

The mission of the **Association of Applied Biologists (AAB)** is to further the application of biology to the production of food, materials, and energy, and for the maintenance and improvement of the earth's environment.

Since its formation in 1904 the Association has addressed major challenges facing society. Today, those challenges relevant to our mission are critical and include: poor food security, nutrition and health; untenable use of agri- and forest environments; unsustainable and insecure sources of energy; environmental change; degradation of water and soil resources; and loss of biodiversity.

Our strategy is to address these challenges

Growing, supporting, and engaging a membership concerned with the application of excellent biology to address relevant societal challenges.

The support of specialist groups: to respond to members and wider stakeholders in the provision of appropriate events, publications, and communications; to help develop early career scientists; and to aid the direction of the wider AAB via group convenors and AAB Council.

The use of conferences, symposia, workshops, and published proceedings for exchange, spread, and development of information, ideas, and thought leadership.

The publication of international, scientific, independently peer reviewed journals to ensure the dissemination of high-quality research findings and reviews.

The further promotion of the disciplines of applied biology through engagement with other relevant societies, research funders, and governmental organisations.

1. Growing, supporting, and engaging our membership

As an association we are defined as and by our members. Given the importance and relevance of applied biology it is essential that we have a strong and engaged membership. It is important that recent growth in membership continues. Actions to increase membership include:

i. Offering a free annual membership to non-members paying full registration fees to conferences organised by AAB. In this way our membership (numbers and reach) is strongly linked to the popularity and delivery methods of our conferences. Excellent online provision significantly increases our potential to engage with cohorts of applied biologists not previously able to attend in person due to the constraints of cost, time, and other responsibilities. Online provision, for example, will further our ability to increase the international spread for conference attendance and membership. All our conferences will have an online option.

ii. Offering greater support for early career scientists (ECS). This includes free annual membership with nominal charge for online conference registration by ECS. The AAB will remain responsive to the needs and engagement of ECS, and they will continue to be represented on Council by two ECS champions.

iii. Increasing the benefits to members, including reduced conference registration and publication costs; access to travel and mobility grants; discounted membership and/or greater access to related societies; improved networking for applied biologists worldwide with a regular e-Newsletter and AAB emails highlighting activities; opportunities to contribute to specialist groups; and the chance to work alongside others in similar fields in, for example, the organisation of conferences.

iv. We will introduce the title of **Fellow of the Association of Applied Biologists**. This title will be offered to individuals who have continued their membership to the AAB, and their significant contribution to applied biology for an extended period of time.

v. We will continue to explore ways of increasing equality, diversity, and inclusion in all activities of the AAB. Online provision has helped inclusivity, and we will continue to offer, e.g. grants for carers.

2. Specialist groups

Applied Plant Pathology

Biocontrol and IPM

Food Systems

Pesticide Application

Soil Biology

Applied Tree and Forest Biology

Cropping and the Environment

Nematology

Plant Physiology and Crop Improvement

Virology

Our specialist groups are kept under review to reflect: our mission; the interests of our members and those of potential recruits; the vigour and funding for progress in the subject area; and societal need. During the 2023-24 biennial, our most recent additions namely the rebranded Soil Biology, and the Applied Tree and Forest Biology groups will be supported to become fully embedded and successful within the association. The expectation is that the AAB will add at least one more specialist group in the next two years.

3. Conferences, symposia, and workshops

Our events are open to the public. AAB's involvement in ~10 events/ year is a reasonable expectation, and consistent with having around ten specialist groups – ensuring that each specialist group remains active and serving the needs of its affiliated members and the broader mission of the AAB. However, what is more important is that the overall reach and significance



Attendees at Advances in Plant Virology, Ljubljana, October 2022



AAB President (2021-22) Professor Christine Foyer awards an inaugural AAB Presidential medal to Professor Dirk Inze at Rothamsted Manor during Presidents Meeting, November 2022

of our event programme increases the relevance, visibility, and impact of the AAB. The current financial position allows us to be less risk averse in identifying topics and modes of delivery than has previously been the case. However, we do need to increase delegate numbers at the majority of our meetings, and to ensure that the programme as a whole does not place an undue financial burden on the association.

To meet our objectives over the next two years we will:

- i.** Continue to support and encourage our specialist group convenors, members, and affiliates to develop and deliver events relevant to the AAB's mission, research environment, and societal need.
- ii.** Look to further encourage collaborations between specialist groups such that where relevant, multidisciplinary events are developed. The biennial presidential conference in Autumn 2024 will continue the format of the 2022 meeting in being multidisciplinary and addressing an area of significant societal need.
- iii.** Collaborate with other related societies to help deliver larger events than likely achievable with a single society working independently.
- iv.** Continue to develop methods of delivery, particularly online, to provide an excellent and well-regarded experience for all delegates.
- v.** Foster links with industry, grower associations, non-governmental organizations, relevant sectors of UKRI, and government to support and inform our events.

Annals of Applied Biology

An international journal of the AAB



Plant Biotechnology Journal

Open Access



4. Scientific journals

The purpose of our scientific journals (**Annals of Applied Biology** and **Plant Biotechnology Journal** with the Society of Experimental Biology) is to provide an opportunity for members and other authors to disseminate their work; for members and others to access quality-controlled research articles; to provide a sustainable income stream to support AAB charitable goals; and to increase the visibility of the society in the journals and vice-versa.

- i.** Review and future proof the business models for the journals.
- ii.** Ensure that the journals uphold the best standards of equality, diversity, inclusion, and ethics. This will include a review of the composition of Editorial Boards and affirmation that guidelines from the Committee on Publication Ethics continue to be adhered to.
- iii.** Consider at least annually any opportunities for new publications.
- iv.** Review editorial offices, ensuring they are serving the needs of authors and represent good value for money.
- v.** Encourage journals to support special issues that are published in coordination with both AAB events and with those organised by other relevant societies.

5. Further activities to promote applied biology

The AAB will promote applied biology via interactions with a number of other organisations which include the Global Plant Council, the Royal Society of Biology, the Federation of European Societies of Plant Biology, and the EU PlantEd Cost Action on plant genome editing. Additionally, we will support the promotion of applied biology through the wider collaborations and representations of individual members of council, and the broader membership of the AAB.

We will continue to provide responses to inform policy. Collective responses from AAB Council will be coordinated by the President.

Professor Mike Gooding, AAB President 2023-24

Dr Geraint Parry, AAB Executive Officer