



Minutes of Council Business Meeting

Saturday, 3 May 2025

Present: Claire Louise Vaculik (Chair), Michèle Wood (Vice-Chair), Sarah Challenger, Jess Collier (items 1–6), Jacqui McKoy-Lewens, Liliana Montoya De La Cruz, Francesca Norouzi (from item 5b), Caryl Sibbett, Catherine Stevens, Simi Warah

In attendance: Gary Fereday (CEO)

1 Apologies for absence and conflicts of interest

Apologies received from Sinead Braiden; Jess Collier apologised that she would have to leave at 1.30pm; and Francesca Norouzi sent apologies for lateness.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and asked for Council members to declare any conflicts, giving an example of a director also being involved in BAAT operational workstreams. Jacqui McKoy-Lewens declared that she was the course leader of the diploma in art therapy with CYP. No other interests were declared.

2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The Chair noted that the minutes of the previous Council meeting on 8 February 2025 had been circulated to Council members prior to the meeting; all corrections had been made and the Minutes approved.

The Chair asked if there were any matters arising, and since there were none, requested updates on some issues and actions.

CEO Update on Actions Agreed

Item 10d

The CEO, Caryl Sibbett and Catherine Stevens (as representatives of the NI committee and MoU) had met to discuss the consultation by the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland on the MoU on conversion therapy. A response had been submitted.

Item 14

The CEO reported that there were new public-facing webpages for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and that Welsh language and Scottish Gaelic versions were being produced. He raised the question whether an Irish language version should also be produced.

A director noted that the Northern Ireland webpage referred to a regional group rather than a committee.

Another director noted that the contact email for Wales was incorrectly shown as an old goooglemail address. The CEO said these points would be addressed.

Action: CEO to ask staff to correct terminology and contact details.

Item 15

The BAAT organogram had been added to the website.

Item 16

The Chair and CEO had met Jason Wisser-Mills and invited him to become a BAAT Ambassador. He had been pleased to accept and was eager to be active on BAAT's behalf. A follow-up meeting would be arranged to discuss future activities. The CEO noted that it was the intention to recruit additional ambassadors.

Action: CEO to hold follow-up meeting to agree how the ambassador would support BAATs work and the profession.

3 Chair's report

The Chair noted that two directors were coming to the end of their term. As this would be Jess Collier's final meeting as a member of the Council and she was leaving at lunchtime, the Chair expressed her thanks to Jess for her contribution and commitment to the work of the Council.

The Chair noted that the spring was a season of new beginnings and said that it was important for art therapists in challenging times to hold on to their senses of creativity and community. She shared an overview of her areas of focus and activities that she had undertaken since the last meeting.

Role of Council

The Chair drew attention to the responsibilities of elected members of Council, including as directors of a limited company, within the terms of the Companies Act. She noted that the Board of Directors sets a clear, strategic direction for BAAT, providing the focus and frame that enables our staff team to: 1) deliver effective, efficient and value-for-money services and support for members; and 2) ensure that the value of art therapy is seen and understood by people and decision-makers across all four nations. She reminded Council that over recent months direct links have been set up to HR advice and legal advice, so that Council can consider issues, take advice when needed, and be sure that we are meeting our responsibilities.

She noted some of the specific challenges facing BAAT at present, including financial pressures and the new set of issues presented by AI. It was important for BAAT to ensure that the value of art therapy was widely understood across all four nations. The Chair added that she was very grateful for all that Council members were doing to advance these goals.

NHSE Commission

This large project, which took place over a year, was now complete. It had been very helpful to collaborate across the three arts therapy professions and to learn more about each other's work. Some of the deliverables from the project that will support art therapists' work in future would be disseminated to members for comment and then considered by Council, before being published. This would be discussed more fully in item 7.

Supporting members

The Chair reported that she had carried out her annual visits with the CEO to Northern Ireland and Scotland since the last meeting of Council. As always it was a pleasure to learn of the diverse range of work being undertaken by members in those countries. Drop-in sessions for members were continuing each month, and in September the Chair said she would be hosting a series of strategy development meetings with members to feed into the new 2027–32 strategy. She noted that in April she had taken part in a CPD event for arts therapists who were interested in working in higher education.

Stakeholder and partner engagement and shared work

While she has now stepped back from representing art therapy at pre-registration education forums, the Chair said she was continuing to attend HCPC meetings. She reported that a workforce profile for each AHP had been put on the HCPC website, which contained useful data for BAAT on the profession. The recent call out for art therapy visitors was an important recruitment process, as the people in these roles help the HCPC regulators to understand some of the more detailed profession-specific guidance, expectations and practice. She noted that she and the Hon. President would be writing to colleagues in local and national government during May to draw their attention to the benefits art therapy can bring to people in their communities.

Chair's role

The Chair observed that she had now served five years in the role. She was very grateful to all those who had served on Council with her and to the CEO and the whole staff team for their support in that time. She felt proud of what had been achieved, especially against the background of the pandemic and some longstanding issues that had needed to be addressed. She herself had learned a great deal and particularly valued the guidance and CPD provided through membership of the Institute of Directors (IoD). One objective in her last year in the role was to ensure a smooth succession and she would be working on this with Council to ensure that the structures were in place to support the next Chair.

There were no questions from directors for the Chair.

4 Vice-Chair's report

The Vice-Chair highlighted her activities on behalf of the strategic priorities of BAAT, including: public affairs; engaging with members; representing BAAT to external partners; the BAAT research strategy; and governance structures.

The Vice-Chair noted that in March she had facilitated a meeting between members of the SIG for *Art Therapists Working With Loss* and Gary Fereday, CEO, and Kat Starczewski, Senior Digital Comms Officer, to discuss public affairs campaigning on art therapy in hospices.

She was due shortly (with Liliana Montoya De La Cruz) to meet Victoria Hume, Executive Director of the Health & Wellbeing Alliance, in order to restart a relationship between the two organisations. They had

been appointed previously to represent BAAT in this forum. She referred to two resources produced by this group (details in written report) for Council members to consider.

The Vice-Chair reported that she had attended a webinar run by the NIHR Developing Research Leaders Programme. Subsequently, she had developed a short interview for InSight with Jed Jerwood about his experience on the programme, in order to support other art therapists to understand how to navigate this process.

Finally, the Vice-Chair said that she had included a link in her report to enable Council members to offer their ideas on potential BAAT standing committees.

There were no questions for the Vice-Chair. The Chair thanked her for her hard work and support over the preceding months.

5 Chief Executive's report

The CEO referred to the Council's five agreed priorities for 2025. He noted that the first three priorities (revised governance structures for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; research strategy; strategic plan) would be discussed in other agenda items. As regards e-learning courses (priority 4), these would be launched in the very near future. With respect to the campaign on hospices and end of life care (public affairs – priority 5), examples of work undertaken by members was being sent to the Communications Officer and would be used in the campaign.

5a. Operational plan update

The CEO highlighted the following items from his report which would not be discussed elsewhere on the agenda:

- The revised membership fees and discontinuation of the Parliament Hill discount scheme had been implemented without any adverse comment; this underlined the fact that the discount scheme was not widely used.
- Three new SIGs had been formed, on eating disorders and difficulties; inpatient settings; and nature-based practice and climate change.
- Of the two Level 6 Diplomas, that on Art Therapy with CYP was now running, albeit with lower numbers than hoped for. The deadline for the Diploma on Supervision had been extended. Since other CPD courses were well attended, it might be necessary to consider redeveloping these courses to make them more attractive. This would be a subject for future discussion.
- The Chair and CEO had visited Scotland and Northern Ireland for their annual meetings. He referred particularly to the Lifetime Achievement Award given to Eileen McCourt in Northern Ireland.

5b. Dashboard

The CEO introduced the updated dashboard. He noted:

- Membership, including full membership, continued to rise and was now believed to be at an all-time high.
- 23 new trainees had joined in Q1/2025, making the training SIG the fastest-growing group. The CEO had recently visited the Derby training to meet students.
- 651 members (27%) were now enrolled on the Find a Therapist search tool. Security measures had been enhanced in order to reduce the number of phishing emails received by members. Discussions were taking place with the IT advisers about possible cybersecurity accreditation for the website.

- The first new Masterclasses had been delivered. Some trainees had subsequently fed back that they were not permitted to attend, as this type of event was only for qualified art therapists. This raised the question whether specific CPD opportunities for recently qualified art therapists should be developed. Overall, booking for courses remained healthy and continued to provide useful income for BAAT.
- Social media channels remained active and showed increased engagement. There had been a 13% increase in website views in Q1/2025 over Q4/2024. The post on 'protected title' had proved the most popular page.
- It was now possible to track usage of the Forums and for the first time they appeared in the top ten most-visited features of the website.
- It remained important to encourage more articles for InSight from members, without the need for direct commissioning. The CEO asked Council members to remind members that non-academic papers were very welcome.
- The CEO would separately circulate statistics related to the Journal.
- Finally, the CEO noted increased member participation in SIGs and Regional Groups.

In questions, a director asked whether anyone left membership of BAAT, and reported that at the regional coordinators' meeting some members were querying the value of their membership. The CEO replied that as in any organisation there was some movement, with people retiring or leaving the profession for other reasons. However, very few members reported that they had left BAAT because they felt that the organisation was not delivering sufficiently for them. He believed that the focus on delivering for members was paying off. There would be a renewed focus on the members' area of the website and improving navigation through it.

A director asked about those who'd been offered scholarships to study on the Supervision course had not enrolled on the course. It was noted that the scholarship covered only £1K of the £5K course fee. There was a discussion whether 'bursary' would better describe the award, and whether fewer, more valuable awards should be offered. There was also a suggestion that BAAT consider offering a smaller number of scholarships, which would allow for the full cost of the course to be covered. It was also noted that one of those who had not taken up the scholarship offered had done so for other than financial reasons.

Action: The CEO undertook to bring the issue of funding offered to widen participation back to Council for further discussion.

A director asked whether there could be a campaign to encourage more members to submit articles to InSight, e.g. through social media channels, emphasising that articles do not need to be academic papers. Trainees could be encouraged to submit articles based on their dissertations. Another director suggested drawing attention to the opportunity to submit articles through the Forums.

Action: The Vice-Chair undertook to mention the opportunity in the SIG Network meeting.

5c. Public affairs

The CEO introduced his update on public affairs and due to time, asked that it be taken as read. He said that activity was increasing and BAAT's visibility in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales was increasing.

5d. Staff wellbeing

The CEO said that work was being done to explore offering an employee assistance programme and a health package for staff; he would bring this topic back to a future meeting of Council.

6 Finance

The CEO introduced the annual accounts for 2024, which required approval by Council. He noted that BAAT's accountants had reviewed the accounts with the Finance Manager and had signed them off.

He noted that there was a surplus of £39K for 2024, around 4% of income, following a deficit of £25K in 2023, though the sizeable NHSE grant made comparisons more difficult. Nevertheless, reserves increased to £196K from £140K, representing around three months' operating costs, which was satisfactory though towards the bottom of the normal range of reserves held by comparable organisations.

Income from membership had increased from £330K to £375K and from courses from £206K to £248K (with an accompanying increase in costs of delivery from £65K to £98K, albeit with a slight drop in income (see agenda item 5b, above) from the diploma courses). IT costs had increased and it would be necessary to keep a tight rein on them.

In questions, a director asked whether there were any concerns about the increase in employer NICs from April 2025. The CEO replied that this did represent an additional cost, and that BAAT had been hit disproportionately as it had a relatively high proportion of part-time employees. However, the increase had been budgeted for in December for FY 2025 and was sustainable. The situation would be kept under review.

A director asked whether there had been a 'double dip' in diploma enrolments and whether this meant that BAAT should look at offering new diplomas. The CEO agreed and said that, as discussed at a previous meeting, there were questions about why BAAT was offering a Level 6 diploma when Level 7 was required for qualification as an art therapist.

Jacqui McKoy-Lewens, as the Level 6 diploma course leader, said that it might be the case that the courses were already delivering at Level 7 standard. However, it would be important in that case to make clear that the course was not considered to be an alternative route to an MA Art Therapy qualification; there were non-art therapists on the current course.

Caryl Sibbett said that it would be good to connect the NI-run courses to BAAT's. The courses there had seen an increase in numbers, and this year they were running two cohorts on the CYP course. There was no issue with the level of the course in Northern Ireland. Jacqui McKoy-Lewens said that it was important to learn from Northern Ireland's experience. The CEO agreed that the courses should be connected; the issue had been time and resources.

Some directors said that they were unaware of a change in entry criteria to the diploma courses to enable non-art therapists to enrol. The CEO said that he was also unaware of this change. The Chair noted that Council had previously voted not to continue a Level 6 course for non-art therapists. It was noted that HCPC had expressed their views in the past on generic course titles and entry criteria.

Action: CEO to follow up with Council as a matter of urgency on the course titles and entry requirements.

A director asked about the increasing IT costs, and whether these had now levelled off. The CEO said that he believed they had; there was decreasing use of money they could draw down on for IT support, following the completion of the website development and the additional resources spent on tackling the phishing issue for members on the 'Find a Therapist' tool on the site.

Decision: The Chair asked directors to approve the Audited Accounts for 2024, subject to a minor correction on page 2 of the directors' report, which should refer to BAAT's strategic aims for 2024–2027, not 2024–2028. The accounts were agreed unanimously.

There was no time for further questions to the CEO on the Management Accounts for Q1/2025, as the previously item had over-run significantly.

7 NHSE project

The final report of the Education Reform Commission had been circulated to directors. The CEO expressed his thanks to the Chair for envisioning the project and to everyone who had worked on it, especially Daniela Pasquini and Josiah Baffour – they had now left BAAT as these roles had ended. The outputs of the project were being launched over the coming weeks, and the new curricula and career frameworks would be sent out for short consultations.

A director asked about placements. The Chair commented that it was an ambition to develop more NHS placements and to gain tariff for placement. Another director commented on the difference of terminology and practice between the professions in regard to placements. The Chair observed that art, drama and music therapy used different approaches and counted placement experience differently; also, within each profession there was variation too. To gain tariff, the professional bodies would now have to work together to find commonality across the professions. A minimum of 337 hours (85 days) had been suggested; however, this had not been agreed. The work could provide a foundation for future discussions.

The Chair highlighted the role of simulation-based learning on tariff; the professions were seeking to quantify how much of a placement could involve this form of learning. A director noted that good examples of best practice in this area had emerged and that an AI-based app was being developed.

A director noted that the 'explainer' animated film for art therapy used the term 'counselling'. Another director said that members had expressed concern about this language. There were potential implications, for example for employers. Another director explained that the concern was that a counsellor might be taken on to provide art therapy, because the title was not protected.

The Chair said that she believed the rationale for the use of 'a form of counselling' was that it was easily understood by the general public. The CEO agreed that this was the rationale used and added that 'counselling' was not used on BAAT's own website. A director suggested that a phrase such as 'similar to counselling' could have been used. She asked when the decision had been made to employ this term. The CEO noted that the script had been signed off by Council, and another director observed that an email had been sent on 31 October 2024 with the draft script, containing the word 'counselling'.

A director asked whether it was too late to make changes. The CEO noted that in addition to changing the voiceover, the word 'counselling' appeared in the animation; there would therefore be cost implications of making changes. The film was already being viewed, although the Chair pointed out that it was available on BAAT's own YouTube channel and was therefore under their own control.

A number of other options were canvassed by directors, including taking the film down temporarily; amending the script to acknowledge the differences in the public's and the profession's use of language; and releasing a statement to explain BAAT's position.

Action: CEO to explore the options as discussed above for amending or explaining the language used in the film.

A director asked whether the films had been shared with participants to confirm their authority to distribute them; and when Council members would receive a draft of the career framework. The CEO noted that there

would be a three-week consultation with members, after which it would be sent to Council. There was one framework for all three professions. The Chair said that she'd been told that links with the completed films had been sent to participants; this could perhaps be confirmed by the CEO.

Action: CEO to check that links had gone out to participants involved in making the films.

8 EDI policy

The CEO said that BAAT had been asked by a trans member if BAAT would make a statement following the Supreme Court ruling. He reported that the consensus among CEOs of other AHP organisations was to put out a supportive statement explaining their organisation's commitment to non-discriminatory policies. He read out a short draft statement.

A director supported the issuing of a statement. She said that it would need to be carefully considered, because some people believed that the ruling impacted on the rights of certain groups. Another director referred to the BMA's response, which she had found heartening. Another director suggested that BAAT's statement might reference the MoU on conversion therapy.

Action: CEO to circulate draft statement urgently for responses by Friday 9 May.

9 Updates from SIGs, regions and countries

9a. Update from the SIG network coordinator

Michèle Wood suggested that her report be taken as read. The main point to note was that members were engaged with the various SIGs. She reported that a valid application had been received to set up a new SIG, on LGBTQIA+ issues. A director expressed surprise that this SIG did not already exist. Another director welcomed the application, though noted the challenges that this work may bring as there seem to be quite a range of views across the profession.

Decision: The application to form the new SIG was unanimously approved. The network coordinator would write to confirm this and suggest that the co-ordinators attend network meetings and get in touch if any challenges arise.

9b. Report from the Regions lead

Sarah Challenger noted that it was a continual challenge to maintain support for the Forums. She suggested using the Forums more as a channel of communication with the membership. There was an issue with the size (geographic and in terms of numbers of members) with some of the regions and she suggested that a review of the regions might be necessary.

The CEO said that a review would be held when possible. He noted that some regions were quite small.

9c. Reports from the nations

Wales

A report had been received and read by directors. Sarah Challenger noted that there was greater engagement with the WATAF (Welsh Arts Therapies Advisory Forum). She noted that WATAF was asking member organisations whether they could provide a registered address for them. The CEO said that he

thought that would be possible for BAAT to do so but a letter of understanding or even a simple contract might be necessary to protect BAAT's position.

Scotland

No report had been received from Scotland.

Northern Ireland

A report had been received and read by directors. In addition, Caryl Sibbett reported that six art therapists had attended the AHPFNI event at Stormont in February. A member had presented a case study of her work in special needs schools. The Annual Meeting had been held and was a success. Caryl Sibbett raised a concern about the lack of NI-specific outcome data to feed into the research strategy. The Chair suggested surveying NI members about this issue.

9d. Reports from BAAT representatives in other forums

It was reported that a meeting of the signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy had been held. This had decided against issuing a statement about the work of the MoU at the current time.

Caryl Sibbett reported that Eileen McCourt had attended meetings of the ACAHP Advisory Committee sub-committees on curriculum matters and research.

The Chair asked that the by-law regarding representation of BAAT in these forums and the report template be recirculated to all existing representatives, so that this process was clear and feedback could be received regularly.

9e. Approval of new representatives

There were two members who had expressed interest in taking on the role of an approved representative for BAAT in different national forums. It was proposed to formally recognise:

- Nicky Power as BAAT representative on the Learning Disability Professional Senate. A director raised the question of how best to communicate with the new representative. The Chair undertook to consult on the best means of maintaining two-way communication.
- Susan Hogan as BAAT representative on the AHP Public Health Strategy Board.

Decision: The appointment of Nicky Power as BAAT representative on the Learning Disability Professional Senate was unanimously approved.

Decision: The nomination of Susan Hogan to the AHPF Public Health Strategy Board was unanimously approved.

10 Four nations governance

The CEO reported that terms of reference for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales had been tested with those involved in this work currently and the feedback had been positive. The process had revealed the importance of also reviewing the position of England and how to engage members there, who make up four-fifths of total BAAT members. The review would therefore encompass England and a proposed revised structure would be brought back to Council later this year.

The Chair asked whether this issue would be included in the members' survey. The CEO said that members would be consulted.

Caryl Sibbett expressed her thanks for the good work which had gone into this topic. She said that Northern Ireland wanted to retain both a country and a regional group. She asked whether issues concerning data storage and email address would have to wait on the bigger picture being resolved. The CEO said that the problem of data storage would be prioritised.

Sarah Challenger noted the difficulty of one person representing the whole of Wales.

Decision: It was unanimously agreed that the position of England would be resolved, before terms of reference for the Four Nations were agreed.

11 Research strategy

The Chair reported that work on the draft research strategy mentioned in the 2022-2027 strategic plan had been underway since 2024. The work had progressed, with a draft in consultation with members from the four nations and a survey underway. She thanked staff for their work on this.

This initial plan agreed was for the work to conclude in June 2025. At the meeting in February, it had been proposed that this be extended – but the document and how the scope had increased was not shared. As BAAT would soon be starting to consult on the Strategic Plan for 2027-32, it seemed more appropriate to conclude this, as had originally been planned, for the time being. The research strategy would then be revisited in the light of priorities emerging in the new strategic plan. She also noted that the draft appeared to only draw on policy from England, so when the work was taken up again this would need also to take account of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

A director noted that it was a comprehensive document, and asked whether it should explicitly state that it related to England alone. The Chair noted that this document did seem to only refer to the NHSE AHP Research Strategy, and it was important to bear that as the context in mind when reading it. Another director asked whether a questionnaire on the research strategy could be sent separately to members, rather than as part of a more general mailing - in order to gain more input from members.

Decision: The suggested approach of incorporating feedback received from members and concluding the document by the end of June was agreed unanimously. Any further changes would be approved by Council.

12 Strategic plan development

The CEO introduced a paper which laid out a process for development of the new strategic plan. It would refine and develop the current plan, for example adding KPIs and providing a more detailed timeline.

In answer to a question, the CEO confirmed that service user involvement in plan development would need to be budgeted for. The Chair suggested going back to the service users who had been involved in the NHSE project. It was noted that it was thought that they may have been remunerated at below the recommended levels; it was proposed that that should be remedied for this project.

13 AGM - update

The CEO reported that preparations for the AGM were on target. The formal AGM would be confined to the morning this year, as previously agreed by Council. No member proposals had been received; four nominations for three places on Council had been received, so a ballot would be necessary. The nominees

were: Simon Hackett, Melissa King, Kate Pestell and Simi Warah. The voting platform should go live in two weeks.

Bev Harden, Deputy CAHPO for England had been invited to make a presentation, which she would pre-record. She had signed off the NHSE project and had been very supportive. Eileen McCourt's Lifetime Achievement Award would again be announced.

A director noted that the AGM was not listed in Forthcoming Events on the website.

Action: The CEO would check this and make sure that it is added.

14 **Annual conference**

Sarah Challenger reported that Claudy Jongstra had been invited as keynote speaker, with a second pair of art therapist invited to speak to frame the subject from the point of view of art therapy.. Contributions from art therapists were also being considered. In the afternoon, the plan was to have two or three member submissions regarding collaborative ways of working and smaller interactive groups, followed by a plenary session.

Sarah Challenger said that she also planned to write a note for next year, setting out who needs to do what when planning the conference so that this work can easily be picked up by a new working group.

The CEO noted that a call for member submissions had been included in the Bulletin. A director noted the need to plan, e.g. for IT requirements for the plenary session. The Chair thanked the members of the conference organising committee.

15 **Annual Awards**

The awards for 2025 would need a working group set up. Several options of people to invite as an external representative were suggested. EDI advisor, Daniel Regan, would also be on the panel, as would Liliana Montoya de la Cruz, Francesca Norouzi and Caryl Sibbett.

16 **AOB**

The next meeting was the AGM, followed by the Council Awayday on 20 September and the meeting on 6 December 2025.

Finally, the Chair thanked Simi Warah, whose current term of office was due to end at the AGM, for all her hard work.