

Position Statement

May 2025



This document aims to present a snapshot of the current situation of the Basketmakers' Association Ltd (BA) with a view to its review and development over the coming years.

Background

The BA was established in 1975 by a group of interested basketmakers and enthusiasts. This unincorporated group continued to develop its activities until its formation as a limited company in 2012. It has grown organically, responding to members' interests and the needs of basketmaking in the UK. Its success is apparent from its growing membership and its broad, high-quality offer.

However, those running the organisation feel increasingly overwhelmed, making its future precarious. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary this year with fun get-togethers, exhibitions, online talks and a big weave, it seemed time to have a rethink about where the BA is heading.

This position statement presents the findings and immediate direction for the BA based on two consultation processes:

- In summer 2024 we undertook a members' survey. We wanted to discover who our members are and what they want the BA to become over the next 50 years. 20% of the membership replied, giving us an acceptable dataset on which to base future decision-making¹. Analysis of the key findings inform this position statement, future consultations, and our plans for development. See BA Journal 188, November 2024, p30.
- A strategic development event was held in January 2025 at Waterperry House with eight of the Board of Directors present. Led by Pru Todd, the current Treasurer, the group explored fundamental principles and started to form a shared vision for the BA.

Where we are now

Current structure

The BA website states that: "Formed in 1975, the Basketmakers' Association is the UK's leading organisation for basketry and related crafts. Run by volunteers, our members are basketmakers, chair seaters, fibre artists, growers, collectors and others with an interest in basketry."

There are several layers of people involved with the BA:

1. The Board of 10 directors meet every two months. They run many of the day-to-day activities and take decisions about how the organisation works.
2. Numerous subgroups, run by volunteers, organise and administer the BA's offer to members. Some of these volunteers are former Board members. Others were recruited to roles by existing or former Board members. Some people sit on several subgroups and undertake various roles and activities across the organisation.
3. There are three volunteers who carry out vital roles and receive modest stipends for their work. These are for the Journal and website.

¹ <https://www.surveylab.com/blog/what-is-a-good-response-rate-for-a-survey/#:~:text=Generally%2C%20a%20response%20rate%20of,between%2010%25%20and%2030%25.&text=Internal%20surveys%20are%20for%20getting,job%20satisfaction%20and%20company%20culture.>

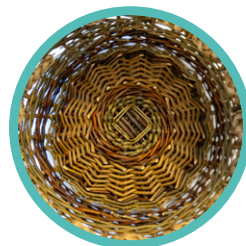
4. We recently had one paid staff member on a self-employed short-term contract to oversee the Traditional Basketry Project. Their original six-month contract was extended for a further six months using financial support from a key partner, the Worshipful Company of Basketmakers (WoCo).
5. There are currently strong and active links with two key partners – namely, WoCo and Heritage Crafts.
6. There are 1,000+ members (this number has increased quite dramatically in recent years) who access the range of services to differing degrees.

Current membership

The BA is a membership organisation. Members pay an annual subscription for access to its wide range of services.

Our members see us as a heritage and learning organisation (69%), with some role in arts and culture promotion (15%) and providing business support and developing markets (9%). This reflects the diverse nature of our membership as follows:

1. Our members range from hobbyists and novices to professional basketmakers.
2. 78% of members' income from basketry is under £15k; 63% told us that basketry contributed less than 10% of their household income; 14% earn more than half of their household income from basketry and the allied crafts.
3. Our membership age range is broad, but older people predominate, with 78% aged 50-80, 15% aged 36-50, and only 3% aged 18-35.
4. Membership length is also broad, with 48% of respondents having been members for 0-5 years, 32% 5-20 years, and 20% over 20 years.
5. People joined primarily:
 - a. for information
 - b. for education and learning
 - c. to link with other makers.
6. Interestingly, 85% of people joined through word of mouth as opposed to 15% from online searches, suggesting that our members respond to face-to-face interaction.



Current activities

The BA provides the following range of services to its 1,000+ membership. Those starred are our most highly valued services, while an exclamation mark denotes the least accessed. They could benefit from further consideration.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information and signposting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Website * b. E-News * c. Journal * d. Events listings e. Social media f. info@email enquiries support 2. Learning resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Residential schools * b. Bookshop * c. Library! d. Archive! e. Financial support in the form of bursaries! f. Online talks and events! | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Professional/business development support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Insurance * b. Professional development courses c. Exhibitions d. Bursaries! e. Makers' profiles! 4. Networking opportunities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Summer Meeting b. AGM c. Social media d. Members' directory * |
|--|--|

Furthermore, members told us that they would like more:

- a. face-to-face meet-ups with other basketmakers
- b. local and regional events

Timings and locations

The BA has a seasonal calendar with events spread out across the whole year. Many things happen online, with the Journal either posted in hard copy or sent in PDF format via email. Regular E-news emails are sent, and the website is available 24/7. The Board have reduced the number of face-to-face meetings and meet via Zoom. Board meetings are currently set for 2025, but venues are under review. In addition, there are three or four face-to-face member events in different parts of the country:

1. Spring School – Harrogate (northern England)
2. Summer Meeting – Varies
3. Autumn School – Midlands
4. AGM – October (alternates every year between face-to-face meeting – traditionally in London – and Zoom)

Looking ahead

Future direction

We want to create an association that is ready for the next 50 years. Most importantly, we want to work together so that the BA can continue its great work and do even more in the best interests of its members, sustainably. So the direction needs to be led by members and be relevant to us all and the environment that basketmakers find themselves in today. This means that we also need to talk to partner agencies, former members (to understand why they left), and other relevant key stakeholders.

As a starting point, we know from the members' survey that our members want us to:

1. remain member-led with paid staff to do key roles (155 votes)
2. continue to foster quality projects and grow steadily and within the resources we have (112 votes)
3. grow and support local development of smaller basketmakers' groups and projects (81 votes).

Furthermore, of our current Articles of Association, the following were considered to be the most important areas for us to focus on in future:

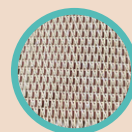
1. To promote the knowledge of basketry, chair seating and allied crafts ("The Crafts"), their making, study, collecting, teaching, and use (181 votes)
2. To publish a newsletter/journal as a means of communication between all those interested in The Crafts (137 votes)
3. To promote classes, courses, exhibitions, discussions and lectures where possible (115 votes)
4. To set and maintain standards of teaching and quality of workmanship (86 votes).

Future areas for development

Our survey asked members what they would change about the BA. Around 25% of respondents were happy with the way the BA is, 25% didn't feel able to comment, and the rest made positive suggestions for improvement or development. These covered four broad areas.

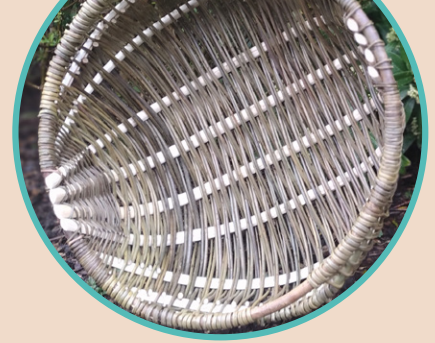
1. Diversity and inclusion

- a. Fairness and equality for members
- b. Not just baskets – more attention on chair seating and the allied crafts
- c. More focus on less experienced makers
- d. More young people as members and volunteers
- e. More men active in running the organisation
- f. More regional/country (Ireland, Scotland, Wales) activities, engagement and makers from overseas
- g. Ensure events are accessible geographically across the year



2. Networking and support

- a. Welcome new members personally
- b. More meet-ups, events, and networking opportunities
- c. Create local groups, grass roots development, willow beds
- d. Higher bursary amounts for fully funded places
- e. More public promotion, influence, raising the profile
- f. Facilitate links with the National Willow Collection and local groups



3. Services

- a. More:
 - website content
 - BA course places
 - books, tools, willow-buying opportunities
 - Journals (and in a larger format)
 - exhibition opportunities
- b. Learning development:
 - Fully funded apprenticeships
 - Work in schools
 - Teaching qualifications
 - Professional development courses
 - Courses and support on moving from hobbyist to professional
 - Reach more makers not attending courses such as:
 - o regular tips and skills focus
 - o online talks and teaching
- c. Promote, safeguard, research, and record local and traditional skills/ baskets
- d. Show relevance of sustainability and the environment, such as using natural and recycled materials
- e. Support innovation in design and contemporary work



4. Organisational management

- a. Employ paid staff for key roles
- b. Restructure, modernise, and grow with a “big family” feel
- c. Create regional subgroups
- d. More volunteering opportunities
- e. Listen and communicate better

Future vision for the next 50 years

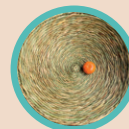
Our survey also asked members about their vision for the BA's next 50 years. We had a great response to this! Everyone's views will help us form our vision for the future. Here's a selection of answers we received when we asked what the BA should look like in 50 years' time:

- A leading international organisation representing basketmakers that promotes and celebrates sustainability, diversity, and inclusion, and excellence in skills and knowledge
- A thriving promoter of basketmakers and their crafts
- A thriving organisation, representing its diverse membership in a sensitive, caring, intelligent inclusive manner, especially inspiring 16-30 year olds to practise crafts
- The place to go to gain skills and qualifications in various techniques
- A place where [we] can meet and learn and develop
- A vibrant, social space to gain knowledge, get support, and meet other makers
- The leading professional body with a national voice that is listened to and respected
- Well supported and with a healthy diverse membership facilitating people to continue with these beautiful crafts
- The feeling of being a great big family

- A dependable, approachable resource for members in time of need and information to the public
- A promoter of excellence and training
- Supporting more people to make a career from basketmaking
- A thriving influential organisation
- A Bishopsland for our craft sector
- In 50 years' time willow makers and growers are diverse and can make a good living. Heritage baskets are still being made. Growth as a hobby and profession, with good access to local groups.

We also asked members how we can achieve these objectives. Here are the responses:

- Connect people who love basketmaking from all over the world so we feel part of a bigger community
- Continue modernising the organisation and focus on the future
- Keep skills alive and develop new ones, sustainably
- Support the craft through education, showcases and workshops
- Annual curated exhibition
- Carry on recording, reviving, and accommodating the learning of traditional skills
- Respect the environment
- Promote and educate
- Support professionals and hobbyists
- Higher profile
- Funded training
- Grow, educate, and develop so heritage is alive and well
- Create and support local groups
- Focus on the twin strands of heritage/functional crafts and original artistic works
- Appreciation of natural materials and the importance of creativity as human necessity.



What happens next?

The next step will be to all agree which things we want to achieve and how we can do this together. We've already made a great start and want to check back with members, especially those who didn't respond to last year's survey. We want to be sure that we're on the right track. Members will be engaged further over spring and summer 2025 and involved in meaningful decision-making about the future of and the running of the BA for the years to come. A final proposal/options will be presented to the AGM in October 2025 for the membership to decide how the BA moves forward.

Not everyone participates in the same way. We will use a range of different ways to engage people in this process and endeavour to be as open as possible. We will create physical and digital consultation materials for local and national face-to-face and online events from June to September 2025. We know that members responding to our online survey want to be kept informed, consulted, and involved in decision making via online methods including:

- emails
- journal
- website
- social media.

Keep your eyes peeled for the next stage of the big review....