

BADCOG Chairmans annual report for the AGM

Friday 11th September 2026

Since our last AGM, BADCOG volunteers have once again had a productive and successful year. There have been 25 main work parties this past 12 months, with a further 69 occasions when additional work was carried out. This includes mowing sites in preparation for main work parties and returning to complete unfinished tasks. Work parties depend entirely on volunteers, and average attendance over the past 12 months was 8 volunteers per work party, which is similar to the last year, but still down on the 2024 numbers which was 10. A huge thank you goes out to all our volunteers for their hard work this past year.

The number of sites we manage remains unchanged at 13, comprising of:

- Two ponds, Holly Lane & Lingwood Village Pond.
- Three woodlands, Snowdrop Acre, Buckenham, Railway Woods.
- Five churchyards, Blofield, Hemblington, Lingwood, Southwood & Limpenhoe .
- Two meadows, Howe's & Jary's Meadows.
- And finally, Walsham Fen.

At Southwood and Limpenhoe churchyards, BADCOG carries out the cutting, while Bure Valley Conservation Group or church members rake and clear the sites. At Blofield Churchyard, we also receive valuable help from Great Yarmouth Green Gym. Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year.

We also help mow part of Cremer's Meadow, for which we receive a donation that is greatly appreciated.

This summer, NWT surveyed two of our sites: Howe's Meadow and Jary's Meadow. Howe's Meadow was assessed to confirm that it still meets the County Wildlife Site criteria, while Jary's Meadow was surveyed for possible inclusion in the wider County Wildlife Site that includes Walsham Fen. I hope to receive the report during the winter. In spring, Sam Brown from NWT visited Walsham Fen to review our site management following the decline in orchid numbers in 2025. After walking the fen, Sam concluded that our management is sound and that the cause of the decline is unclear. Orchid numbers at Walsham Fen remain low, while those at Howe's Meadow remain healthy. Thank you to everyone who helped with our annual counts this summer.

In January, the small gate between Jary's Meadow and Walsham Fen was replaced, and a stronger fence was installed along the boundary between the two sites. The work was organised by David Pilch, with most of the funding provided by NWT. Thank you to David and NWT.

Also in January, the barn owl box at Walsham Fen was cleared out, refurbished and replaced. Our thanks go to John Elvin and his son for doing most of the heavy lifting on this project.

We have also installed several bird boxes this year around Lingwood Pond and in Buckenham Wood. Those around the pond were supplied by Lingwood PC and built by Brundall Men's Shed, while those in the wood were provided by Strumpshaw PC and built by a Lingwood resident. Thank you to everyone involved.

At Buckenham Wood, many visitors will have noticed the ongoing management work, especially in the middle section. A wider management plan for the whole wood is still being developed, particularly for the Strumpshaw PC section. As BADCOG has helped manage this part of the wood since 2005, I have been asked to contribute to the plan, which we hope will be completed soon. This will be a long-term plan, so visitors should not expect major changes overnight.

At Snowdrop Acre, a local tree surgeon milled a fallen elm tree into planks on site. It was fascinating to see the process take place where the tree had fallen. We hope some of the planks will be used to make a bench for a BADCOG site of our choosing. The bench will be built by Brundall Men's Shed and funded by BDC.

In November we had reports of a fallen tree blocking the public footpath through Railway Wood. BADCOG volunteers were quickly on site, and the tree was removed allowing safe access through the wood again.

In addition to our members' evening, we welcomed four guest speakers to last year's winter talks, all of which were very interesting. Thank you to John for organising them. The Talks Co-ordinator role is now vacant, should anyone wish to take it on.

In December Ernest took a group of us on a very enjoyable, guided walk around Buckenham Wood and in May, we visited Grange Farm, Lessingham. It was an interesting opportunity to see how the farm has moved away from livestock and arable farming to become a wildlife-friendly farm and visitor attraction.

The BADCOG stand/display had three outings last year: two Annual Parish Council meetings, at Strumpshaw and Lingwood, and the Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards and Fair at the Forum, Norwich, where it attracted a great deal of interest.

The only negative issue to report this year is our collective decision to close public access to Walsham Fen. This is due to the poor condition of the boardwalk, which is hazardous in places. The entire 380-metre boardwalk now needs to be replaced, with the old structure removed and disposed of properly. This is well beyond BADCOG's resources. Norfolk County Council and other agencies are aware of the problem, but the landowners, Norfolk County Council, have shown little, if any, interest in resolving the problem. However, BADCOG will continue to manage the fen for its wildlife value and keep open areas where we can access the site safely.

On a much brighter note, two churchyards managed by BADCOG, Blofield and Hemblington, have reached the finals of the Norfolk Churchyard Conservation Awards. The results will be announced next month.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all our volunteers who have helped in so many ways over the past 12 months. This includes members of the main and sub-committees, as well as everyone who has taken part in our main wildlife conservation work parties.

A Mckie

BADCOG Chairman