

## **Summary of discussion points at the U.H.O.C. AGM - Newcastle upon Tyne** **September 2012**

The following list of points were summarised largely from the AGM minutes but also personal and group conversations following that meeting. It was very apparent that you were keen to discuss the issues facing the group and there was a strong desire to secure the future for the group and the conference. Unfortunately time ran out on the day.

A number of us have joined a professional network called LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) which enables you to connect with your trusted contacts and helps you exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals. Within this site is a group called 'Universities Horticulture Officers Group' which can be found and joined by typing the name into the search bar, this may be a good forum to discuss the points below. I would ask you to consider the points and come back to me with your opinions so that I can summarise the responses and either make recommendations or pass the points on to Allan at Bristol for his consideration depending on how you want me to proceed.

Tom has already made some progress on a website, which is intended as both an information source and marketing tool, information required for this idea to progress is included on a separate sheet and will be used in conjunction with your replies to this document.

I would urge you to remember that delegate numbers for the conference are in decline and that the key to reversing this will be our response to the questions below

### **Communication**

- Should the group have a dedicated website?
- Could we use a form of social media to maintain contact with current attendees and also attract future delegates?
- Could we form ourselves into local groups and use the personal approach to contact potential delegates in our area.
- How do we best connect with those Horticultural Officers who do not attend the conference?

### **The conference**

- Is the timing of the conference right ( currently every 18 month April down south and September up north to take advantage of the weather conditions)
- Is the length of the conference currently appropriate?
- Is the format of the conference good, currently a series of visits to places of Horticultural interest?
- Should there be more technical content in the form of workshops, discussion group work and lectures.
- Would it be better for each conference to have a Theme, i.e. bio diversity, or to focus on specific topics during the course of the conference?
- Should we open up membership/eligibility to a wider group of manager's i.e. Horticultural /grounds managers of educational establishments, agricultural/horticultural colleges etc.
- Should we ally ourselves to a parent organisation, i.e. institute of Horticulture, HEEAG, CUBO, RHS?
- What would the advantages be of association?
- What would the disadvantages be of association?
- Would it be beneficial if the conference counted towards points for CPD.?
- Would it be beneficial for learning elements of the conference to be formally recorded and published or at least distributed to the delegates?
- How would this recording and distribution be done?

### **The Group**

- Should we form ourselves into a distinct Group or organisation?
- If so would we need a new name, term of reference, structure?
- If we agreed to action the above to what extent would you want to take the group to:-
- A local forum kept specifically for our own use
- A voice ,advisory role in British horticulture

### **Finance**

- How would a new look group be financed i.e. membership fee, levy on conference, sponsorship, aid from parent group.
- Are we happy to continue the trend of obtaining sponsorship for the conference?