

April 2017

Review - Abridged

British Protected Ornamentals
Association (BPOA)

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1. Background

The British Protected Ornamentals Association (BPOA) is a trade association representing both ornamental growers and the allied trade within the protected ornamentals sector.

Mission Statement

"To ensure that resources are directed towards growers needs for R&D, marketing & political representation thereby assisting growers to grow together and raise the profile of their industry"

The BPOA is a specialist group of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and uses the influence and political lobbying strength of the NFU to ensure ornamental plant growers' interests are represented.

The Association's primary aim is to ensure that resources are directed towards growers' needs for R&D, marketing and political representation, thereby helping nursery businesses to grow together, and raise the profile of their industry. This is achieved through the activity of the Association's Technical Committee and Home Grown Users' Group.

Aims

Protected ornamental horticulture is a dynamic and ever-changing marketplace.

The BPOA wishes to represent its members effectively and raise issues of importance to the industry, and seeks improvement through periodic operational reviews.

This review will take place this autumn/winter and be ready for preview by the Management Committee after a preliminary presentation at the AGM 2017 (January).

The BPOA Management Committee requires that this review provide a list of recommendations for the BPOA to employ in order to address the issues as outlined below, with suggested steps and timelines for implementation.

BPOA Review issues

The BPOA Management Committee has identified some questions that need to be addressed with recommendations for action for the Association to consider and implement.

- 1. Function:** What is the function of the Association and what will members require of it in the near future?
- 2. Structure:** Is the current structure of the BPOA suited to its purpose? (Home Grown Users' Group, Technical Committee, Management Committee and individual officers' roles within the Association).
- 3. Value:** How can the Association demonstrate value for money to members? Offer products/services?
- 4. Membership:** How could the BPOA increase its membership numbers and how should this develop in order to achieve its objectives?
- 5. Communication:** How can the BPOA's communications with its membership be improved?
- 6. Recruitment:** How could the BPOA recruit, select and retain personnel? What are the job descriptions for the recommended roles and are these transparent? What would attract non-committee members to increase in their participation?
- 7. Subscription:** Is the current BPOA fee system appropriate for an increasingly consolidated marketplace? Are the current NFU support structures appropriate?
- 8. Industry:** What part does BPOA play in coordinating the ornamentals production industry generally and how does this relate to its relationship with the NFU? Does this need to be clarified?
- 9. Business:** Where does the BPOA "fit in" with other sector bodies and trade associations? Can the BPOA become more responsive to opportunities & changes in the industry?
- 10. Future:** What will the BPOA look like in the future and what must the Association do now in order to best-position itself to meet the needs of the growers of tomorrow

During this consultation period, 25 members of the BPOA were consulted from across the Association to gain some insight as to what the BPOA needs to do for the future.

I would like to record here my thanks to those who gave me so much of their time and shared with me their candid thoughts.

The views expressed below are a reflection of the feedback that I have received during this consultation process.

1. Function

It will come as no surprise to learn that current members of the BPOA have differing opinions as to what the main function of the BPOA is or should be. Some take the view that the BPOA should focus entirely on technical issues and others that it should take a broader view and represent its members and the protected ornamental horticulture sector more widely.

The current mission statement is quite clear: ***"To ensure that resources are directed towards growers needs for R&D, marketing & political representation thereby assisting growers to grow together and raise the profile of their industry."***

It is recognised by most members that the link with NFU is and must remain strong; especially concerning political issues and through the Board for Horticulture. Links with the AHDB Horticulture panels are also valued and members believe that the BPOA has a positive influence on R&D projects undertaken by AHDB Horticulture.

2. Structure

Given that the BPOA has limited resources in both finances and people, there are bound to be difficulties in finding the best structure for the Association.

During this review, concerns have been expressed about the current governance, separation of powers, transparency and general structure of the BPOA. **The roles carried out by committee members and BPOA officers should be redefined.** The technical work of the BPOA

is highly valued, and in particular, members recognise the effective running of the North West technical committee; which operates very successfully as a regional group.

The Home-Grown initiative has worked well in the past, but there are issues to resolve:

- Intellectual property (IP) – Is it protected?
- The Home-Grown brand – Is it a brand? Who's allowed to use it? How is its use controlled? What's it for? Who's it aimed at?
- If controlled better; could the use of the brand be a revenue earner?

3. Value

Members value their membership of the BPOA, but most think that it is capable of doing a great deal more and providing added value.

4. Membership

Memberships like so many similar organisations, is stagnant. This is mainly due to the fact that, with every year that goes by, the number of horticultural businesses in the UK consolidates.

It's difficult to see where more members might come from within the garden and house plant sector; but what about from a wider field?

5. Communication

Some members think that current communication within the Association is adequate; but many believe that internal communication could be better and should also be more outwardly focussed. Specifically; there's a strong case for better communication with others in the Industry; including other groups, organisations, political bodies and the Press.

6. Recruitment

Due to limited resources; especially the resource of time, it is difficult to find members who can give the required commitment to committee activity within the BPOA.

In order to spread the load; new ways of running the Association should be considered.

7. Subscription

The current subscription bands and rates should be reviewed to better reflect the differences between the sizes of individual businesses.

Understandably, the NFU makes a large contribution and sees real value in so doing. Both the NFU and members of the Association believe that the working relationship adds value for money for both bodies.

8. Industry

The link between the BPOA and the NFU is highly valued. Coordinating the views of the protected ornamental sector through the NFU is seen as vital, but communicating information up and down the pipeline does not always work well.

Communication with other industry bodies is also raised by some members. Generally, it is felt that the BPOA is not pro-active enough in communicating with the outside world.

9. Business

It is felt by members that the BPOA should be far more responsive to opportunities and changes in the industry and that it needs to engage far more with other groups and bodies; including the Press.

10. Future

The pace of change in the world and in the Horticultural Industry seems to just get faster and faster – witness the incredible changes that have occurred over the last 12 months.

All organisations need to embrace change and to put strategies in place to deal with them – hopefully ahead of the curve.

Hopefully, this consultation has captured the key points that need to be adopted by the BPOA in order to ensure a successful future. I am pleased to offer my recommendations below.

11. Recommendations

a) Function

The current mission statement clearly sums up the aims of the BPOA: *"To ensure that resources are directed towards growers needs for R&D, marketing & political representation thereby assisting growers to grow together and raise the profile of their industry."* This was felt to still be appropriate.

The BPOA has a strong leaning towards technical delivery; through nursery and group meetings, and through R&D links with AHDB Horticulture.

However; marketing, promotion and political representation opportunities need highlighting and reinforcing.

b) Structure

i) Governance

The BPOA has very limited resources in both finances and people; therefore, a simple structure needs to be in place to provide for the separation of powers and transparency, good financial and administrative information and yet allow for the flexibility and fleet footedness that the Association needs to have an impact.

ii) Committees

The work of the Technical Committee is highly valued. The direct links with the Horticultural Crop Panels at the AHDB are also valued, but there are very mixed views as to the current value of the Home-Grown Users' Group. This is an area that could be reinforced.

c) Value

Most members value the BPOA, but they would value the Association a great deal more if it was more pro-active and played a much stronger part representing the Horticultural Industry.

Points to consider are:

- Being more pro-active on a regional/local basis.
- Looking outward – promoting to the outside world; including: customers, retailers, allied businesses and other stakeholders.
- Direct engagement with retailers: garden centres, sheds and supermarkets.

Running a promotional campaign with retailers.

d) Membership

It is difficult to see how membership can be increased from amongst similar businesses; however, it may be possible to attract new members from other sectors e.g. cut flowers.

There is also a strong argument for attracting members from Allied Industries as Associate Members.

e) Communication

No organisation is ever good enough at communication. In the case of the BPOA; the key to better communication is through expanding its communication to become more outward facing.

f) Recruitment

Is there the opportunity to realign finances to provide monetary incentives for key officeholders?

i) Executives

ii) Non-Executives

g) Subscriptions

Subscription bands and rates should be reviewed immediately.

h) Industry

The BPOA should be playing a key leadership role within the Horticultural Industry. As the voice of protected ornamental plants, the BPOA should be disseminating information up and down the communication channels with its already strong links with the NFU and AHDB Horticulture and work to develop stronger links with other Industry bodies.

i) Business

The BPOA is in a strong position to collate information from its members that would aid the Association and the Horticultural Industry in general when making representations to others.

j) New Name

The British Protected Ornamentals Association (BPOA) is a well-known name to members and insiders; but is not well known outside of the Ornamental Horticultural Industry. Most members of the public, and very few retailers, have any idea what the meaning is of the words "*Protected Ornamentals*".

If the BPOA is to become more outward looking and to have a closer relationship with retailers, customers and the outside world; then a more user friendly name needs to be found.

k) Future & Implementation Plan

As soon as possible after the Management Committee meeting in February 2017, the Management Committee of the BPOA should discuss the issues raised in this review, decide on the order of priorities and commence the implementation plan without delay. The Executive will need to implement some of the proposed changes immediately and should set clear target dates for completion of the others.