example through poster competitions or inviting ECR session organisers and presenters. For 2017 this will be the Sustainable Intensification meeting. I would also encourage all conference organisers to consider whether they can do something to increase involvement of ECR in their meetings. At March Council we will discuss suitable incentives e.g. a competition winner getting a special invitation to submit to FES. Within this there is an inherent assumption that we will also increase the number of ECR members of AAB as a result of publicity and conference attendance.

*Key performance indicators: 1) Increased numbers of ECRs in AAB membership 2) Establishment of an ECR event at a minimum of one conference per year.*

#### Developing improved linkages between AAB and other relevant UK and European membership organisation

There has been an ongoing discussion regarding the possibility of AAB working with other membership organisations in the agricultural/biological sector to share best practice and, perhaps, resources. There are a number of organisations with whom we have jointly organised conferences in the recent past including AES, BES, BGS and ESA. I would like to have a discussion at Council in March about which of these organisations we should be prioritising and approaching in the next few months. Following that we will develop our *strategy for linkages* and with help from Carol and Stuart I plan to make contact with these organisations and start by identifying where there are synergies which we can build on in planning out future conference programmes. I believe that by working with these other organisation we can raise the profile of AAB.

Christine Watson January 2017