

*British Dragonfly Society*

*Annual Report 2014*



# British Dragonfly Society

## Annual Report

for the year ended **31 March 2014**



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## **British Dragonfly Society**

Registered Charity No 800196

### **Patron**

Sir David Attenborough OM CH FRS

### **Charity's principal address**

23 Bowker Way, Whittlesey, Peterborough PE7 1PY

### **Trustees and Committee Members as at 31st March 2014**

Trustee	Position
Vacancy	Chairman
Vacancy	Vice-Chairman
Mr H G Curry	Hon. Secretary
Mr B Walker	Hon. Treasurer
Mr D Smallshire	Convenor of Dragonfly Conservation Group
Mr M Parfitt	
Mr D Goddard	
Mr S Irons	

### **Bankers**

The Bankers of the Society are Lloyds TSB.

### **Cover photos**

Front: Vagrant Emperor dragonfly (*Dave Smallshire*)

Back: Cover of the new Atlas of Dragonflies

## 1. About the Society

### **Aims**

The aims of the British Dragonfly Society (BDS) are to promote and encourage the study, conservation and understanding of Odonata and their natural habitats, especially in the United Kingdom, and to raise public awareness of dragonflies. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the aims of the Society. The BDS is a non-profit making Society with no political affiliations or stance.

### **Study and conservation**

Within the BDS there are two main inter-linked areas of interest, dragonfly recording and dragonfly conservation. The first of these consists of a dedicated group of individual enthusiasts each collecting and supplying records to a Dragonfly Recording Network of Vice County Recorders (VCR). The purpose of these records is not simply to document what is present, but also to inform the second main area of interest, that of dragonfly conservation. Records help us to understand the value of a site and added notes about population size and breeding behaviour allow us to assess the importance of an area for species survival. Dragonflies are good indicators of the health of a habitat, so any variation in distribution or population size can indicate changes on a wider environmental scale. Education and training are important weapons in conservation. Raising public awareness is vital because people need to appreciate something in order to want to preserve it, so providing information to an ever widening audience is an important job for the BDS. We aim to share the knowledge gained with as many as possible of those whose job it is to take care of the environment. This is achieved both through direct contact and through public events, other meetings and publicity in the national press and social media.

## 2. Summary of Key Achievements this year

### **Dragonfly Week 2013**

Dragonfly Week took place from Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2013 and concluded with our third annual Dragonfly Day with the National Trust & The Dragonfly Project at Wicken Fen. This event was very popular with families and many children attended, being taken on guided walks, trying their hand at dipping ponds, seeing displays, and getting a chance to make origami dragonflies, draw and colour dragonfly designs, and put stickers on fabric dragonflies, adults being equally as enthusiastic as their children.

### **Rutland Water Birdfair 2013**

The BDS shared a double stand with The Dragonfly Project in our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. The event once again provided good opportunities to meet the public, a focus for our members to meet us, and networking opportunities with our other groups and Societies. Several of our VCRs and Voluntary Officers (past and present) took the opportunity to visit and this year's special Membership Offer, in its second year of operation, attracted 27 new members to the Society.

### **Members' Day 2013**

In celebration of our 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Members' Day was held in the fantastic setting of Oxford University's Natural History Museum. Attendance was excellent and we had a message from our Patron, Sir David Attenborough, who expressed his apologies and good wishes for our celebrations. The series of presentations included a review of 30 years of the Society by past President Andy McGeeney and a special video presentation by Professor Georg Ruppell & Dr Dagmar Hilfert-Ruppell on sexual conflict in dragonflies. At the close there was a ceremony to cut a special 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary cake.

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### **Strategy & Funding**

The BDS has been generously supported by (i) a hosting agreement with Natural England at Telford, (ii) through a partnership agreement with the Environment Agency (EA), (iii) through grants from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and (iv) from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). We are also very grateful for a donation of £1,000 from BDS member Mr Frank Cannings.

Going forward EA funding will cease due to budget restrictions; biodiversity funding has been withdrawn and the EA are looking at a significant number of redundancies over the next two years. We will, however, still have funding from the final year of the current 3-year NRW grant and the second half of the SNH grant. Despite this there remains a significant and growing shortfall in funding to cover core costs and we are increasingly eating into BDS reserves. This situation cannot continue, hence the need to review our forward planning before applying for future grants.

Funding for Southern Damselfly projects in Wales prompted a meeting with our grants officer at Environment Wales, in early August. There are two funding streams we may be eligible for in the future; to continue our practical habitat work for Southern Damselfly, and to part fund an officer in Wales.

We contacted Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) to explain the strategy change since our CE resigned and asked if they would consider a fresh application. We have been advised by The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) about EFF preferred funding model, one of declining support over time, and believe this could work for us. If successful, it could provide interim funding while we investigate other options.

A new application to The MacRobert Trust has been made to match fund the work of the BDS in Scotland during 2014/15. The application covers the elements exclusive to Scotland, but does not include the 50% of our Officers' time that is part of the SNH grant. The application may be more successful if those UK elements were excluded, but we are not confident as our work is peripheral to their normal funding. The 31<sup>st</sup> October deadline for applications is not assessed until March of the following year.

### **Trustees**

We have struggled to find new people willing to come forward and we will be reduced to just five Trustees by next year. We are making efforts to address this issue with some urgency, so that we can share the workload more evenly and take on expertise to manage the day to day running of the Society.

### **Dragonflies in Focus**

Our 'Dragonflies in Focus' Officer Steve Prentice retires from the BDS on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2014. We need to discuss what skills and experience we want from a replacement and what we can afford financially to support this or a similar post going forward. Discussions are under way to retain a part-time Records Officer.

### **Scotland Officer**

We received 62 applications for the new BDS Scotland Officer post and from these a short-list of 7 was selected for interview in Edinburgh on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013. Following the interviews, kindly hosted by the SNH Edinburgh office, it was decided to offer the post to Danièle Muir, a part-time Ranger with Perth and Kinross Council who was also just coming to the end of a contract as a Project Officer for the Carse of Gowrie Swift Conservation Project. Danièle, as BDS Scotland Officer, has made an excellent start on the workplan. She is enjoying the role and is full of enthusiasm, has lots of contacts in her local area and is not shy of getting in touch with other organisations and people as necessary. She plans to attend Gardening Scotland in May and has suggested other events later in the year to boost interest and recording in Scotland.

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### **Dragonfly Beer**

Beer design specialists 'From the Notebook' (FTN) produce a range of 'idiosyncratic beers' inspired by the idea of wildlife enthusiasts working in the field sketching and recording what they observe. Major features of the creatures represented are depicted on the labels, and to this end we are pleased that FTN have become our first Corporate Sponsors with the forthcoming launch of 'Golden-ringed Dragonfly Golden Ale' with attractive artwork, brief species description, and BDS logo displayed on each bottle. BDS will receive a contribution of 10p for each bottle sold.

## **3. Conservation**

### **England**

**Southern Damselfly – New Forest** – Following concerns raised with us about plans for Latchmore Brook we contacted relevant bodies and received assurances that the proposals took into account requirements to maintain the habitat for Southern Damselfly. Natural England's officer for the New Forest is happy with the current plans but advised us to redirect any questions to the Forestry Commissions' (FC) Senior Ecologist, Marianne Bergin, who informed us that the restoration plans are currently being revised and they are taking Odonata into account and feel that it is important that the works benefit Odonata. The FC is expecting a report in January from the surveys carried out over the summer by Hampshire Wildlife Trust. The plans should restore favourable condition for the SAC and SSSI – a vital part of this is conserving the Southern Damselfly. When the plans are finalised they will be shared through the planning process. We have asked Marianne to let us know when the plans are submitted for consultation and also offered our advice on Southern Damselfly related matters.

**BAP Query Cayton and Flixton Carrs Wetland Project** - We advised Keith Gittens, north-east Yorkshire VCR, about the production of a BAP for Cayton and Flixton Carrs Wetland Project.

**White-faced Darter Re-introduction Delamere** - The first year of translocation of final instar larvae and sphagnum to the site has been completed. An end of season report was produced and the steering group (of which BDS is a member) commented on this. The project officer will update the report to incorporate comments. There had been physical difficulties finding exuviae at Doolittle because of access limitations. Phil Watts is studying the genetics of the donor populations (Chartley and Fenn's) from exuviae; there are size differences in the length and wing bud length and there is concern that this may be a result of significant genetic differences.

**IUCN Reintroductions Specialist Group** – We have put Mark Stanley Price from the IUCN in touch with our experts. He was investigating use of the White-faced Darters reintroduction project in Cumbria as an example of a good invertebrate reintroduction project.

**RSPB – Southern Damselfly Data Request** – The RSPB requested our Southern Damselfly data to help them carry out an internal exercise to identify species where they can make a positive contribution to their conservation and they sent us a draft of their plans for our comments. We explained that there was a general feeling of support for what has currently been drafted and suggested some amendments to the ecology / general information.

**Norfolk Farms Project** – We received a copy of an article written for British Wildlife magazine about managing farm ponds following studies of Manor Farm in Norfolk. The paper recommended that farm ponds should be buffered from fields and protected from pollution. The studies indicate that ponds should be restored and managed as this maximises species diversity and that this approach should be incorporated into agri-environment schemes and nature conservation legislation. Our Conservation Officer was contacted as funding is available for a project developing ponds and dykes on a farm in Norfolk so we

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provided general advice and contact with our experts, who are keen for us to be kept informed and advise where possible on this project.

### **Scotland**

**Hotspots** – we are researching each of the 56 Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) sites for suitability as a dragonfly hotspot and are grading sites according to community involvement, suitable habitat, ease of access & staff involvement in the project. At each of these sites we will run a survey training session for the public, plus at Crombie and Gartcosh, a further training session for staff and volunteers who lead their own dragonfly guided walks & events.

**Scottish Dragonfly Conference** – our Scotland Officer has made contact with SNH regarding booking Battleby for our first Scottish Conference, planned for April 2014. We have also investigated Dundee Food & Flower Festival as a suitable event to attend. Other potential events looked into include Loch Leven Discovery Day, Ochils Festival, Lendrick Muir pond survey & training.

**BDS stand at Gardening Scotland** will be part of the GfL ‘Living Garden’ which will include a pond where Pond Doctor sessions will be run, facilitating an extra opportunity to advise on what is good for dragonflies in gardens. Training sessions and an events programme to raise awareness of dragonflies and their conservation are being organised.

**RNIB Radio Station** - our Scottish Officer took part in an interview for Insight Radio. Small articles about the Scotland Officer posts have gone into our magazine *Dragonfly News* and *Scottish Invertebrate News*.

**Development on a Northern Damsel Site** - a watching brief has been maintained over Tesco plans to build a new supermarket at a Northern Damsel site in Aviemore. We received the baseline report for the habitat surveys carried out in 2013 and a request for advice on translocating the Northern Damsel at Aviemore to a new site. Comments from several of our Scottish recorders on the baseline report and the translocation process have been sought. These were quite critical of the process to date, one of the key points being that the process is being rushed at the last minute.

### **Wales**

**Southern Damsel, Pembrokeshire** – Stephen Coker (VCR for Pembrokeshire) carried out Southern Damsel surveys in 6 one km squares and supplied maps showing the results. These maps show numbers seen in the areas through an impressive colour coded system.

**Pensarn Corner** - we circulated a press release about the practical work and it appeared in the *Western Telegraph* (8<sup>th</sup> July 2013), *Tivy-Side Advertiser* (4<sup>th</sup> July 2013) and on the *ITV Wales* website (4<sup>th</sup> July 2013) These resulted in several potential sightings of Southern Damsel, one of which sounded as though it may be in suitable habitat. Landowners and have been notified and a local BDS representative will visit the site.

**Wales Species Expert Group (WSEG) meeting** – A BDS representative attended this meeting held at Ynys-hir RSPB reserve near Machynlleth. The majority of the meeting was spent discussing the wetland species habitat integration table and trying to simplify tabulation whilst maintaining relevance for a wide range of species. It also discussed the new structure in Wales and how the WSEG can help the LBAP officers – possibly by providing a number of specialist workshops each year. The evidence gaps project, available on the *Wales Biodiversity Partnership* website, was also discussed - this is a large database that

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lists evidence gaps in biodiversity and the ecosystem approach across Wales – this also links in with academic research.

**Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference** – The BDS Conservation Officer also attended this conference where the theme was ‘Developing Ecological Networks – planning, integration and delivery for Wales’. Most of the presentations were addressing the ecosystem / landscape scale approaches. This approach is now seen as the way forward in Wales. Our Conservation Officer attended workshops on the Wales Biodiversity Strategy and building LBAP engagement using novel approaches. The conference was very well attended with delegates from local councils, the government, wildlife trusts and NGOs and universities.

### **Wales - Southern Damselfly BAP Funding Application**

We put together a funding bid to carry out work identified in the Pembrokeshire Southern Damselfly SAP. This is for three projects involving mechanical works. Ant Rogers, the BAP Officer for Pembrokeshire, has advised that there may be funding available for the work.

### **Evidence Gaps Project Launch**

This was held at Cardiff University and brought together NGOs, academics, people working in the Welsh Government and other people working in the conservation / environmental sector in Wales. It was attended by the BDS Conservation Officer. The launch was followed by a freshwater workshop. Professor Steve Ormerod is keen to work on projects with the BDS and we have looked at potential areas utilising Mike Averill's *Gomphus* study, our records database and potentially Stephen Coker's computer programme with photos / records etc.

## **4. Training & Education**

**Training Courses in Wales** – The BDS Conservation Officer and local representatives produced materials for 3 training courses, 2 as part of the NRW grant deliverables and 1 for Natural England. These were delivered by us at WWT Llanelli on 11<sup>th</sup> July, Rhydymwyn on 17<sup>th</sup> July and Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses on 1<sup>st</sup> August. The courses focussed on identification of dragonflies, with a presentation giving ID tips to ‘type of species’ level followed by identification of dragonflies and damselflies in the field. They were well attended, and we received very positive feedback from the attendees.

**Student Projects** We have devised some Wales-specific projects that are suitable for final year and PhD level university students, and have contacted Professor Steve Ormerod from Cardiff and Dr. John Gee from Aberystwyth. Cardiff who have shown interest in collaborating with us and we have therefore sent them details of the proposed projects.

## **5. Publicity & Outreach**

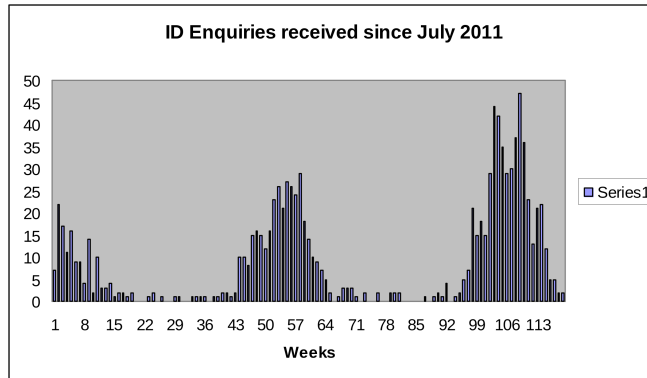
### **Websites and email enquiries**

Over 1,000 identification queries have been handled via the dedicated BDS email address. The graph shows how use of this system has grown over the past two years with nearly 50 enquiries now received in peak weeks. This volume is still manageable because most enquiries concern commoner species. It's very encouraging that we have only been beaten by the very poorest of photographs and have covered enquiries from every continent except Antarctica.



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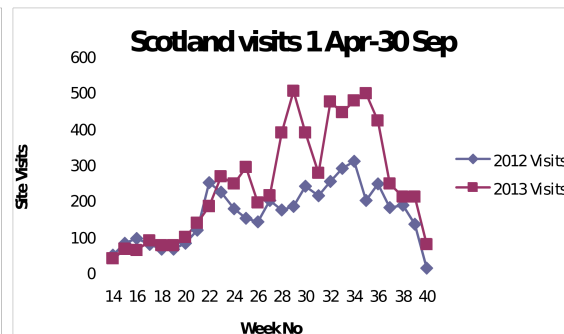
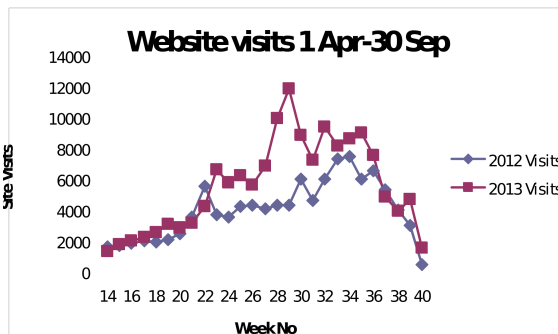
The BDS Facebook page now has nearly 600 likes and carries regular posts from us. We are also getting regular input from others sending photos etc to our site. Not unexpectedly our posts peaked over the main dragonfly season. The top post each month since March has been seen by at least 400 people and often over 500. In July the BBC Online page carried a series of dragonfly photographs to coincide with Dragonfly Week and shared this via our Facebook page. This meant the BDS name reached over 26,000 people in a single week.

The BDS Twitter account also posts on a regular basis, although this is regarded as a less useful medium for publicity than Facebook. The Society had 2,345 followers on Twitter by the end of the year.

The BDS Flickr page now has 150 members with 1,333 photographs on the site.

The BDS sent out five press releases this year, four of which were successfully taken up by the media. The BDS was also directly involved in two other press releases put out by other organisations, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and Jersey Post. Beyond this, the BDS was mentioned in media stories about Southern Migrant Hawkers, the Dragonfly Centre and the Suffolk dragonfly group.

Prompted by regular articles in the press and social media postings, plus regular updates to the BDS Latest News items (21 stories since January) and Star of the Month features, the BDS website homepage has received 40% more hits between April and September this year than during the same period last year. Hits from devices in Scotland alone rose by 52% in the same comparison. This latter increase is probably attributable to the new BDS Scotland Officer post being advertised.





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**Young Persons Art Corner (Wicken Fen)** – Following receipt of a framed picture from a college student, we arranged for it to be displayed in the Dragonfly Centre at Wicken Fen. As a result we are discussing instigation of a possible ‘Young Persons Art Corner’ in the Centre.

#### **BBC TV 'Countryfile'**

We responded to an enquiry about the Small Red-eyed Damselfly and climate change and supplied species photos.

#### **BBC Wildlife Magazine**

The magazine staff asked for an opinion of 12 species for a 'spotters' guide' and we suggested 9 adult species photos plus 2 larvae and 1 exuvia. We provided comments on sketches of the suggested species and highlighted several errors, trying to focus on key identification features.

#### **Press Release – Weather Drives Dragonfly Sightings**

We sent out a press release in April mentioning the first Large Red Damselfly sightings and possible Vagrant Emperor sightings at the end of February. The Vagrant Emperor sightings were linked to reports of dust being blown in to the country from the Sahara Desert.

#### **Scottish Dragonflies - Postcard Survey**

We set up a BDS photographic competition, with the help of a volunteer on the 'Flickr' website, for our 2013 Scottish postcard survey of Large Red Damselflies. We had over 50 entries on Flickr and via e-mail. The winner was Martin Černý from the Czech Republic. The postcard has now been designed and printed.

**Welsh Webpage** – Our Conservation Officer devised plans and gathered information for a Welsh section on our website,. There will be 5 sections, namely Welsh species, dragonfly breeding habitats in Wales, conservation projects, dragonfly sites in Wales and *DragonflyWatch*.

The first two sections will use information produced for our Welsh training courses. The ‘Conservation Projects’ section will give information about the recent Southern Damselfly projects in the Preseli SAC. Information about two of these projects has been translated into Welsh. We've compiled information regarding 39 sites in Wales for the ‘Dragonfly Sites’ section, sites that have a good assemblage of species but can cope with visitors. We have deliberately avoided directing people towards fragile habitats that may be damaged by the anticipated extra visitor numbers. We've also compiled a small amount of information about each site – focussing on dragonfly species or habitat information, directions to the site, information about facilities, grid reference and nearest postcode. We now have photos and species lists for most of the sites and most of the text has been amended and approved by site managers, although we're still waiting for some replies.

#### **Northampton Leaflet and Event**

BDS Trustee Mick Parfitt agreed to man a BDS stand at an event held by Northampton County Council. The County Council also produced a leaflet about dragonflies on the River Nene. We sourced photos for the leaflet from the Northampton Vice-County Recorder, Mark Tyrell, who also sent information about the BDS, and commented upon several versions of the leaflet. The event was considered very successful.

## **6. Recording**

#### **DRN database**

DRN data up the end of 2011 has been extracted and sent to Dr Chris Hassall of Leeds University for a Europe-wide project designed to map and model the distributions of European Odonata with which he is

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involved. The DRN database now contains 1108437 taxon records, an increase of 18186. CEH continues to work on analytical methods to produce species' trends, using the DRN dataset.

### **Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey**

Some 2,697 records collected via the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey for the period 2008-2012 have now been validated and verified using the NBN Record Cleaner. Of these, 2,303 passed validation and verification and have been imported into the DRN database. Only 115 records needed referring to the VCRs.

### **BTO Garden BirdWatch & Birdtrack records**

19,229 records were received from Andy Musgrove at BTO which included GBW 2010-2102 and Birdtrack 2012. All records were verified using Record Cleaner and deferrals were sent to VCRs. A reminder was sent to VCRs by Pam Taylor to expedite replies from VCRs who had not responded. This proved successful and verification verdicts on outstanding deferred records are now being received. BT/GBW records accepted by VCRs will be imported into the DRN database for use in the atlas.

### **NBN Gateway**

997,488 non sensitive records up to the end of 2011 have been extracted and sent to the NBN and were uploaded to the NBN Gateway on 5 Feb 2014.

### **DRN Recorders' Day**

Over forty people attended the Recorders' meeting held on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014 in Bubbenhall Village Hall near Coventry.

### **DragonflyWatch**

We presented the latest thinking on *DragonflyWatch* at Members' Day, and this was followed by a launch at Recorders' Day.

## **7. Publications**

### **New Dragonfly Atlas**

As a result of a meeting held at CEH Wallingford in July 2013 a new set of atlas maps were created and made available for collaborative comment. Some observations, deletions and corrections were made as a result. Preparation of tables showing the distribution of species in 10km squares and the numbers of records for each species as a percentage of all recorded 10km squares prompted the request for a standardised species order for the atlas. It was noted that there were inconsistencies in the earlier atlas. The Atlas has now reached the proof reading stage and updated maps and data tables are being produced as required. Our Dragonfly Conservation Group worked extremely hard to prepare the Atlas texts and images for publication which is scheduled for May 2014.

### **Dragonfly News**

This twice-yearly magazine publication goes from strength to strength and will shortly reach its 65<sup>th</sup> edition. The content is varied, lively and well received thanks to the voluntary efforts of our excellent editor.

### **BDS Journal**

Our internationally acclaimed Journal, soon reaching volume 30, is widely recognised as a scholarly publication with a high standard of excellence appreciated by universities and academic bodies worldwide.

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### **Darter Magazine**

Published annually, and in colour since 2010, this magazine provides a summary of dragonfly recording highlights and progress and is a focus for our VCRs to see the results of their hard work.

## **8. Outlook - Future Plans**

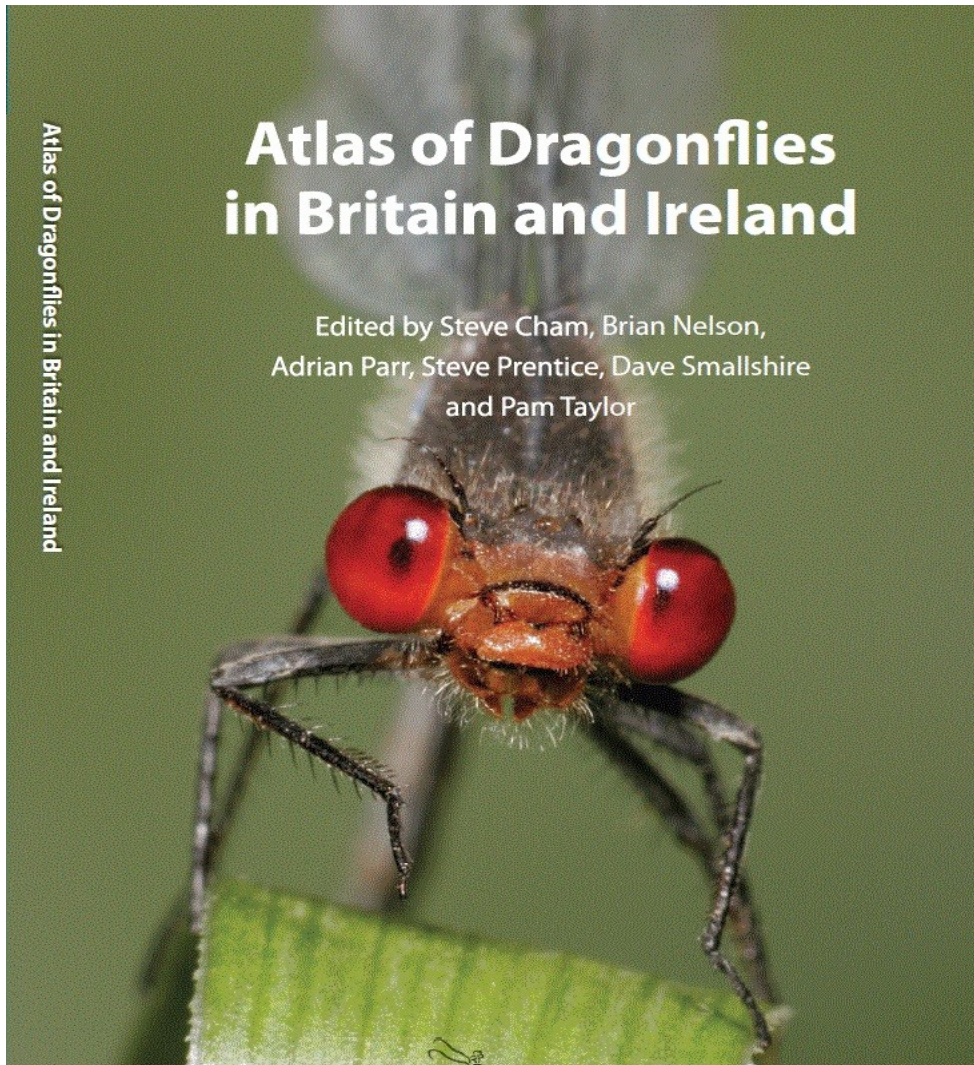
We intend to review our position and produce a new outline Business Plan to take us forward and to determine the future direction of the BDS. This will be a summary of our aspirations, their timings, and the requirements needed to fulfil them. This document will help us to apply for grants that often have a long lead time before they come to fruition, and ensure that we do not miss opportunities to further our aims.

## **9. Accounts**

For information regarding our Accounts for this financial year please see the associated document “BDS Accounts 2013-2014”.

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Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland

# Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland

Edited by Steve Cham, Brian Nelson,  
Adrian Parr, Steve Prentice, Dave Smallshire  
and Pam Taylor

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23 Bowker Way,  
Whittlesey,  
Peterborough.  
PE7 1PY

Tel. 01733 204286

[www.british-dragonflies.org.uk](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk)