

BSS Council Meeting Report

24 October 2011

BSS Review – An early analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. (SWOT)

A SWOT analysis is nowadays more properly used to summarise the outcome of strategic analysis but it can be useful as a framework to establish key issues. The table below is just one possible one for the BSS today.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	1. BSS is the largest English speaking sundial society in the world with 30% of its members living overseas. We hold and maintain the national register of dials. We are frequently the society of choice for world wide sundial interest and our Bulletin is a flagship product.	1. We have a large 'sleeping' membership who rarely take part in society activities or communicate with us or others and few will offer their services to the society unless 'fingered'. This is no worse than other societies however.
	2. The BSS web site attracts the most visitors of any sundial web site. It is our main source of new members. Its content largely matches today's public's information expectations - as judged by a recent review of the sundial mail list.	2. It is hard to encourage attendance at meetings etc from members who live in NI, Scotland, Wales and overseas. We are very much a Southern biased grouping and that does not tie in with population.
	3. We have very loyal membership subsets who regularly record dials for us and attend meetings.	3. Most new members join via our web site yet despite falling numbers, we do not do a hard enough sell there towards promoting membership.
	4. Affiliation to RAS and our relationship with the Borthwick Archive with the MDR opens doors to the academic fraternity.	4. We possibly offer too much free material on our website. Much is necessary to justify Public Benefit but by offering too much we do make it less necessary for some to join the society.
	5. Even if we instantly lost half our membership our total 2010 reserves could meet nine or ten years of the consequently reduced membership income. Our 16 year commitment to drive down costs has yielded a very lean financial framework.	5. Our system of accounting is still largely spreadsheet based and this contributes to difficulties. A better system has been purchased but has yet to be implemented. Its adoption would also help us monitor trends.
	6. Our overall income is diversifying and is now slightly less dependent on membership income.	6. We offer nothing for children of secondary school age who might be working on curriculum projects involving dialling.
	Opportunities	Threats
External	1. An extension of our website and Facebook page and possibly advertising on Facebook, all with PayPal selling, will bring the society to the attention of younger persons and may encourage membership and more public use of trails.	1. We are seeing reducing membership largely as a result of age and death of members. This will continue and our new Membership fees may result in further loss of membership.
	2. Our 25 th year in 2014 will offer a rare opportunity for publicity and perhaps increasing public interest. We need to embrace it.	2. Paying for society membership is seen as unnecessary by some in these days of the Internet. We need to cast our website with membership promotion in mind.
	3. We need to approach those sections of the membership who loyally register dials and attend conferences, to do specific minor tasks or to help with monographs. They may later join the Council.	3. Our level of reserves is too large and is now unjustifiable under the requirements of SORP 2005. Action is needed to plan the use of reserves.
	4. Consider selling monographs of earlier Bulletin articles devoted to specific topics. We might also publish statistical analyses of Register information as interesting (saleable) monographs.	4. The higher cost of conference venues that offer all under one roof facilities might be putting off some of our 'sleeping' members from attending.
	5. We should consider collaboration with Peter Ransom to develop a protected section of our website devoted to younger persons and secondary schools.	5. The limited take up by members of email (or their use of the Internet) as a communication mechanism or for electronic membership takes much effort & greater expenditure.
	6. We might consider gift aid membership (like the NT does). It could bring in some additional income.	6. Imminent changes to Public Benefit law might well affect our financial decisions.