

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 20 September 2016

PRESENT: Malcolm Brown (*Chair*), Rick Brassington, Liv Carroll (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), Chris Eccles (*Vice President, Chartership*), Marie Edmonds (*Secretary, Science*), Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), Rob Larter, Jennifer McKinley, David Norbury, Colin North (*Secretary, Publications*), Sheila Peacock, Christine Peirce, Nik Reynolds, Katherine Royse, Keith Seymour (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Alex Whittaker and Michael Young (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*)

APOLOGIES: Jason Canning, Nigel Cassidy, Sarah Gordon, Tricia Henton, David Hopkins and Naomi Jordan

In attendance: Nic Bilham (Director of Policy & Communications), Neal Marriott (Director of Publishing, Library & Information Services) Jonathan Silk (Director of Finance & Operations) and Stephanie Jones (PA to Executive Secretary)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies from Jason Canning, Nigel Cassidy, Sarah Gordon, Tricia Henton, David Hopkins and Naomi Jordan were NOTED.

3. MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 22 JUNE 2016 AND 20 JULY 2016

The minutes were APPROVED. A redacted version of the minutes of the 22 June 2016 meeting will be published on the website. The minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 20 July 2016 relate to a confidential staff matter and will not be published.

SJ

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 22 JUNE 2016 MEETING

These are all in hand or covered elsewhere in the agenda with the exception of the following:-

Jonathan Silk will brief Council at their November meeting on interpreting the Society's financial statements.

JZS

Risk Register: Jonathan Silk has circulated a document to the Senior Leadership Team which will then be shared with the Finance & Planning Committee before being brought to Council.

JZS

Membership of Standing Committees: the process for appointing members of Standing Committees was discussed by the Elections Committee this morning and a paper will come back to November Council.

CN

Standing List under Regulations R/FP/5 and R/FP/6: Council approved the membership of the Standing List at their June meeting but asked the Fellowship Services Manager to review the list to ensure members are active. This item will be referred to the Professional Committee.

SJ

Review of Society's Awards: it was agreed at June Council that a Panel, chaired by Marie Edmonds, should reflect on the history of each of the Awards and Funds and

suggest more coherent criteria. It was not possible to bring this panel together in time to report to September Council but in the meantime Jonathan Silk has undertaken a review of the Society's funds and reserves and made a number of recommendations which, with the agreement of the auditors, will be taken to the Financial & Planning Committee and Council in November. Meeting of the panel to be arranged and to include Graham Goffey and Jonathan Silk so that an overarching recommendation can be brought to Council.

SJ

5. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The directors reported on activity in their departments since the last meeting of Council.

5.1 *Director of Finance & Operations (CM/38/16)*

Jonathan Silk said that the management accounts to the end of July show an improved year-end position (net surplus of £181k) due partly to an unplanned legacy receipt of £80k and also to better than expected receipts in Publishing.

Work continues on the 2017 Budget and the Finance & Planning Committee reviewed a first draft on 7 September. This currently shows a small operating loss of £54k against a target surplus of £50k - £100k but a further review of these figures is likely to produce the desired outcome. The final budget will be presented for approval to November Council.

JZS

A review of the Society Funds and Reserves has been undertaken and makes a number of recommendations that, subject to agreement with the auditors, will be taken to the Finance & Planning Committee and Council in November.

JZS

Graham Goffey said it was intended to review the pay award and appraisal processes during 2016 but circumstances had not allowed this to happen so it is necessary to use the current system. This review will take place during 2017. The September Finance & Planning Committee discussed the proposed salary increase for 2017 of 5.5%, which effectively allows for a 2% general uplift in employee salaries and bonus payments as per previous years. The Committee and Officers, who discussed it this morning, recommended its approval to Council.

Council APPROVED the proposed salary cap for 2017 of 5.5%.

Jonathan Silk said that Fellowship numbers for 2016 are slightly down against estimated numbers (12,289 actual vs 12,357 budget).

CRM/Finance system replacement:- the 'discovery' stage of the project has been progressing and should result shortly in a menu of options and associated costs for implementation, the core of which will fall within the agreed budget. Formal arrangements have been made to move technical support for the website to the CRM/Finance suppliers, Felinesoft.

There have been no health and safety incidents at Burlington House or the Publishing House since the June meeting of Council. The work on the refurbishment of the lift at Burlington House is completed.

It is a requirement that the trustees as a matter of routine should take reasonable steps to assess and mitigate any risks to the charity's activities or beneficiaries and to confirm that any serious incidents have been reported as part of the annual return. Serious incidents include loss of funds, significant sums of money or other property donated from an unknown or unverified source and unlawful activity by a member of staff or trustee. Jonathan Silk said that there were no serious incidents to report since the last meeting of Council.

Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting will be:- complete 2017 Budget

process and bring final report to FPC and November Council for approval; complete review of Society funds and reserves and obtain audit agreement; move CRM/Finance System Project into implementation stages; and complete Investment Management tendering process with a view to recommendation of the new supplier in November.

5.2 *Director of Policy & Communications (CM/39/16)*

Nic Bilham said the Year of Water conferences, London Lectures and other activities are going well. Planning for the Year of Risk in 2017 is proceeding with some interesting ideas coming forward that will be discussed by the Science Committee in October. A theme for 2018 will be agreed shortly. The Shale UK conference in Liverpool in June was very well received. The programme for the first Bryan Lovell meeting in November on '*Water, hazards and risk: managing uncertainty in a changing world*' is developing well. This is a new Flagship meeting series focusing on societal challenges.

The Society responded to the following consultations and inquiries:- BIS: TEF Year 2 technical consultation (further to previous work with University Geoscience UK on the Teaching Excellence Framework); House of Commons Science and Technology Committee: Leaving the EU – Implications for Science and Research; Energy and Climate Change Committee: Leaving the EU – Implications for UK Climate Change Policy; Energy and Climate Change Committee: Leaving the EU – Implications for UK Energy Policy; Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee: Rural Tourism in England; Environmental Audit Committee: Future of the Natural Environment after the EU Referendum; and Environmental Audit Committee: Sustainable Development Goals in the UK.

The Society participated in workshops run by the Campaign for Science and Engineering and the Science Council on the possible impacts of Brexit on UK science more widely. Work continued with representatives from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (formerly Department for Energy and Climate Change) and the National Academies to develop a mechanism to provide independent expert views on contested statements in the siting process for a radioactive waste repository.

The Society is participating in a Science Council diversity benchmarking exercise and is developing future plans for delivering its diversity, equality and inclusion objectives.

The 7th annual Geoscience Education Academy, attended by 30 geography and science teachers, was a great success and was once again kindly sponsored by BP. The Society is collaborating with the British Geological Survey on an innovative schools event for Earth Science Week, focusing on groundwater and water supply in developing countries and the UK.

Nic Bilham, who attended the 35th International Geological Congress in Cape Town with Michael Young and Edmund Nickless, chaired and presented in several sessions and panel discussions about geoethics and professional matters. The Society was also involved in sessions relating to the IUGS Resourcing Future Generations initiative, chaired by Edmund Nickless. The IUGS Council meeting took place during the conference and Edmund Nickless was elected a member of the Executive Committee for the period 2016-2020.

Nic Bilham will represent the Society at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting in Denver at the end of September.

The IT team continued to work hard to reinstate services affected by the suspension of MyGSL on the website. MyGSL login function was reinstated and as a result bookshop discounts for Fellows and other society members were once again available, as well as access to Geofacets ME. Nic Bilham has passed supervision of the technical side of the website to Jonathan Silk.

The Society welcomed over 1300 visitors to Burlington House when it participated in Open House on 17 September.

LEGO is launching LEGO City 'volcanoes' themed products at the Society on 29 September.

Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting:- completion of the 10-year strategy; planning for the Year of Risk (2017) and working on themed years legacies; continued planning for a GSL/UGUK/BGS/NERC workshop on future priorities for geoscience research.

5.3 *Director of Publishing, Library & Information Services (CM/40/16)*

Neal Marriott said work and progress on priority issues are underway and in hand at both the Publishing House and the Library. Subscriptions, the key source of income, are on track.

There were a number of key items in his report but in particular Neal Marriott highlighted:-

Designs for the upgraded Lyell Collection platform are largely agreed. The process is proving to be demanding, as expected, but the project is on track for launch in January 2017.

An increasing number of book titles are now being printed using digital presses.

There will be a review of the Society's colour charging policy.

One of the Society's key agents in North America is resigning so Anne Davenport, Head of Sales, Marketing & Distribution, will be investigating alternatives there and next year in South East Asia.

The Online Bookshop is stable after the recent round of MyGSL fixes, and there are signs of an upturn in sales.

The addition of the Africa maps module to Geofacets is experiencing further delays with Elsevier reporting copyright problems. A meeting will be held to clarify and try to progress matters.

Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting are:- finalise the 2017 Publishing and Library budgets; offsite meeting to be held with Publishing House managers to review the impact of changes in the publishing environment on our activities, and examine associated threats and risks; appoint supplier for the Dan McKenzie website and continue the work of the Plate Tectonics Archive Working Group;

6. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

6.1 *Report of the Officers' Meeting*

Malcolm Brown said the main item of business was the salary settlement for 2017 and other staff issues. Marie Burke, HR Manager, attended the meeting and reported on such items as training, the staff consultation group and the away day.

The Library Space Review was also discussed and in particular a paper that went to the Finance & Planning Committee about staff requirements for the completion of the Library inventory. Graham Goffey said this will take about a year to complete and only then will it be possible to form a clear view of the space available at Burlington House. Officers recommended to Council that two temporary Library Assistants are employed to conduct the inventory which Council APPROVED.

6.2 *Report of the Elections Committee*

The members of Council retiring at the June 2017 Annual General Meeting are:- Nigel Cassidy, Chris Eccles, David Hopkins, David Norbury and Michael Young. Potential candidates for Council, and also for President-designate, were discussed by the committee.

6.3 *Geological Society Discussion Group (CM/41/16)*

In April 2016 Council received a proposal to incorporate the Geological Dining Club as a specialist group renamed as the Geological Society Discussion Group (GSDG). The wish was to continue with the long tradition of the Dining Club but move it forward to a new era. Proposed terms of reference were taken to a Dining Club meeting on 13 July and approved. The GSDG will receive no funding from the Society. It was noted that progress made by the GSDG to widen attendance will be kept under review by the Science Committee, to which it will report, and that changes may be made in future to reflect feedback and experience of the new arrangements.

Council discussed the proposal at some length. Marie Edmonds had no objection to the formation of the GSDG but expressed concern about it being described as a 'specialist group'.

Council APPROVED the formation of the Geological Society Discussion Group as a specialist group.

NB

6.4 *Use of the Common Seal (CM/42/16)*

Regulation R/G/16 which governs the use of the Common Seal requires Fellowship Certificates, which are sealed, to be signed by the President and the Executive Secretary.

Council APPROVED the proposal that the Regulation is amended to allow the certificates to be signed by the President only for the time being.

SJ

7 REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/43/16)

The reports of the standing committees were NOTED.

8. ELECTIONS

8.1 *Fellowship (CM/44/16)*

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the OGM on 20 September 2016.

8.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/45/16)*

The applications from Fellows listed to become Chartered Geologists had been approved by the Chartership Panel and were AGREED by Council.

8.3 *Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/46/16)*

Council AGREED to elect as Candidate Fellows and Junior Candidate Fellows those applicants listed.

8.4 *European Geologists (CM/47/16)*

Council NOTED the names elected as European Geologists at the 13 September 2016 meeting of the EFG.

8.5 *Chartered Scientist (CM/48/16)*

Council AGREED to elect as Chartered Scientists those applicants listed.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 24 November 2016