

Our impact

2022 - 2023

We inspire local and global action to protect freshwater ecosystems through science



FRESHWATER
BIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Thank you for supporting our work | 4 |
| Our impact | 6 |
| Freshwater science | 8 |
| Citizen science | 9 |
| The Big Windermere Survey | 10 |
| Freshwater species recovery | 12 |
| What next? | 13 |
| Advocacy and learning | 14 |
| Feedback from our training courses | 17 |
| Organisational resilience | 18 |
| Moving forward | 20 |

Thank you for supporting our work

We are the voice for freshwaters and are dedicated to understanding and protecting freshwater ecosystems. We are advocates for one of the most vulnerable ecosystems on the planet.

The last year has seen the continued growth and increased resilience of the Association and, most importantly the scale and impact of our work.

Our people (staff, board and fellows) are the driving force behind this and combined with support from partners, funders and volunteers we have achieved so much in 2022/3. We supported, co-ordinated and trained over 800 volunteer citizen freshwater scientists throughout the UK. This community driven approach to evidence gathering is proving increasingly powerful in furthering our understanding of the

pressures facing freshwaters, and where action is needed.

We continue to playing our part in helping to better understand and address the impacts of the biodiversity and climate emergencies on freshwaters through our science, knowledge exchange and advocacy programmes.

I hope you enjoy our first impact report and the stories behind some of the notable successes that your support has made possible. Thank you for your commitment to protect freshwater ecosystems through science.

Simon Johnson, FBA Executive Director



Our impact

We supported, co-ordinated and trained over **800** volunteer citizen freshwater scientists throughout the UK.



Riverfly:
4,253 survey records uploaded to our database by volunteers

461 active citizen scientists

850 sites monitored across

355 rivers and **103** catchments

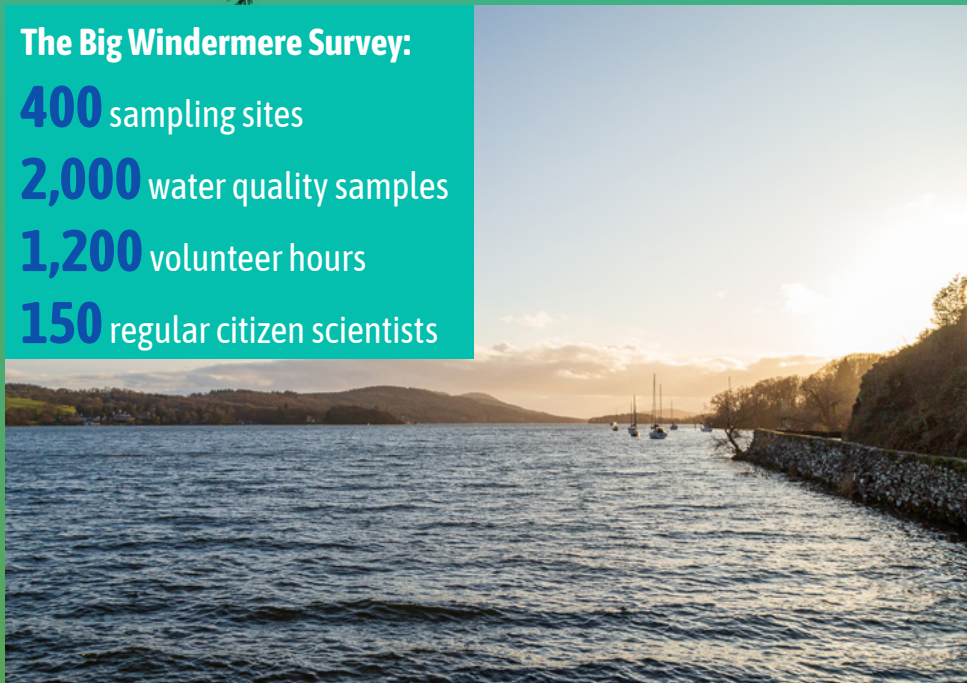
The Big Windermere Survey:

400 sampling sites

2,000 water quality samples

1,200 volunteer hours

150 regular citizen scientists



Freshwater species recovery:

45,000 pearl mussels being reared in our Species Recovery Centre

1,100 released into the River Irt, Cumbria boosting population by **400%**

Our oldest broodstock mussel is circa **130** years old!



Advocacy and learning:

450 delegates from **27** countries, **511** submitted abstracts at the Symposium of European Freshwater Sciences organised by FBA

227 participants took part in our FBA training courses

Creation of FBA's Early Career Network



Organisational resilience progress:

£48,000 operating surplus achieved

22% increase in funding

10 major collaborative programmes underway

Co-developing a Staff Wellbeing plan with colleagues

Net Zero & sustainability plan in development

Freshwater science

Since 1929, we have developing, delivering and disseminating targeted freshwater science to enable better and faster action to address risks and knowledge gaps affecting freshwater habitats and species.

Our freshwater science work is underpinned by a collaborative and networked approach. We prioritise and target issues affecting freshwater habitats and species where we can drive impact, meet the needs of stakeholders and generate multiple outcomes and benefits.

FBA is leading the development of freshwater citizen science approaches in Cumbria and throughout the UK. Citizen Science is defined as when the public participates voluntarily in the scientific process, addressing real-world problems.



Citizen science

The Riverfly Partnership is a dynamic network of organisations, representing anglers, conservationists, entomologists, scientists, water course managers and relevant authorities, working together to: protect the water quality of our rivers; further the understanding of riverfly populations; and actively conserve riverfly habitats.

“ Before I started to Riverfly I had volunteered with ARK and got involved with river restoration. Riverfly seemed a natural progression and the best way to learn more about the life in the river. To start with, it was curiosity that brought me to monitoring and wanting to do something different from anything I had done before. Over the years that has morphed into a desire to learn more about the creatures that live in the riverbed and a fascination with the idea that a riverbed has so much living in it. I have been monitoring for about seven years across seven sites, which gives an interesting insight into just how a river can be affected by the area it flows through. ”

Glyn Horn, Riverfly Citizen Scientist

Riverfly 2022/2023 in numbers:

4,253 survey records uploaded to our database by volunteers

461 active citizen scientists

850 sites monitored across **355** rivers and **103** catchments



The Big Windermere Survey

The Big Windermere Survey is an innovative community freshwater science initiative launched jointly by FBA and Lancaster University.

Together, volunteers, professional scientists and catchment managers will take Citizen Science to the next level in terms of supporting evidence lead conservation action for Windermere.

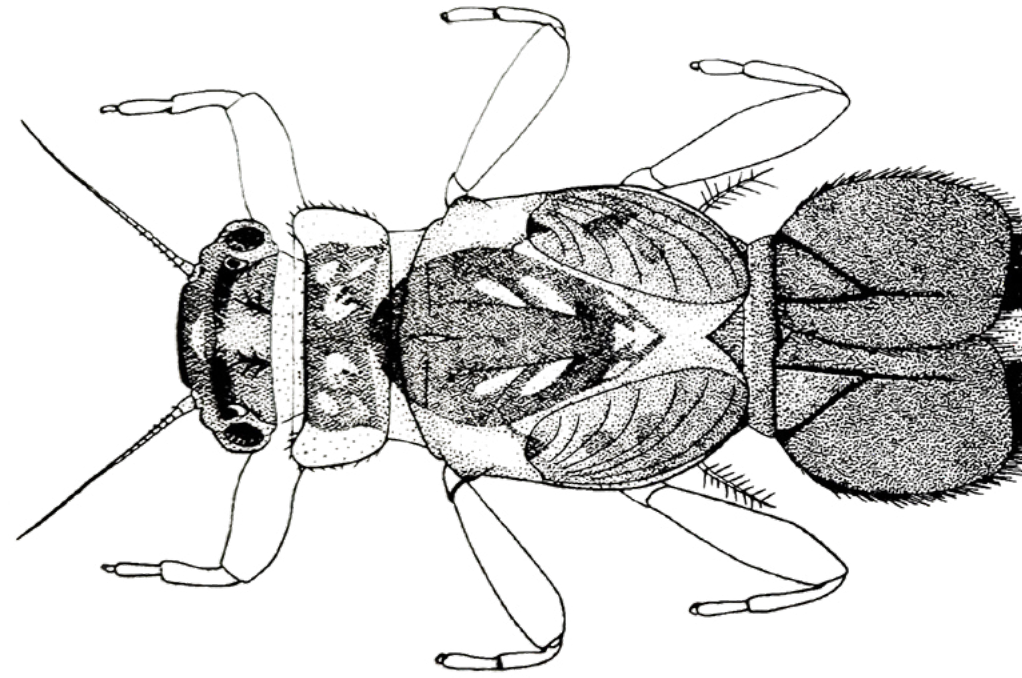
The Big Windermere survey in numbers...

400 sampling sites

2,000 water quality samples

1,200 volunteer hours

150 regular citizen scientists



I love being a Citizen Scientist, what a great opportunity The Big Windermere Survey has given us, us being myself and 11-year-old son, we are regular, year-round lake users both in and on the water so naturally have an interest in its health and of course ours!

We watch for the results with interest and while they could sometimes be better we are happy overall and pleased that we are contributing to the long term understanding of Windermere.

Ian Wood, Big Windermere Survey, Citizen Scientist



Freshwater species recovery

Since 2007 the FBA has been captive breeding one of the most endangered freshwater invertebrates in Europe, trying to save local populations in England from extinction.

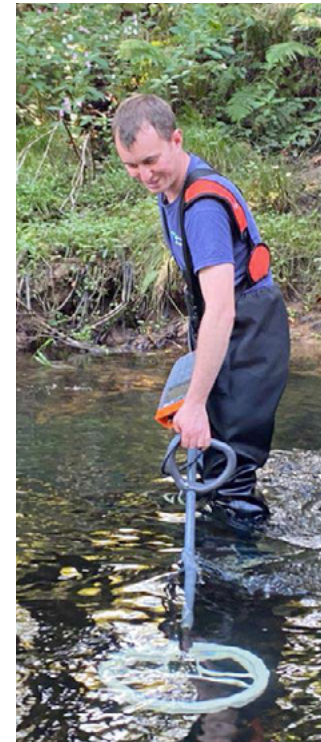
The freshwater pearl mussel is found only in very clean rivers and streams which are low in calcium and other nutrients.

Freshwater species recovery in numbers...

45,000 pearl mussels being reared in our Species Recovery Centre

1,100 released into the River Irt, Cumbria boosting population by **400%**

Our oldest broodstock mussel is circa **130 years old!**



My role within the partnership with FBA is to be the main point of contact with landowners and to bring about habitat improvement works. The releases of juvenile mussels have increased the population by over eight times and brought in much needed younger individuals into the population.

Our ultimate aim for the population is for it to be self sustaining without any intervention. There is much more work still to do and as a result we hope to continue our partnership for many more years to come.

I'm confident that mussels in the River Irt have a much a brighter future as a result of our partnership with FBA, but we must maintain momentum to make sure the population recovery can be sustained. ”

Chris West, Project Officer, West Cumbria Rivers Trust

What next?

Building upon the success of Pearl Mussel recovery programme

Developing an under-utilised site with existing infrastructure

Focusing on saveable aquatic species 'under threat of extinction'

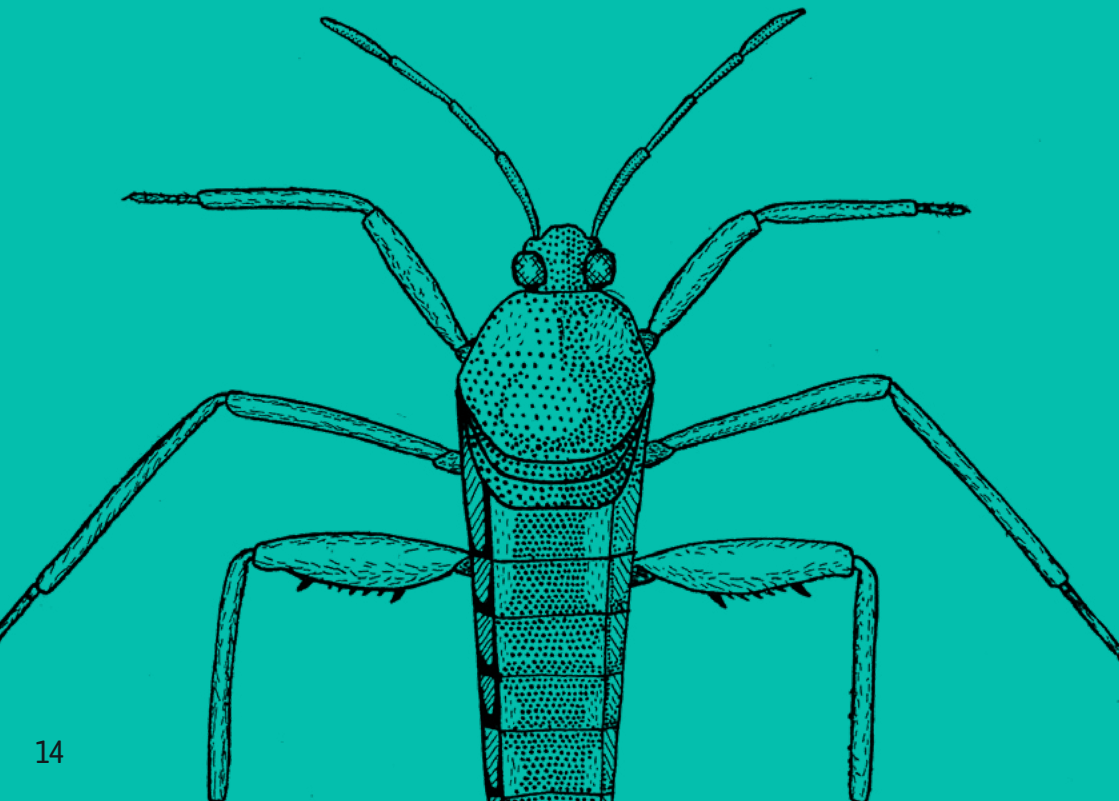
Enabling volunteers to participate in conservation action

Developing a Net Zero 'centre of excellence' operation



Advocacy and learning

We train and educate freshwater scientists, building a community to protect freshwater habitats. Our members and Fellows are at the heart of our Association, working collectively to shape the scientific agenda, influence policy and to deliver tangible change.



Our goal is to increase understanding, learning and participation in freshwater ecology. Our work is driven by our ambition to enhance the protection of these fragile freshwater ecosystems. We are independent of government, we work to inspire change, influence policy and champion the value of freshwater science with key decision makers.

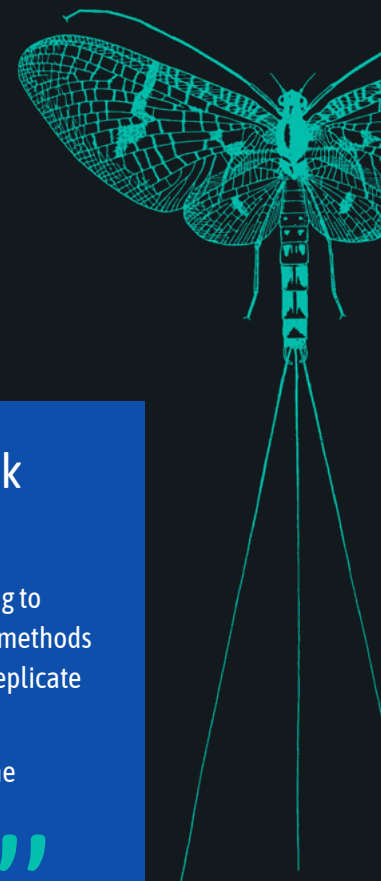
Advocacy and learning in numbers:

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227 participants took part in our FBA training courses

Creation of FBA's Early Career Network





Feedback from our training courses

“ I just wanted to say a massive thank you for a really great three days!

The course was hugely informative, and it was amazing to get to see such a variety of sites showcasing different methods of river restoration. It has given me loads of ideas to replicate on sites north of the border, think I might be busy...

It was also brilliant getting to chat to you and everyone else on the course who are all doing some really great things in the freshwater environmental sector. ”

Hamish, Tweed Forum Project Officer



“ The course was very useful; and interesting.

Great to get real experience with sampling methods and I like that the tutor made sure we had seen a range of organisms. Honestly, I don't think anything was either not useful or interesting! ”

Anonymous feedback – Sampling and ID

“ I had the great pleasure of sharing a wonderful week of science and fun in Newcastle at the 13th Symposium of European Freshwater Sciences. We, the European Federation for Freshwater Sciences want to thank the Freshwater Biological Association for all the work you did during these last two years that has made us feel so comfortable in SEFS-13.

We also would like to thank each of the 420 delegates that attended SEFS-13, for sharing your science, and also for the good moments shared in the social events! ”

Antonio Camacho, Chairman, European Federation of Freshwater Sciences



“ In my role as the representative of the Early Career Network at FBA, my goal is to help creating a vibrant community passionate about all things freshwater.

I hope to see this community growing and expanding, fostering meaningful connections among members, particularly with the FBA Fellows who are a great and unique resource and mentors for the new generation of freshwater enthusiasts. The mentorship program, an important initiative we have launched this year, links the early-career network with these FBA Fellows, offering a rich learning experience. ”

Dania Albin, Chair, Early Career Member Network



Organisational resilience

We want to maintain our reputation with our stakeholders as a professional, effective and financially viable NGO that is attractive to funders and partners and regarded as a safe pair of hands.



We will continue to develop and embed effective, evidence-driven, consistent and cost-effective operational processes and structures across the FBA.

Our three priorities for 2023/4 are:

Maintaining good governance and continually improving financial performance

Establishing a clear pathway to carbon reduction and sustainability in our operations

Develop a comprehensive approach to staff development and wellbeing

Our progress:

£48,000 operating surplus achieved

22% increase in funding

10 major collaborative programmes underway

Co-developing

a Staff Wellbeing plan with colleagues

Net Zero & sustainability plan in development

“ During the year, the trustee and management team have worked hard on implementing changes to improve the financial position of the charity. This involved numerous areas being reviewed including the charity’s cost base, project appraisals, the approach to budgeting and ultimately looking at income growth opportunities and improved core cost recovery. A part of this was setting up a Finance Working Group to manage the implementation of change and to monitor the impact of those as well as look at the long-term future of the charity. The management team’s hard work has already started to bear fruit, with improved operating results being reported in 2023. ”

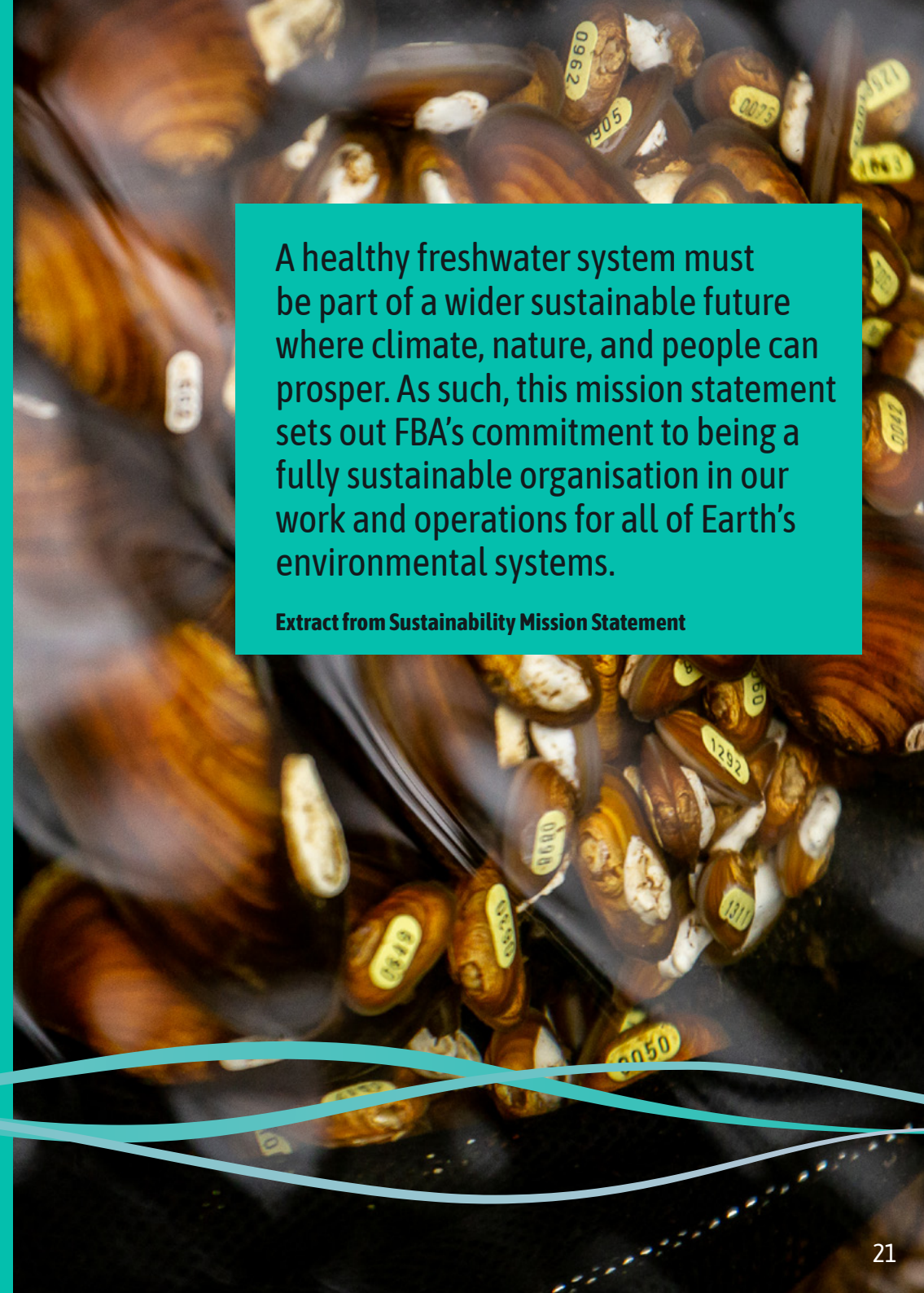
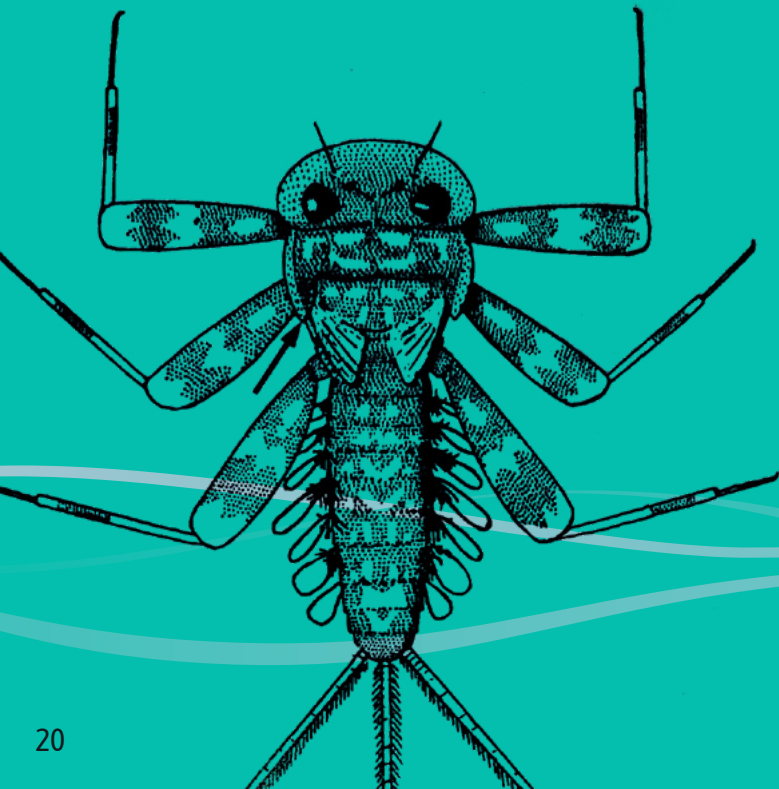
Martin Borradaile, Dodd & Co Chartered Accountants



Moving forward

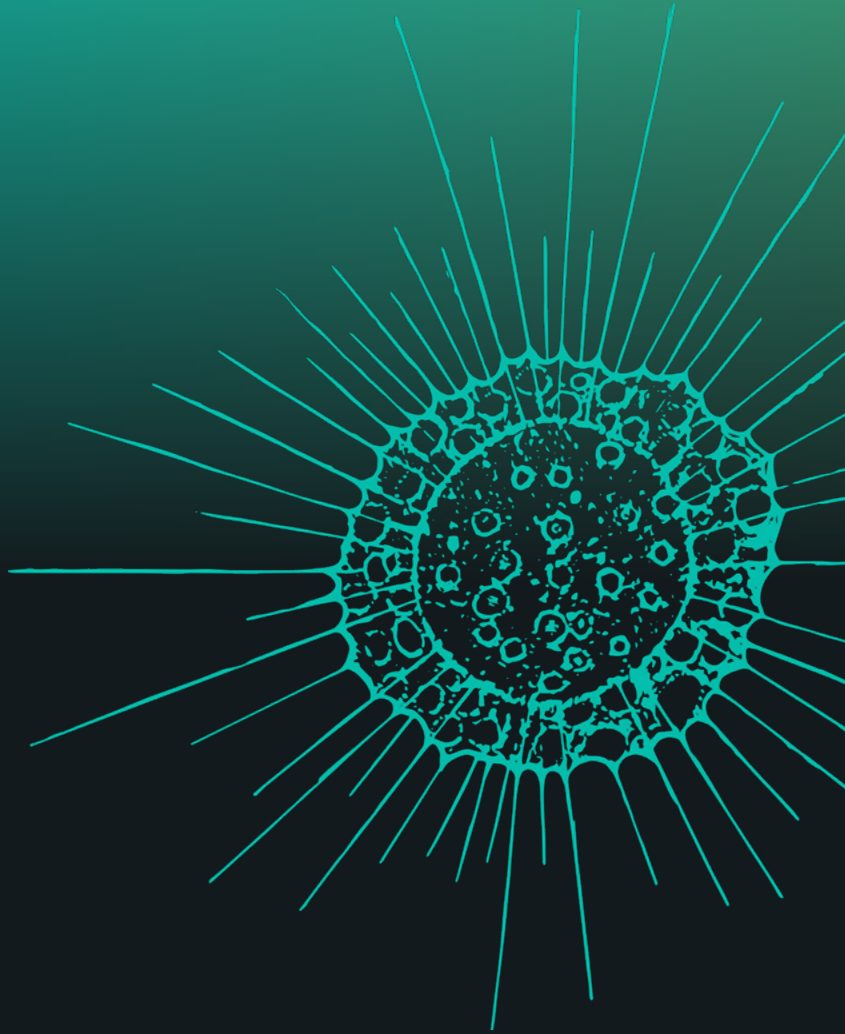
“ Moving forward into 2024, we remain as passionate and committed as ever. We will continue to deliver on the objectives in our growth plan and deliver action focused science, training and advocacy that works for freshwater ecosystems and people. ”

Simon Johnson, FBA Executive Director



A healthy freshwater system must be part of a wider sustainable future where climate, nature, and people can prosper. As such, this mission statement sets out FBA’s commitment to being a fully sustainable organisation in our work and operations for all of Earth’s environmental systems.

Extract from Sustainability Mission Statement



fba.org.uk

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