

Thu 06/01/2022 10:58

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year. We'd all hoped to have seen the back of Covid news in the catch up but sadly we are not there yet. However, as we move into 2022, I will be using the catch up to provide more information on what's happening across the charity with its many moving parts. In particular I'll be setting out how these all fit together as part of our five year strategy and longer terms plans. I'm aware that many staff are new since the strategy was launched. Even those closely involved with its formation have been so busy dealing with the pandemic that it's time for a reminder. Feedback from staff has already provided lots of suggestions for subjects to cover, the use of infographics and information on who's who and who does what. One idea was to produce a series of spoof Ladybird books (How it Works: the SLT or People Who Help Us: Digital and Data) was the most imaginative so far.

My last catch up of 2021 naturally focussed on the outcomes of most interest to staff from the Board meeting held that day- namely the decision on leave and pay. As we start in the new year it's an ideal time to also report that the Board was very positive about the way that we have navigated the pandemic and its impacts, and were optimistic for the future. There is no question in my mind that this positioning is very much down to the hard work and willingness to be flexible across the entire organisation.

### **Response to Omicron**

Across the UK, the advice remains to work from home if you can. For staff that cannot, please remember to use the measures in place to reduce infections. This includes wearing face coverings in communal areas. It is mandatory in Scotland to wear face coverings in the workplace unless you remain 2m apart. In Wales wearing face coverings will still be necessary where physical distancing cannot be maintained, unless there are good reasons not to. In England they are not required in offices, but are advised where you are likely to come into contact with people that you don't usually meet. Please continue to observe social distancing, ensure good ventilation and continue with good hand hygiene. Do not under any circumstances come into work if you have any Covid symptoms, however mild. Do not dismiss them as "just a cold", but instead get tested. The testing and self-isolation information can be found here for [England](#), [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#).

### **Biolinks update**

The PM's comment about riding out the omicron wave makes it sound easier that it really is. So I am pleased to flag up some of last quarter's BioLinks highlights. The work of Gino Brignoli and Rachel Davies in particular has enabled us to aim for the original project targets in a lot of the areas of work rather than the reduced targets we set as a result of Covid. This means more engagement with customers and builds our reputation with the funders. A large proportion of the 2022 training programme is now scheduled and many of our targets for audience engagement are already exceeded. One particular success in just this quarter is Olivia Watt's work that has added almost 2,000 new subscribers to the newsletter. The online Bee Nesting Ecology and Conservation course managed by Dan Asaw was hugely successful with 123 learners completing the course which will be repeated. Keiron delivered the first of 3 parts of a £14,000 contract with Butterfly Conservation and the team successfully secured a £3,000 grant to create insect morphology infographics.

### **Special Mention**

One of our Higher Education Placements, Ollie Peach, has successfully applied for £1,000 of funding from the Bay Villa Trust for Castle Head. This will go towards the installation of a new 3 metre Challenge Wall, which forms part of our obstacle course. It's a great team challenge activity, where the whole group is tasked to get over the wall by helping each other in as quick a time as

possible. Ollie showed great initiative and attention to detail in his application for this funding and all his hard work has paid off.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark