



Minutes of Council Business Meeting

Saturday, 8 February 2025

Present: Claire Louise Vaculik (Chair), Michèle Wood (Vice-Chair), Sinead Braiden, Jess Collier, Caryl Sibbett, Catherine Stevens, Simi Warah

In attendance: Gary Fereday (CEO)

1 Apologies for absence and conflicts of interest

Apologies had been received from Sarah Challenger, Jacqui McKoy-Lewens, Liliana Montoya De La Cruz and Francesca Norouzi. Sinead Braiden noted that she would need to leave the meeting early. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and asked for Council members to declare any conflicts. None were declared.

2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The Chair noted that the minutes of the last Council meeting on 7 December 2024 had been circulated to Council members prior to the meeting for corrections. Some additional corrections were noted:

- The Chair noted that on page 6 of the minutes, the numbering under item 7, Finance and Risk, should read 7a, etc not 6a, etc.
- She further noted that under item 7b (currently numbered 6b), Council had agreed that a decision on the Executive Assistant should not be taken at the meeting.
- A Council member had sent proposed corrections to point 7 on page 9, but these did not appear in the version of the minutes circulated. The CEO apologised and said that the proposed amendments had been accepted and incorporated, but for some reason had not appeared in the circulated version of the minutes.

Action: CEO to recirculate updated version of the minutes of the meeting of 7 December 2024.

The Chair asked if there were any matters arising and requested updates on some issues and actions.

Matters arising

Item 7b – 2025 Revised Budget

The Executive Assistant role that had not come to the December meeting for decision was raised and a query put forward about whether a paper about staffing could be brought to the next meeting, so that a decision could be made then.

Item 14 – AOB

The Chair noted that with all of the additional activity being undertaken for the NHSE commission that it would not be helpful at present to proceed with the suggested mid-year co-option of another Council member. This could be considered again in 2026.

CEO Update on Actions Agreed

Item 5e

No concerns had been received regarding the revised AHPF Public Health Strategy that had been circulated to Council.

Item 5f

The team were looking at possible venues for the Annual Conference 2025. Council members had indicated their interest in joining the working group.

Item 6c

The Risk Register would be discussed later on the agenda.

Item 8b

The CEO was continuing to establish clarity in regard to expenses for coordinators.

Coordinators had been emailed regarding the use of WhatsApp. A number of coordinators had expressed their appreciation of the guidance

Item 9

The list of members representing BAAT on external bodies had been posted on the website. The CEO was checking that it was complete.

Other actions would be covered by the agenda.

Item 13

Parliament Hill had been informed that the contract would not be renewed at the end of April 2025.

3 Chair's report

The Chair shared an overview of her perspective, areas of focus and activities that she had undertaken since the last meeting.

NHSE Commission

In March 2025 the NHSE commission will be completed and we can share the inspiring work undertaken with art, drama and music therapy colleagues across the UK – and more widely too. She noted that so many art therapists have been involved – delivering workshops, responding to surveys, being part of focus groups, and speaking about their work for a series of films. The projects will provide a firm foundation for growth. They'll enable art therapists to raise awareness of the unique value we add to service users' lives and the wider community. Our pre-registration trainings will be able to use the new shared curriculum guidance to shape their work into the future and help safeguard resources they

need to deliver worldclass art therapy trainings. And art therapists at all stages of their careers will be able to draw on the career framework to show the level of work and to help them reach their professional goals. A particular highlight in January was the workshop held for children at the Wellcome Collection, facilitated by Tony Gammidge and Rosie Heavens. Feedback from the children noted that some thought they might now like to train as an art therapist. The Chair asked for thanks to be recorded to Daniela Pasquini and Josiah Baffour for all their hard work in delivering a complex programme.

Supporting members

In addition to visits this year to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Chair said she was planning meetings with members for the autumn - as part of the consultation on the new BAAT strategy. These meetings and others will allow the sort of co-production, which we heard so much about at the Annual Conference, as the foundation of our work – placing members’ voices at the heart of plans. She noted that this was her promise when she stood as Chair, so she will be pleased to be able to deliver this over her term.

Stakeholder and partner engagement and shared work

Regular meetings with NHSE and HCPC have continued, though there are fewer of these in January. The Chair noted that many of the meetings she was asked to attend involved pre-registration education and training policy; these are usually attended by staff from other AHP member organisations. As a result of changes in her own schedule, the Chair will not be able to attend these meetings in future. As this aspect of work is an intrinsic part of the everyday work of a professional body, she had previously recommended that a staff role be developed to cover these meetings.

Governance

Over recent weeks the Chair and Vice-chair have worked with Council to better understand all that needs to be in place to be able to fulfil their responsibilities as directors of the limited company. There is more to be done in this area to ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined and that directors can easily access relevant information and the professional advice that is sometimes required. She also noted that there was no forum for meeting the Chairs of the national groups (and there was no separate group for England); it might be helpful if a Council member, or the CEO, could organise these meetings.

Chair’s role

The Chair reflected on her work since being elected in May 2020, noting how much she has valued the support of the Honorary President and all those members who have served on Council previously. There have been a number of challenges over this time and she has often been drawn into operational work. In her remaining period as Chair, she wants to focus on the duties of a Chair that were set out for this role in the role description: being a key spokesperson for the organisation and the profession; overseeing the strategic direction of the organisation; ensuring that it is well governed and managed; and that we meet all our statutory obligations.

Year ahead

In the coming year she is looking forward to working with directors, the staff team, and BAAT members across the UK - being creative together and finding our voices, so we can showcase this inspiring and impactful therapeutic approach to more people across

the UK. She also noted that BAAT faces a potentially challenging year ahead. It might be necessary to prioritise the workload - both among volunteers and the staff team – to ensure that plans are focused and sustainable.

4 Vice Chair's report

The Vice Chair highlighted three aspects of her role on which she was particularly focused:

- Supporting and engaging with members, including through facilitating the SIG Coordinators' Network meeting (the latest meeting had taken place on 16 January)
- Building understanding of BAAT's research strategy, in connection with which she had attended, with the Chair, a meeting with Lisa Ledger (NIHR Assistant Director of Allied Health Professions) on 10 January
- Assisting with the governance of BAAT, promoting inclusivity and ensuring clear and fair HR processes.

5 Chief Executive's report

5a. Priorities for 2025

The CEO introduced the five proposed priorities for 2025:

- **Revised governance structures** for N Ireland, Scotland and Wales should be developed, ensuring the voices of members across all four nations are heard, valued and supported in a fair and equitable way, by agreed by the time of the AGM in June.
- The **revised research strategy** was a more substantive piece of work than originally envisaged and would take longer than planned, particularly to enable consultation with members. It would be presented at AGM 2026.
- A new **strategic plan** was needed. The current plan, which covered 2022–27, was the first one the organisation had had; it could be improved, and draw more on engagement with stakeholders, including members, staff, Council and external partners. A proposed timeline for developing the plan was for discussion later on the agenda (Item 9).
- The **CPD offer** was being broadened and made more accessible to members with the launch of self-directed learning, beginning with a course on mentalisation, which was almost ready to launch.
- The **public affairs strategy** would be developed, building on the 'pilot' hospices / EOLC campaign, and ensuring that member expertise was fully incorporated into campaigns.

In addition, a review of policy and strategy on equality, diversity and inclusion would be undertaken; this would be discussed later on the agenda (Item 8).

In discussion, members raised the following points:

- The importance of promoting the profession and establishing its boundaries
- The hospice campaign was a good model of a public affairs campaign, and it was good to see professional guidance linking to the campaign
- It was important that campaigns should involve the four nations
- There was interest in seeing more detail for the research strategy and research networks.

In response, the CEO said that:

- Campaigns would be discussed with the four nations

- Wider public affairs activity so far had made more progress in NI, Scotland and Wales than in England, e.g., in meeting with civil servants
- A paper on the research strategy would be brought to the next Council meeting.

Decision: It was agreed unanimously that the five priorities were the right ones.

5b. Operational plan update

The CEO highlighted the following items from the plan, noting that other significant items would be covered elsewhere on the agenda:

- Work was still in progress on the SIG forums; some were more active than others. A short video for coordinators was almost ready. He said that it was not unusual for membership bodies to find it challenging to persuade members to engage in forums.
- Take-up for the Level 6 Diplomas had been lower than expected, which would have an impact on BAAT financially. Saturation of the market might be an issue for the supervision course, but there were also more active competitors now. The courses should run if they could break even. One possible issue was that the courses are pitched at Level 6, whereas qualification is at Level 7.

It was noted that NHS Scotland offers generic supervision training for staff. There was also an ongoing debate about what training BAAT members have access to. Given the cost of the course, it was important that the qualification should then be recognised by NHS Scotland.

It was noted there were more than 30 candidates on each of the two courses in Northern Ireland (CYP and supervision), with the CYP qualification made mandatory for working in schools for some therapists (but not art therapists). BAAT NI would like to explore if these two courses could be approved by or linked to BAAT. It was established that all students on these courses were Northern Ireland-based, as all courses were offered face-to-face. Agencies were now paying for their students to come on the course, with employers valuing the courses because both are mapped to the HCPC and to BACP CYP and Supervision competence frameworks.

It was noted by a Council member that that BAAT courses were niche, designed only for art therapists, whereas competitors' courses were more generic. Central and NW London NHS Trust for example provide a great deal of in-house training for art therapists.

The CEO said that he would feed the comments back to the team. It might be necessary to rethink the courses. The Chair noted that having attended the vivas for several years that the supervision course was very good and well-liked by those who enrolled.

5c. Dashboard

The CEO introduced the updated dashboard. He noted:

- There had been a sustained increase in membership. The only caveat was that the number of members registering as unemployed or underemployed was also increasing. There might be an issue around people being entered in the wrong category and a review of the membership categories might be necessary.
- 25% of members were now enrolled on the 'Find a Therapist' search tool and it was receiving very positive feedback.
- Events continued to be busy (except for the Diplomas discussed above), with positive feedback on them.

- Communications: the BAAT's use of X (formerly Twitter) would continue to be kept under review. Some not-for-profits had left the platform, but one issue was that some of the metrics for the Journal were dependent on the use of X.
- Members were engaging with the Bulletin, but it would be good to encourage more articles for InSight from members, without the need for direct commissioning.
- Information about the performance and work being done by the International Journal of Art Therapy editorial board was included in the dashboard summary.
- Staffing: the Professional Officer, Louise Smart, had indicated her wish to retire. She had been an excellent member of the team. An advertisement would be placed for a like-for-like replacement (one day a week). A knowledge of both the NHS and not-for-profit sector was an essential requirement, to handle the more complex queries received. The Council expressed its thanks to Louise Smart for her excellent work in the role.
- The SIGs and Regional Groups had varying levels of activity; the intention was to try to spread best practice to the less active groups.

5d. Public Affairs

The CEO said that while measuring public affairs activity was difficult, it was possible to see that activity had picked up momentum in NI, Scotland and Wales. In the latter case, the CEO reported that links were being re-established with the Wales Arts Therapies Advisory Forum (WATAF), and that Sarah Challenger was now the BAAT representative on AHPF Cymru Wales.

The second element of the PA strategy, creating a sustainable career structure for art therapists, was being addressed through the NHSE project.

In relation to the third strand, engaging in wider society / mental health issues, the possibility of funding bids in collaboration with the Centre for Mental Health was being explored. Since BAAT is not a charity, it is not usually able to bid for funding, so a partnership with CMH could be very helpful.

The CEO concluded by saying that he would move forward as quickly as possible within the time constraints of his role.

6 Finance and Risk

The CEO introduced, for information, a paper on BAAT's financial position to the end of Q4/2024.

He noted that the revenue figures had been distorted by a large payment received from NHSE; this would in due course all be spent on the NHSE project. However, revenue was in any case £37K over budget, mostly owing to increased membership and CPD fees. Expenditure in Q4 was £100K over budget – again, this was an accounting anomaly and was caused by the timing of money being spent on the NHSE Commission. At present, a surplus of £42K for the year was forecast, Year-end accounts would be presented at the May Council meeting.

The Chair invited questions on the CEO's financial report.

The Vice Chair drew a link with the Risk Register, noting that the last three headings under Financial Risk still showed amber after mitigation. The CEO said that BAAT was potentially vulnerable to small drops in income, since it was a small organisation. The concern would be a fall in the income from the Diploma courses, for which there was a targeted surplus of £20K. However, BAAT had reasonable levels of reserves and a tight grip would be maintained on expenditure.

The Chair asked whether it would be necessary to prioritise activities. The CEO said that historically income from courses had subsidised membership fees. If demand for courses dropped, either other sources of income would have to be found or activity reduced. He added that the current model had served BAAT well; courses were well-liked and had so far delivered a surplus.

A Council member observed that given that courses had associated costs (the staff required to run them), membership fees might begin to subsidise courses. The CEO remarked that whilst this potentially could happen, the courses were efficiently run, that this was not the case, and the financial situation was continually monitored.

7 NHSE project

NHS England project update

The Chair noted that links had been sent to members for the relevant updates and reports on what was being delivered. She encouraged Council to review this work. The project remained on track. She expressed her thanks to Daniela Pasquini and Josiah Baffour again for all their hard work in delivering the project.

8 EDI policy

The Chair gave an update on the review of the EDI policy and strategy that had recently been undertaken; The review intended for 2023 had not taken place owing to pressure of work. Having asked BAAT EDI advisor to consider this, in the light of changes and developments in this area of practice. It appeared that the current policy was felt still to be fit for purpose. EDI would now form an intrinsic part of the revised strategy consultation for 2027–32. In the meantime, the focus would be on continuing to deliver the current plan.

It was observed that while poverty was not a protected characteristic, it impacted on the range of people entering the profession too. Another Council member observed that poverty was an increasing problem in Northern Ireland, and that no grants were available for part-time or level 7 courses. The Chair said that this point would be kept in mind. She reminded Council that there were some bursaries that BAAT had made available, at the supervisory and managerial levels to enable career progression.

In the discussion several points were raised:

- It was noted that art therapy was one of the most privately trained professions and entrants often had to have their own means to be able to train.
- It was observed that translation into Irish (as well as Welsh) should be considered on BAAT material.
- Misogyny was raised, which was a problem in the criminal justice system, and the concern that Art Therapists might not focus on this as much as necessary - because it was a female-dominated profession.
- A Council member queried the status of the apprenticeship pathway. The Chair replied that the Government's focus on Level 4 qualifications, rather than Level 7 was placing all Level 7 apprenticeships under question; the situation was being monitored.

9 Strategic plan development timeline

The CEO introduced a paper outlining an indicative timeline for the development of the new strategic plan for 2027–32. Council was invited to give feedback and agree to the timeline, so that preliminary work could begin and a more detailed project plan could be brought to the May Council meeting. The Chair said that if

any Council member wished to join meetings with members to discuss the strategic plan, they would be very welcome to join her.

Caryl Sibbett asked whether the nations would be involved in the process and the CEO confirmed that they would. Caryl Sibbett also raised the possibility of NI leaving the UK during the period of the next strategic plan; the Chair noted that BAAT would consider the implications of such a development.

10 Updates from SIGs, regions and countries

10a. Update from the SIG network coordinator

The SIG Network Lead highlighted two points from her report on the SIGs. First, that she had had useful conversations about how members use the SIGs – as information sources, spaces to meet people, and as a means of engaging with BAAT. One issue was the proportion of SIG members who were not actively involved, but Council members felt this was not a problem as some members simply joined SIGs to ‘listen’ to the online discussions

Two new SIGs were being created: Inpatient settings; and Nature-based practice and climate change. There was also a proposal to establish a SIG on eating disorders and difficulties.

10b. Update from regional network coordinator

The Chair noted that the Regional Lead had shared her report and thanked her for doing so and for the activity outlined in it.

10c. Countries

Scotland

A summary of activity in Scotland had been shared in advance. The issue of a ‘The Matrix’ for NHS Psychological Therapies in Scotland does not explicitly include arts therapies. There was concern that some psychologists were suggesting that art therapy was ‘not evidence-based’. There was greater awareness of art therapists in England as they enjoy a dual identity as both a AHP and psychological therapists, but they were not allowed to describe themselves as such in Scotland. It had now reached crisis point, and the support of professional bodies was needed.

The Chair noted that this underlined the importance of the paper on governance structure that the CEO was preparing.

Northern Ireland

A summary of activity in Northern Ireland had been shared in advance. It was reported that art therapists in the education sector were being marginalised. Some art therapists were being encouraged to call themselves counsellors to overcome these challenges. Because of constraints in public sector funding generally, there was an increase in private practice. She felt that HCPC were not as helpful as one might hope when approached about people calling themselves art therapists, who were not in fact qualified.

10c. Wales

The Cymru Wales report had been circulated in advance and contents noted.

10d. Feedback from Council members representing BAAT

The MoU on Conversion Therapy was discussed. The Alliance party of Northern Ireland was consulting on a bill it was sponsoring to outlaw conversion therapy, and a Council member asked whether BAAT would wish to respond. It was agreed that it was important to balance the desire to support the principle behind the bill against any potential political pitfalls. It was noted that in a previous legal case the courts had found in favour of religious freedom.

Action: It was agreed that Catherine Stevens, Caryl Sibbett and the CEO should discuss further whether a response to the consultation would be appropriate.

[Sinead Braiden left the meeting after this item.]

11 **Supporting statements for HCPC Fitness to Practice (FtP) cases**

The CEO introduced a paper on the extent to which BAAT could provide supportive statements to members going through HCPC FtP procedures. The proposal was that, in line with legal advice, BAAT would limit itself to irrefutable facts in any statement made. For context, the CEO observed that only 9 or 10 art therapists had been involved in the procedure over the past 7 or 8 years.

The Vice Chair supported the paper, and thought the template letter was good. Another Council member asked if it would be possible to ask any member in this situation if there was anything that they would like to have mentioned, for which they could provide evidence. The Chair suggested that a role held in BAAT, such as a SIG coordinator position, could be included.

Decision: The suggested approach was agreed unanimously.

12 **Professional guidance**

The CEO introduced a paper recommending a process to commission and review guidance on clinical and non-clinical issues. The proposal was that a sub-committee should be established to consider Guidance with the final decision for the Council as a whole.

The direction suggested in the paper was agreed. The Chair said that it would be important at the next discussion for Council to have a clear sense of the implications of any final decision.

13 **EDI issue at HEI – for feedback**

A trainee member with a protected characteristic had raised concerns about a fellow trainee who had expressed views that the other trainee found discriminatory. Council considered how trainings might respond to such issues. After careful consideration Council thought that HCPC guidance provided a framework to manage such situations. The Chair asked the CEO to share HCPC guidance on this issue with staff who were drafting a response to the member who had raised the issue.

14 **Draft four nations governance**

The CEO introduced a paper outlining draft terms of reference for the four nations' committees. He said that the proposed structure sought to outline an equitable arrangement across the nations. He felt it was important to have one document setting out the framework, whilst allowing for variations based on national differences of approach and structure.

Council members expressed their support for the paper, seeing it as a necessary step and it was important for the terminology used to be clear. The CEO noted that titles could cause confusion – e.g. the Council in Scotland had no legal responsibility, unlike the BAAT Council (the Board of Directors). The Chair asked

whether Council should make it clearer in the paper that it was delegating authority to national committees, whilst the committees would be accountable to Council? She said that the paper underlined BAAT's commitment to the four nations and it would also be important to look at the structure in England. Another member felt that data governance should be covered in the paper, and asked whether committee members in the nations could have BAAT emails and whether the area on the website for the nations could be restored. The CEO said that the team was looking for ways to create space on the server for the nations (e.g., to store shared documents) and that the website request would be actioned.

The Chair drew attention to para 7.1 of the paper on funding. She suggested that BAAT could provide baseline funding (e.g., to fund an annual meeting) with members raising additional funding for local resources.

The CEO said that we would ask BAAT's legal advisers to review the proposed terms of reference once they had been redrafted, following feedback from the Scottish Welsh and Northern Irish committees. A revised paper would come back to Council.

Some updating of the four nations pages of the website was still to be completed.

Action: The draft terms of reference to be circulated by the CEO to BAAT Scotland, BAAT Cymru Wales and BAAT Northern Ireland for feedback and then the final iteration to come back to the May Council meeting.

Action: CEO to follow up on progress of improving the webpages for BAAT Scotland, Cymru Wales and Northern Ireland.

15 **Organisational chart on website**

The Chair introduced a paper proposing the addition of an organogram of BAAT to the website. She noted that national groups would need to be included, if approved, and that the design drew on the BAMT structure, which differs as BAMT has a limited company and a charity.

It was noted that the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) had lay representation on committees, e.g. tax and legal experts. The CEO said that he believed that the addition of lay members would strengthen the Board, and that he would support the creation of committees such as those for education, finance and professional standards.

The Vice Chair felt that developing standing committees could enable a longer-term view of strategy development and provide professional development opportunities for members. The Chair said that board members could also have specific roles on a committee. It was noted that BACP board members chaired standing committees.

The organogram was welcomed and it was suggested that an accompanying paper could also describe the roles of specific posts, lines of accountability etc, and if these go on to be approved, include the nations' committees. Another member asked whether the organogram could include members sitting on external committees. The CEO observed that the risk was that the organogram might become too complex.

Decision: It was unanimously agreed to add an organogram to the website; the Chair invited further feedback on the organogram.

16 **Ambassador role**

The CEO presented a paper on the proposed appointment of ambassadors to promote art therapy. The paper also suggested Jason Wilsher-Mills as a possible candidate to be an ambassador.

Council members supported an approach to Jason Wilsher-Mills. It was noted that it would be important that ambassadors were operating across all four nations.

It was suggested that people with experience of art therapy should be identified. The CEO commented that issues of confidentiality might have to be addressed.

It was also suggested that any candidates should be checked out in case of any potential reputational issues; a director noted that there were specialist social media checkers available.

Decision: The paper, and the proposal to approach Jason Wisher-Mills, were agreed unanimously.

17 **Annual conference**

A discussion was held on themes / title and also speakers for Conference 2025.

A conference working group had been considering the matter. The group had put forward two main themes – Co-production and Collaboration, and Employability – but Council members were invited to suggest others. It was noted that the first of these had been particularly supported in the working group.

The CEO noted that a timeframe for the process of deciding themes etc had been agreed at the last Board meeting; he would recirculate it to members. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Ideas for a potential speaker on employability
- The theme of collaboration would be open to a wide range of possible speakers
- A CAHPO could be considered as a speaker
- There was a balance to be struck between the goals of professional development for members and profile-raising of the profession in the aims of the Conference
- Employability was a big issue in NI, whereas co-production was already happening; an NHS focus would also be less relevant there
- What does the theme of collaboration mean for those in private practice?
- The choice of location could be important, e.g., one that spoke to collaboration or innovation
- A gallery might be a possible venue
- Boundary issues and their impact on PI insurance were a potential topic.

There was a brief discussion on venues. The CEO confirmed that the staff team had been researching potential venues, which they would book once a decision had been made. It was asked whether it was necessary to hold the conference in London; the CEO said that as it was only the second in-person conference it made sense to play safe at this stage and keep the conference in London.

18 **Annual awards**

a) Lifetime Achievement Award

Council members were asked to consider potential nominees and one individual was suggested. Council was asked to consider if there were other potential recipients. The Chair asked that the suggestion be written up as a formal nomination; any other nominations were invited from members of Council by the deadline, which was the end of February.

b) Awards Panel for 2025

The Chair noted that there were two annual awards, for innovation, and for EDI. Last year two other professionals had been included on the Panel – our BAAT EDI advisor and a CAHPO. Some members indicated that they were happy to serve on the panel again.

The Chair said that an invitation to nominate for the awards would be sent to members, and she would check with staff whether any changes to the process were needed.

The Chair suggested that the categories should remain the same, as this was only the second year of the awards. A clear process for reviewing nominations was vital, so that members could understand this and the choices made.

19 **AOB**

A Council member asked whether the start-time of the meetings was to remain the same or could be earlier. It was agreed to retain the current start-time for the present.

The Chair thanked Council for their ongoing work, feedback and the rich discussion; she then ended the meeting.