

The British Orchid Council

OUTLINE SCHEDULE FOR BOC CONGRESSES

Part 1 – The Long Term Planning of Congresses

(In practice there is often LESS time available)

Introduction

BOC Congresses are held at intervals of approximately eighteen months, alternating if possible between a Spring event and an Autumn event, This sequence has to be interfered with from time to time to prevent clashes with World Orchid Conferences or European Orchid Congresses, or some other pressing need. (Availability of the venue for the BOC Congress might be one of these.)

Each event is hosted by a member organisation of BOC, and the details of the running of the event are determined by a committee set up by the host Society in collaboration with BOC.

Successive Congresses should, if possible, be held in different parts of the country so as to reach, over a period of time, most areas in the British Isles. In practice there are not very many member organisations willing to take on the responsibility of a Congress, so that the pattern has inconsistencies from time to time. None the less the Congresses have been widely spaced and have ranged from Edinburgh to Devon, and from Southport to Norwich.

The Congress Committee's activities are subject to the approval of the Executive Committee of BOC, and so ultimately to the meetings of the Council.

1. Three Years (ideally) prior to event – Initial Action

(This stage can easily be compressed into 24 – 30 months if you already have likely venues picked out. Looking for a venue can be a long and discouraging process.)

1.1 Decision to run a Congress on behalf of BOC, will need:

- Nucleus of keen and able workers. (at least 6).
- Sufficient keen "ordinary members" to provide stewards and labourers on the day.
- Presentation to BOC Executive Committee of a Business Plan including an outline budget. This should equate the estimated costs of the Congress against the likely income from registrations, Trade stands, public admissions, and any other sources of income. Knowledge of the costs of the chosen venue, together with figures for attendance at the previous Congress will provide the bare bones of this, but local factors will have to be considered too.
- From these figures estimates of the various charges to be made to the registrants and visitors can be calculated, and the scope of the Congress determined. A Spread sheet is available from Ian Parsons.

1.2 Application to BOC

The event ideally should be held in a part of the country not recently in easy reach of a BOC Congress, though lack of a suitable and willing host society may prevent this. (Ideally BOC would be able to choose from several applications at each opportunity!)

1.3 Venue for the event will need:

- **At LEAST** 16,000 square feet exhibition space. As BOC expands and overseas participation increases, the requirements may well become even more stringent. This is the over-riding reason why BOC needs to reserve sizeable funds for support of the Congresses.
- Adequate lecture facility.
- Good access for exhibitors, registrants and public.
- Congress Hotel. Accommodation, preferably in one hotel, nearby for 300 or 400 registrants. Close to the exhibition hall or arrange for shuttle transport service. Have a list of alternatives – cheaper, quieter, etc..
- Other attractions – places of historical interest or beauty etc..
- “Registrants only” facilities – lounge with refreshments.
- Set up bare bones of Congress Committee:
 - Chairman (acceptable to BOC – previous track record, not *necessarily* in orchids, Registrar, Show Secretary, Publicity Secretary, Floor Manager, and Lecturer Secretary.
- An officer of BOC will be included in the Congress Committee – for some meetings at least.
- Good telephone liaison and email can serve for this if distances are great. Such advice can avoid costly errors and need to rehash arrangements.
- Open Bank account specifically for the Congress. (This is not essential, but makes preparing the accounts easier.)
- Apply for advance funds from BOC for initial expenses.

2. Two Years to eighteen months prior to Event

- 2.1 Book venue (even earlier if possible). Discuss requirements and arrange contract, paying careful attention to cancellation clauses and the liabilities of both you and the management of the venue. Check Public Liability Insurance with the venue, and check Cancellation Clauses for loss of Deposit and other losses.
- 2.2 Draw up a more detailed budget, and make final determination of the required registration fees etc. Three price bands for registration; registration during last month should be expensive to deter late registrants (they make life very hard for organisers, and it is very useful to have registration fees sitting in a deposit account accruing interest.) A Master Spreadsheet is available from Ian Parsons.
- 2.3 Decide on location and form of meals on Friday and Saturday evenings. Very desirable that there should be a preview of the show for registrants on the Friday evening. Best if this can be combined with an informal reception/buffet.

- 2.4 "Formal" dinner on Saturday evening, dress is traditionally formal but not excessively so. Lounge Suits is the "norm". Evening dress is rare at these events. This is to encourage attendance of as many orchidists as possible, including those (few) who are very young, and travellers from far places. Put the Dress Code on the Registration Form and information.
- 2.5 Prepare and distribute initial publicity. Must be ready for the preceding Congress – best chance of directly reaching much of the orchid public at one go.
- 2.6 Review exhibition and selling space available and make decision whether or not it will be possible to accommodate any non-orchid items, if these are considered desirable.
- 2.7 Decide when to open to the public, cannot be early (before 11.30?) on Saturday because of judging, placement and checking of rosettes, and so forth.

3. Eighteen months to One year prior to event

- 3.1 Outline plan for guest speakers, especially overseas exhibitors, - make tentative enquiries re availability Aim at a balanced programme, both as regards content and source – Trade, Amateur, Botanists, Overseas. Try to obtain some novelty for the programme – certainly not a re-run of the last congress programme, however successful. It is usual to provide free registration for speakers in addition to such expenses as they may request. (it should not be necessary to pay travel expenses for a speaker who will be trading at the event.)
- 3.2 Invitations to exhibitors: **MUST** invite amateur (BOC), trade (BOGA), Botanic Gardens who are BOC members, Eric Young Orchid Foundation, Orchid Review, Overseas exhibitors. **N. B. BOC RULES PRECLUDE EXHIBITS BY INDIVIDUAL AMATEUR GROWERS.** Obtain current list of BOC member organisations from the BOC Secretary. Often easier and better to combine overseas exhibits and trade with lecture programme. (Final date for replies should be notified in invitation.)
- 3.3 From September 1999 new rules apply for BOGA member exhibits at a BOC Congress.
 - **A package has been agreed stating:**
 "£100 (increased by inflation if necessary) be charged to BOGA members to cover a 3 table display area and 4-5 square metres of selling space, and including free registration for a maximum of 3 employees."

 If organisers feel that inflation may have overtaken the most recent agreed figure, they should ask the BOGA Executive Committee to negotiate this – NOT engage in "local" negotiations.
 - British Traders who are not members of BOGA (or any other Trade organisation that may become a member of BOC) should be charged in the same way but, IN ADDITION, must pay an amount equal to the current annual subscription paid to BOC by member organisations, so as to comply with BOC rules. (£20 at March 1999.)
 - Clearly this matter will have to be kept under review and arrangements revised depending on trends in costs and on the state of BOC reserve funds. Some venues will have rules of their own regarding sales, entrance charges, and so forth. Each Congress committee will have different problems and will have to produce its own solutions – in conjunction with the Executive Committee of BOC.
- 3.4 Selection of exhibitors is the prerogative of the Organising Committee, but should be reasonable. This implies that current member organisations of BOC will normally be entitled to exhibit provided they apply for space before any closing date for application. A selection of

overseas and non-BOGA British trade will enhance the interest and scope of the exhibition and give wider choice to would-be purchasers. Some space should be reserved for this purpose.

- 3.5 Exhibitors should be given a choice of different sizes of exhibition space at the time of the invitation, but it should be made clear that the size of the space provided will depend on a number of factors, and will be at the discretion of the Floor Manager, and finally with the Congress Committee. The Congress Show Secretary will have the interesting but unenviable task of fitting all exhibitors into the available space. For this work, there must be a firm closing date after which the floor plan will be finalised. Exhibitors should be informed of the details of the space allocated to them as soon as possible so that they can plan and prepare their exhibit.
- 3.6 Start more detailed liaison with staff at the venue. Meals, exhibition hall, lecture theatre, security, first aid, parking, etc..
- 3.7 Set up publicity, including the Orchid Review, AOS Orchids magazine, Orchid Digest, Die Orchidee, OSGB Journal.
- 3.8 Explore possibilities of sponsorship, TV and radio coverage, opening of event by a "Personality". Balance cost and hassle of the latter against any possible advantages, chief of which might be increased publicity and so lead to greater attendance by the public. Need for extra security and disruption of the timetable might be negative factors.
- 3.9 It is usual to have some sort of information pack for registrants, various types of bag have been provided in the past to contain the brochures, catalogues, etc.
- 3.10 The brochure and bag are good subjects for sponsorship.
- 3.11 Registration forms should be widely available now, and registrations will start to arrive.
- 3.12 Organisation of "side trips" for registrants or their spouses. Try to avoid clashes between orchid attractions and the lecture programme, though the limited time span of a congress may make choice between attending a lecture or going to the local nursery or botanic garden necessary.
- 3.13 Details of excursions should be in registration forms, saves postage. Request large deposit or advance payment to avoid shortfalls.
- 3.14 Best to have registrants making own bookings with hotels, etc., running a "booking agency" is a great deal of hassle.

4. One year prior to event

- 4.1 Chase up speakers and exhibitors for confirmation that they are coming. (This will need further efforts later in some cases.) Decide on space allowed for each exhibitor and notify them of this and any restrictions specified by the venue, use of water features, supports, etc..
- 4.2 Check with the Chairman of the RHS Orchid Committee that RHS Judging can occur at the Congress. (This can usually be best done through the RHS Orchid Committee Secretary.)
- 4.3 Floor plan finalised, and sent out if possible. (May have to be done later, but try at least to complete this task as early as possible. If left until a few months prior to the event there will be much more harassment for the Show Secretary.)
- 4.4 Send copy of the floor plan to each exhibitor, (with the allocated space clearly marked and any special features of size, shape, restrictions, and so forth clearly detailed.)

- 4.5 Notify exhibitors of times for starting and finishing setting up and of earliest time for breaking down exhibits. Inform about requirements for insurance – at most venues this will be the responsibility of each exhibitor.
- 4.6 Increasing liaison with BOC regarding arrangements, distribution of literature, details of available accommodation, etc.

5. Final months before the event

- 5.1 Mostly more of the same. Last minute changes of programme ironed out, publicity stepped up – especially locally and TV/radio if possible.
- 5.2 Programme brochures, lecture equipment, notices and signs for display around exhibition, car parks, etc..Full page advertisement in the Orchid Review.
- 5.3 Decide whether AA or RAC signing will be needed for routes to the venue – usually is.
- 5.4 Obtain necessary supplies – polythene sheeting, and trestles for instance.
- 5.5 Badges for Registrants, Trade, Lecturers, Stand Holders and others (RHS Orchid Committee, etc), - provide access and aid security.
- 5.6 Insurance – check with administrators of venue regarding this. You will at least need public liability cover, but exhibitors will also need to arrange insurance for plants and personnel.
- 5.7 Book coach trips, transport of registrants between hotels and exhibition, etc., if applicable.
- 5.8 Check that all speakers know what they are expected to do, and when. (VERY important that the duration of the lecture is agreed and adhered to. Total lecture time = introduction + lecture + questions + answers + thanks and any presentation)
- 5.9 Tickets for organised meals, lectures, and trips. Roster for stewards. Many categories of steward needed – on door, supervising loading/unloading, lecture theatre, keeping an eye on exhibits while public are in the show, manning registration/information desk. Parking Stewards may also need special badges and/or tickets if working away from main venue.
- 5.10 Liaise with BOC Judging Sub-Committee regarding requirements for judging, their Chairman will need a list of registrants approximately six weeks prior to the Congress. He, or she, should provide an up-to-date list of BOC Judges and Trainees so that the Registrar can use this to indicate which of them have registered for the event: also overseas registrants some of whom will be qualified judges. (Only registrants may attend judging.) Rosettes for classes are at present bought by BOGA, the classes themselves are set by the BOC Judging Sub-Committee.
- 5.11 Arrangements must be made for printing out and copying of the judging results so that these can be made available to the press and other interested persons.
- 5.12 If the organisers decide that extra classes or trophies may be needed this must be discussed with the BOC judging administrators. It would not be reasonable to assume that BOGA (who generously have paid for Congress rosettes in recent years) will pay for extra rosettes than is usual, such expenses would probably have to come from the Congress budget.
- 5.13 RHS judging usually also takes place – this will also need preparations. Communicate with the Secretary of the RHS Orchid Committee regarding requirements. (These will include vases for display of any cut-flowers that are entered for RHS judging. BOC should provide these – check up on this in good time.)

- 5.14 Flower arrangements, bouquets, etc., need to be laid on as appropriate for the various functions.
- 5.15 Ensure that trophies awarded at the previous Congress will be available for award at this one. You need a list of winners from the last Congress, (The BOC Secretary maintains an inventory of the whereabouts of every trophy) contact these people in good time, best to have charge of the trophies before the event (they will almost certainly need to be cleaned and polished.) They must be set out in order of presentation adjacent to the “top table” at the Banquet. Some degree of familiarisation with the trophies and their positions should take place BEFORE the banquet starts. The Chairman of the BOC Judging Committee will assist with this).
- 5.16 Other problems will present themselves.
- 5.17 This takes us to the morning of Congress Friday – see detailed timetable in Part 2 of this document.

The British Orchid Council

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Part 2 – Timetable and Aide-memoir for Congress.

1. THURSDAY Evening

- 1.1 Sites of exhibits measured, marked out, identified, polythene to protect floors staging materials or whatever.
- 1.2 Time for finishing exhibits and clearing away to be clearly indicated (and should have been notified in advance.)

2. FRIDAY

- 2.1 Arrival of exhibitors and registrants.
- 2.2 Remember to arrange availability of refreshments during the day. Those setting up exhibits will have little or no time to go seeking sustenance away from the venue. Snacks, tea and coffee should ideally be available throughout the day.
- 2.3 Organise (and put up signs for unloading access, car parking, information, registration, refreshments, toilets.)
- 2.4 Hall cleared for cleaning.
- 2.5 Show preview for registrants. Preferably combine with reception and buffet meal. An informal gathering with access to the exhibits is one of the highlights of orchid events.
- 2.6 Preview for Judges. Normally combined with registrants' preview, but must be arranged if no general preview.
- 2.7 Preparation for judging.
 - Congress Judging. Space will be needed for setting out rosettes – these need to be easy to access so that the stewards can quickly find them so they can be placed on the appropriate winning plants. Ideally a row of benches or tables will be needed – there are quite a lot of rosettes.
 - RHS Judging. Check with the RHS Orchid Committee Secretary that the space provided, number of seats, etc., will be adequate for the task. Congresses usually attract many entries for judging – some of them may be HUGE plants.

3. SATURDAY

- 3.1 **Judges breakfast.** Essential in order to gather judges together and ensure prompt start to judging. Judges' briefing during this period or in exhibition hall immediately after. All judges and stewards should attend this.

3.2 **BOC Judging.** (BOC Judging Sub-Committee responsible for this, but some security and other services may be required.)

3.3 **Hall cleared** of non-involved persons. Necessary considerations include:

- Clip-boards for stewards
- Schedule of judging groups and classes
- Ruler or rings for checking flower size (check size with BOC Judging Sub-Committee)
- Reference books
- BOC Judging Chairman usually provides all of these items, but check on this.

3.4 **RHS Judging** necessary considerations:

- Separate room needed for seating the Committee – up to 30 persons plus visitors
- Space for registrar, secretary, artist, photographer, exhibits etc.
- Adequate signs/notices to publicise and facilitate entries.
- Area available in the exhibition for display of any awarded plants not “belonging” to one of the existing stands.

3.5 **Lectures.** Each about 45 minutes in total. Need quiet room of adequate size, well ventilated but dark. Microphones and functioning audio system are **ESSENTIAL** in all but the smallest lecture theatre – which would not be adequate anyway. Good steward to ensure that door is kept closed during lecture, curtains drawn, lights working, projector working, etc..

Preferably a “chief lecture steward” who knows how everything works, has access to spares, and who will liaise with lecturers to ensure their slides fit one of the available projectors, and that they have everything they need. Needs also to know about fire drill arrangements for evacuating the theatre.

Each lecture session needs chairperson to make brief introductions and generally look after the lecturers, thank them and present any gift that has been provided.

3.6 **Banquet.** Ensure that lecturers and exhibition finish for the day in time for participants to prepare for the Banquet. Check that PA is satisfactory, bouquets, trophies, flowers for tables. Possibly arrange changing rooms for anyone attending the banquet but not staying conveniently close to the venue. In some venues it may be necessary to organise transport from the main hotels to wherever the Banquet is to be held. There are pitfalls here, so great care is needed to ensure that nobody is left at the hotels prior to the event or, possible worse, at the site of the Banquet at around midnight. In any case the times of the coaches should be clearly notified to all participants both before and during the Congress.

The event should be “admission only by pre-purchased ticket”. Tickets should be kept securely prior to sale, and should be collected on entry to the event. It is embarrassing to discover that the event has become over-subscribed due to unauthorised ticket holders.

4. SUNDAY

- 4.1 Early morning access to exhibition for photography – registrants only. Useful also for those unfortunates who have to make detailed reports for magazines or newsletters.
- 4.2 Lectures and excursions. Don't have these ending too late.
- 4.3 Breakdown of show. Sad but essential. No work to start until the official closing time, but after that clear the hall of all non-involved personnel, and make access easy for loading of vans, etc.. Useful if refreshment sales are available close by.

5. LATER

- 5.1 Accounts. Finalise accounts, have them audited, and announce large profit to BOC.
- 5.2 The host Society should ensure that all those working on the Congress team are reimbursed for their legitimate expenses, including phone bills, (these can add up to alarming proportions).
- 5.3 Any profit or loss after expenses is the responsibility of BOC, but the host Society will be entitled to a payment of £1,000 when final accounts have been audited and approved. (See Minutes of British Orchid Council Meeting held on 3rd September 1995.)
- 5.4 Any advance payment from BOC must show on BOTH sides of the accounts – i.e. it needs to be paid back.
- 5.5 Thanks to those involved. All who have exhibited or lectured at the Congress should be thanked for their support. Letters should be sent soon after the event, usually they will be signed by the Congress Chairman. Other officers may like to thank some exhibitors personally as well, where special efforts have been made. Any sponsors should also be thanked – possibly with a note of what huge throngs of people attended the event.
- 5.6 Chairman, should, of course, make sure that his main helpers are personally thanked and publicly acknowledged, and that the general body of helpers are thanked for their efforts – in newsletter and at next public meeting.
- 5.7 Next Congress. It is essential that each Congress Committee passes on information to its successors. In particular, prices and quantities of equipment, food, etc.. Full breakdown of numbers attending, profit and loss, numbers of stewards for various purposes, any special notes regarding sponsors, problems with the venue, and so on. Make sure that they have lists of your exhibitors and lecturers.