



Minutes of Council Business Meeting

Saturday, 6 December 2025 (10:00-13:00)

In person at Friends House, London.

Present: Claire Louise Vaculik (Chair), Michèle Wood (Vice-Chair), Melissa King, Sarah Challenger, Simon Hackett, Liliana Montoya De La Cruz, Francesca Norouzi, Catherine Stevens, Simi Warah

In attendance: Gary Fereday (CEO)

Apologies: Jacqui McKoy-Lewens; Caryl Sibbett

1. Welcome, apologies and declaration of conflicts of interest

The Chair welcomed everyone especially newly appointed directors, acknowledging today is the first time directors are meeting each other in person. Conflict of interest noted regarding a New Special Interest Group proposal being voted on today as Melissa King is one of the 20 people asked if interested in joining the SIG.

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The Chair noted that the minutes of the previous Council meeting on 3rd May 2025 had been circulated to Council members prior to the meeting; all corrections had been made and the Minutes approved.

The Chair asked for any matters arising that were not on today's agenda and since there were none, requested updates on some issues and actions.

The CEO reported the following updates:

- Contact details for Wales on the website have been corrected.
- Jason Wisner-Mills is now a BAAT Ambassador
- Ongoing considerations of the descriptor and parameters of BAAT scholarship/bursary This will come to Council at next meeting (February 2026).
- Termination of the Art Therapy with CYP Diploma
- Confirmation that the NHSE funded explainer animation 'What is art therapy?' now states 'psychotherapy' instead of 'counselling and psychotherapy'.
- Statement from BAAT about its EDI commitment to non-discriminatory policies completed.
- Paper on England's position in BAAT's Four Nations Governance prepared

3. Chair's report

The Chair gave a verbal report, acknowledging she is coming to the end of her elected term in June 2026. She presented Council with a paper copy of her nomination statement to highlight her aspirations and what had been achieved in this final term of office. The Chair briefly outlined the history of her role and the structural changes within BAAT that she has navigated. She spoke about possible consideration that may be needed in the future about financial remuneration for Directors. She outlined how understanding the requirements of the role of Chair (and remuneration and time commitments) will help Council support succession planning and continuity for the Association. To aid this planning, the Chair distributed information about current Board of Directors' terms of service and eligibility to stand again as a director, Vice-chair and Chair. The CEO raised a point of clarification for length of terms for Council members wondering how the 'six-year rule' is implemented. The CEO thanked the Chair for her hard work.

Action Chair and CEO to check Articles of Association to confirm parameters for eligibility of directors standing again. CEO to get advice from Governance expert, Andy Burnham.

A director queried how the Chair's honorarium compares to other similar companies.

Action: CEO will get time and money comparators for the Chair role from equivalent organisations. Council will consider issue of final remunerations as part of the work on updating governance structures.

4. Vice-chair's report

The Vice-chair outlined the breadth and complexity of her activities since May, (acknowledging a fivefold increase in time required) which has included:

- Meetings with CEO and Chair
- Facilitation in the AGM 2025
- Representing BAAT along with Liliana Montoya De La Cruz at Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance meetings
- Leading Special Interest Group coordinators' network meetings and responding to queries
- Supporting BAAT's #ThisIsArtTherapy in Hospices campaign
- Leading Extraordinary Council Meeting activities (i.e. arranging meetings; communication with directors; documenting directors' votes and meeting minutes)
- Advice-seeking from legal, insurance and Human Resources experts to support Council in decision making
- Liaison with external agencies to support Council activities

The Vice-chair expressed her gratitude to fellow directors for their support and additional efforts in working with her to tackle governance and employment issues. This

has strengthened awareness of the role of the Board, its responsibilities in keeping the Association functioning safely and the urgent requirement for documentation outlining a delegation of duties and division of responsibilities for Non-executive Directors and Executive staff. The Vice-chair has uploaded examples of such Schemes of Delegations including a draft version for BAAT in the Board portal for directors' immediate consideration.

Action: All directors to review Schemes of Delegations documents and agree a version for BAAT. This will be checked over by a governance expert and brought to next Council meeting (February 2026) for ratification and made available for election publicity in March.

5. CEO report

The CEO outlined progress made against 2025 priorities in five areas:

- Developments in revising governance frameworks for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have paused to allow consideration of how England (nation with the largest number of members) fits into the structures. A discussion paper has been prepared to consider options
- Research Strategy draft outline has been completed following member consultation and workshops. One director queried with the CEO the timeline for the research strategy, which was concluded rather than paused in June 2025. There was brief discussion about plans to present the research strategy at the 2026 AGM.
- Strategic plan for 2027-2032 consultations has begun with members, although engagement was lower than hoped. Further consultations with stakeholders will occur and a revised timeline is being developed to see if it's possible to present the 2027-2032 version at the 2026 AGM
- CPD expansion: two-self-directed (e-learning) modules are now ready to launch. These are Mentalisation and Producing AIRs.
- Public Affairs Development. The first "This is Art Therapy" campaign, focusing on hospices and end-of-life care launched successfully. The Vice Chair and CEO thanked Kat Starczewski for her excellent work on developing the campaign and preparing downloadable resources and videos for members to use.

The CEO outlined proposed priorities for 2026 asking Council to confirm these are appropriate. These are:

- Continuing developing the public affairs activity with targeted #This is art therapy campaigns
- Develop Memberzone and member offer and review fee structure
- Establish a clearer process for development, approval and review of professional guidance
- Strengthen governance through sub committees, Four Nations, Special Interest and Regional groups
- Review the professional development offer from introductory to masterclass levels to meet the needs of members and map onto the recently developed career framework.
- Establish a more permanent office

Directors agreed the priorities, but asked that the rationale for relocating the BAAT office ensured the following criteria are met:

- a. the move would not exceed current costs;
- b. the move and location are acceptable to staff;
- c. the current BAAT operations would continue with no negative impact on members.

Vote: Directors voted unanimously that the CEO could authorise the office move without having to return to Council for approval so long as these three criteria are met. (Votes: Yes:9 No:0 Abstain:0)

Two directors (Michèle Wood and Catherine Stevens) agreed to be available to provide a 'wet' signature for any new lease.

Action: CEO to continue exploring options (locations and virtual) for BAAT office

Operational plan: The CEO gave Council an update on the following areas:

- Evidence pages summarising art therapy research are now published on the website. These are for psychosis; self-harm; cancer; primary schools and end-of-life care.
- The impact factor for the International Journal of Art Therapy (IJAT) performance has dipped. Reasons for this are being explored; it's likely to be a technical issue and way metrics are accumulated.

The Chair informed Council that Zoe Moula, IJAT Editor in Chief will be standing down when her term ends in April 2027.

Action: The Chair will invite Zoe to the next Board meeting to discuss the journal with Council. This will support Directors in the process of advertising for and interviewing for the next editor in chief, which will need to start in Spring 2026.

The CEO reported that the Annual Conference was successfully delivered to a nearly full in-person auditorium and approximately 70 online delegates. Feedback was very positive. He thanked the Conference Committee (Simi Warah, Jacqui McKoy Lewins and Sarah Challenger) and the Events Officers (Danni Robbins and Amy Collins).

Thinking ahead for next year, the CEO asked directors to join the Conference Committee for 2026. One director asked for guidance on directors and staff roles for this.

Action: Liliana, Simi, Melissa, Simon and Sarah offered to be the 2026 Conference Committee.

The CEO updated Council on HR issues. The Employee Assistance Programme recently introduced is being appreciated. He reported the management team are working to better manage workloads and flow across the year. He reported that the Research Officer is reducing her hours, and the longer-term provision of this function is currently

under review. Directors acknowledged the enormous value Dr. Sue Holttum (the Research Officer) has brought to BAAT.

Action: CEO to convey Council's appreciation of Dr. Sue Holttum's hard work. She has been an excellent resource for members of BAAT. Council suggested her contribution to the profession is acknowledged at the AGM 2026

The final product of the NHS England Commission project was launched. This is the joint Clinical Career Framework. The CEO extended his thanks to Claire Louise Vaculik who conceptualised the project and was employed as a consultant to the commission through 2024/25.

The CEO highlighted the checklists for efforts for BAAT Campaigns, mentioning the next public awareness campaign. This will be 'what is art therapy' in a setting, options being considered are schools and community-based art therapy practice. Other possibilities were discussed.

Action: CEO asked directors to suggest ideas for campaigns for consideration.

The CEO presented highlights from the organisational dashboard.

Highlights included:

- Membership continues to grow - now at an all-time high of 3,140 members.
- Find a therapist function now has 718 Full Members (30% of the full membership) appearing.
- SIGs and Regions are growing steadily, with 185 members joining SIGs and joining regions in Q3.
- Bulletin open rate at 49% - significantly above the sector average of 20%. Social media activity continues to expand, and the website was viewed 122,000 times in Q3.
- Member Enquiries: Enquiry numbers remain broadly stable, with 34 escalated to the Professional Advisor and 16 to the Pre-Registration Education Advisor in Q3.
- Professional development courses continue to be a highly regarded and popular member service.

Directors raised questions about whether the scholarship/bursary was achieving its goals. Discussion focused on clarity of information about the offer and how it was advertised. Information about the number of applicants, those who drop out and why would be helpful, and other experiences to date.

Action CEO to bring a paper on the scholarship/bursary scheme to next Council meeting.

6. Finance and Risk

The CEO presented the budget for the next financial year. He stated that while he considered the situation to be good as costs are increasing BAAT finances are still tight.

In conjunction with Finance Manager, Dr Abimbola Badiora, the CEO has created cost centres to better identify areas of spend. This is still 'work in progress' There was positive feedback from Council for this approach.

Directors raised questions about specific items in the proposed budget and considered likely implications for BAAT's current activities and any future developments in the staff team. Whilst recognising rising costs for the organisation, Directors asked that Full Member fees were held just below £200, and Student Member fees held at the 2025 rate.

Directors proposed that the budget item for potential staffing changes, (that could trigger recurring costs), be made only for temporary (ie non-recurring) roles.

Action: Council voted unanimously to approve the budget with the caveats on member fees and non-recurring costs incorporated. (Votes: Yes:9 No:0 Abstain:0)

7. Update from SIGs, Regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Special Interest Groups

Michele Wood (Council lead for Special Interest Group Coordinators Network Meetings) presented her paper for information and decision. Engagement in Special Interest Group appears to be growing, and coordinators are making good use of the network meetings and communication with the Council lead. There is a suggestion for an online template to be developed for SIG coordinators to input content for their AGM reports

Vote: Approval for a new Special Interest Group

Council voted to approve an application for a new Special Interest Group 'Traditional Tales/Fairy Tales and Art Therapy. The proposal was circulated with this board's papers. (Votes: Yes 8; No:0, abstained due to a declared conflict 1)

Report from Wales

Sarah Challenger gave a verbal report outlining the political landscape in Wales and its potential negative impact on the profile and employment of arts therapists. There are some opportunities too.

No updates received from Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Council thanked all SIG and Regional coordinators for their hard work and reports.

8. Reports received from members representing BAAT in other Forums

Council extended thanks to:

- Nikki Power for her update from National Professional Learning Disability Senate
- Professor Susan Hogan for her update from Allied Health Professions Strategy Board (England).

Any other Business

Following resignation of Sinead Braiden (August 2025), Council are considering the possibility and best timing of co-opting a member who could bring experience of art therapy in Scotland to discussions.

Action: Papers tabled for this meeting that could not be considered due to time constraints will be carried over to the February 2026 Council Business Meeting. Directors requested the February meeting is longer than 3 hours, given the amount of material to cover.