

BSS Council Report Conference Organisation

2012 Cheltenham Conference – final report

The Cheltenham Conference was our most luxurious conference yet and it has received considerable acclaim. We had only been able to command relatively good rates at a four star hotel because of the very specific post-Easter drop in bookings normally experienced at the Cheltenham Chase. Breakeven delegate numbers had been set a little higher than usual in order to minimise the increase of rates over Wyboston. Budgeting was therefore always going to be strongly linked to forecasts of attendance and a potential subsidy was agreed with the trustees in case of problems. Some limited advertising and additional mailings were set up in order to boost bookings.

In the event some 84 delegates booked to attend all or part of the conference - not far short of the Wyboston attendance of 86. This, along with the fact that we did not need to pay a budgeted premium for the conference dinner helped to boost margins. No element of the available emergency subsidy* has been needed or used.

This has resulted in a margin after all expenses but before any Treasurer's allocations and disbursements, of 5.4%. Reassuringly, 98% of attending delegates felt that the rates charged for the conference represented good to excellent value for money.

The Special Conference Web Page (<http://bit.ly/bss2012>) has again proved very popular with no fewer than **872** visits in the Feb-May period alone. Over 400 of these have been to view the post-conference summary. Some 59 of all of the webpage visitors since 1st Feb spent between 15-30 mins on the site, 55 more spent between half



and one hour and another 23 even spent longer than one hour at the site in a single visit. Interestingly, visits to the Wyboston and Exeter pages for the same Feb-May period totalled 64 and 102 respectively. There is a lot of interest in conference reports. Many emailed compliments have been received (though not, it must be said, from the trustees) about the 2012 post-conference summary. I recommend that the practice be continued next year but this time that no attempt be made to censor legitimate delegate criticism of the trustees.

We had a full programme of extraordinarily high quality papers this year though we again received no requests to present poster presentations. There was a stronger than usual take up of our offer to accept post-dated cheques and five delegates paid using PayPal.

I received no Council response at all to my request in my March report for ideas regarding possible Conference 'wallet freebies'. Accordingly I included three modestly priced items of my own selection. The pen purchase has resulted in a stock level that should be sufficient for a further two conferences. The value of this stock has been included (i.e. written off) in the above financial figures.

The return of the BSS Auction was much welcomed by many delegates. It realised more than £440 for the Society.

Files relating to the conference and a digital copy of all the associated PC files have recently been posted to the 2013 conference organiser.

P Powers 18/06/12

[Notes: This is a copy of the report submitted to trustees. Only some details of outstanding creditors and sums involved have been removed from this version.

*Charities should not (usually) budget for a loss so in the case of large events where there is uncertainty in take up, it is normal for trustees to pre-approve a modest subsidy].