

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 5 April 2017

- PRESENT: Malcolm Brown (*Chair*), Rick Brassington, Liv Carroll (*Secretary, Professional Matters*) – item CM/22/17 onwards, Nigel Cassidy, Chris Eccles (*Vice President, Chartership*), Marie Edmonds (*Secretary, Science*), Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), Sarah Gordon, Tricia Henton, David Hopkins, Naomi Jordan, Rob Larter, David Norbury, Sheila Peacock, Christine Peirce, Nik Reynolds, Katherine Royse, Keith Seymour (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), and Michael Young (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*)
- APOLOGIES: Jason Canning, Jennifer McKinley, Colin North (*Secretary, Publications*) and Alex Whittaker
- In attendance: Nic Bilham (Director of Policy & Communications), Neal Marriott (Director of Publishing), Jonathan Silk (Director of Finance & Operations) and Stephanie Jones (Administrative Secretary)
- Items 7 and 8: Doug Fenwick, Chair of the Audit Committee, and Don Bawtree, Partner and Head of Not For Profit at BDO LLP, the Society's Auditors

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies from Jason Canning, Jennifer McKinley, Colin North and Alex Whittaker were NOTED. Liv Carroll will be joining the meeting later.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2017

The minutes were APPROVED and a redacted version will be published on the website.

SJ

4. MATTERS ARISING

These are all in hand or covered elsewhere in the agenda.

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/13/17)*

Jonathan Silk highlighted the following topics from his report:-

Financial Outturn Review 2016: this was a full review of the Society's financial performance in 2016 based upon the monthly Management Accounting format as reconciled with the draft Annual Financial Statements. The objective of the report was to provide an understanding of whether the Society had performed to financial expectations for the year (or done better or worse); and the cause of significant variances and whether any lessons for the future might be learnt.

Research Grants 2017: a review panel met on 14 March to consider the research grant applications for 2017. The total amount requested by 44 applicants was

£61,085 and the panel recommended that £33,086 be awarded to 31 applicants and the Robert Scott Memorial Fund of £2,000 to one applicant. Council APPROVED the research grants.

CRM/Finance Implementation Project: the project is progressing well and Sage 200 implementation is moving into User Acceptance Testing (UAT). UAT is also progressing for CRM and the feedback from users has been positive.

CPD: the procedures and guidance around CPD have been reviewed and a number of changes proposed and a paper will be brought to June Council. Nigel Cassidy said he has received complaints about CPD with some saying that the Society does not compare favourably with other organisations, particularly for CSci. The new CRM system should address many concerns and it was agreed that an item will be placed in the next newsletter to manage expectations about the new system.

JZS

JZS

Health & Safety: there were no incidents at the Publishing House but at Burlington House a desk tipped onto a member of staff who injured her leg. Although this required a visit to hospital it did not result in any lasting injuries. The desk has been replaced. It was agreed that more attention must be given to increasing staff awareness around health and safety, and that regular reports will be given to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at their weekly meetings and to Officers. The HR Manager will shortly be circulating a revised procedure. It was suggested that a 'near miss' procedure might also be useful.

JZS

Audit Tender: the tendering process for external audit services is underway with a view to making a decision by mid-May to put to the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Council AGREED to delegate the decision on the appointment of the Society's auditors to the Audit Committee subject to a cap of £32k + £5k.

JZS

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:- continue to move the CRM/Finance System Project towards go-live; develop draft IT team and strategy; complete Audit tender; and commence review of Society cash and banking arrangements.

5.2 *Director of Policy & Communications (CM/02/17)*

The Year of Risk is well underway and planning for the Year of Resources has started. Nic Bilham highlighted the following topics from his report.

A pair of conferences in July will explore opportunities for learning about risk across sectors. Sarah Gordon is one of the convenors. The first half will be held at Imperial College and will then move to Burlington House where there will be learning about risk not only in the geosciences but also other sectors such as the military, aviation and perhaps medicine.

Coal Geology Group: Marie Edmonds said this is a constituted Specialist Group of the Society which has been dormant for a number of years. A notice was placed in December 2016 *Geoscientist* stating the intention to disband the group. There was one response which was discussed by the Science Committee and passed to the History of Geology Group and the Engineering Group should they wish to incorporate anything on the history of coal within their activities. Council AGREED that the Coal Geology Group should be disbanded. It was noted that this does not preclude the organising of conferences or other activities relating to coal.

NB

The Society has responded to the following consultations and inquiries:-

- Northern Ireland Government: Review of Permitted Development Rights for Mineral Extraction (February 2017)
- Welsh Government Natural Resources Policy Development (February 2017)
- House of Commons Science and Technology Committee: Inquiry into Research Integrity (March 2017)
- CBI Minerals Group & Mineral Products Association: Consultation on Proposed UK Minerals Strategy (April 2017)

A major response is being drafted to the *DBEIS: Consultation on Industrial Strategy (April 2017)* and consideration is being given not only to submitting this response but also to producing a report which will complement the Future Science report.

Future Science: a vision for the next 25 years was held at Burlington House on 21-22 February jointly by the Society, BGS, UGUK and RAS and attracted senior academics from a wide range of geoscience specialisms. It was a very good meeting and a major step in the effort to re-engage with the academic community. Work is underway to issue a report in mid-2017 setting out a shared vision of research priorities to funders and other decision-makers.

Honorary Fellowship: the External Relations Committee commended the nominations of Markku Iljina and Vitor Correia for Honorary Fellowship. Council AGREED that these nominees will be asked if they will accept the honour before it is advertised in *Geoscientist* and formal election takes place. Nic Bilham reminded Council that anyone is free to put forward nominations.

SJ

Diversity, Equality and inclusion: this continues to be a priority for the Society and is included in the new Strategy. Tricia Henton and George Jameson will be meeting to develop plans which will come to the June meeting of Council. Amongst other activities, the Society is planning an event to support university departments applying for Athena SWAN accreditation.

NB

Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting:- planning for the Year of Risk (2017) and Year of Resources (2018); Future Science meeting outputs; initiating review of accreditation scheme; continuing work on the business plan; and attending the EGU General Assembly.

5.3 *Director of Publishing (CM/15/17)*

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

The subscription renewals environment continues to be challenging, especially with respect to the corporate markets, but overall subscription sales receipts are just ahead of the same point in 2016.

GeoScienceWorld have announced they are leaving HighWire and placing their contract for journal hosting with Silverchair. The launch of the new sites will take place at the end of August and the contract with HighWire will end 31 December 2017. This presents a number of challenges to the Society and there is a lot of work to be done over the summer. The situation will be closely monitored and put on the Risk Register. The Society will retain HighWire as the host for the Lyell Collection.

Lucy Bell joined the Society on 3 April as the new Production Editor for Petroleum Geoscience to replace Sally Oberst. She is a Geology graduate with several years' experience working as a Production Editor at the Institute of Physics.

The Society has published the Journal of Micropalaeontology, which is owned by the Micropalaeontological Society (TMS), for many years. At the end of 2016 TMS

appointed a new President and Chief Editor and with that has come change. They were very complimentary about the work of the Society and Sarah Gibbs, Senior Production Editor, but they now wish to publish on an Open Access basis. They will be moving publication to Copernicus and the Society will work with them to ensure a smooth transition.

Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting are:- Neal Marriott and Sarah Gibbs to visit GeoscienceWorld and Silverchair to plan for migration and QA; continue work for launch of new HighWire platform for the Lyell Collection; establish new Production Editor; discuss Publishing House review with key staff and Officers and commence development of publishing strategy and business plan; continue work on the Library audit; and ensure the soft launch of the Plate Tectonics Archive website.

6. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

6.1 *Result of ballot for Council*

Malcolm Brown reported the results of the advisory ballot conducted by Electoral Reform Services. 1962 valid votes were cast for the position of President-designate. 1829 voted in favour of Nick Rogers' name going forward to the formal ballot at the AGM. 2017 votes were cast for the remaining four vacancies on Council. This compared with 1718 votes in 2016, which is a continued and encouraging growth of involvement by Fellows. This must be due at least in part to the use of the Electoral Reform Service system, which is a very simple and efficient process. There were two invalid votes. Candidates will be informed of the outcome following Council. The names of the successful will go forward for formal election at the AGM on 7 June. Malcolm Brown expressed his thanks to all those willing to stand for Council.

SJ

6.2 *Report of the Officers' Meeting*

The main items of business were staff related and in particular the process for the pay and reward review.

6.3 *Options for the future use of the Fellows' Room (CM/16/17)*

A Burlington House Space Review is currently underway in order to provide for an informed and evidence-based approach to future planning for the use of the building. The review is looking at all parts of Burlington House, recording current usage and noting limitations and opportunities in relation to potential future use. Staff will be invited to contribute to the exercise and the Review will be available for the incoming Executive Secretary to use in advising Council on medium to long term developments.

The Fellows' Room has been occupied by the Royal Academy (RA) since early July 2016 under a series of short term arrangements which were initially regarded as being for around 13 months in total. The RA would like to prolong the arrangement a little longer, which requires Council approval, so an early view of how the Society may wish to use this space is needed.

Three possible options have been identified:-

- i. Reversion to Fellows' Room;
- ii. Flexible, multi-purpose space; or
- iii. Office accommodation for GSL staff

The Library Users' Group has been consulted and there was a consensus in favour of option ii with the room being returned for the Society's use prior to *Plate Tectonics at 50* in early October.

Council AGREED that the Fellows' Room should be vacated by the RA and returned to the Society for its use from late September 2017.

JJS

There was also agreement that the space should be flexible and multi-purpose. It was agreed that its use, and possible re-naming, links to both the wider review of the building and the fundraising programme. A paper on the Space Review will come to June Council.

GG

6.4 *Review of Society Awards and Funds (CM/17/17)*

While making an amendment to the Regulation governing the Society's Awards in November 2015, Council requested that the history of the Funds and the President's Award was researched to create an opportunity for reflection on broadening the individual descriptions for some/all of the Funds and the President's Award so that they better reflect the modern geoscience landscape. The opportunity was taken to review all the Society Awards and Funds. Marie Edmonds chaired a panel comprising Andy Fleet, Ted Nield, David Shilston, Sarah Day and Jonathan Silk. The panel suggest that the Awards are categorised into:-

- i. Career Achievement
- ii. Service and/or Outreach Awards
- iii. Mid-career Awards
- iv. Early Career Awards

They also amended and corrected some of the descriptions with information provided from the archive by Caroline Lam, Archivist, and with the assistance of Wendy Cawthorne in the Library.

Council AGREED with the changes to the Awards descriptions which will be incorporated with Regulation R/G/14.

SJ

Marie Edmonds said there is a wider piece of work to be done with regard to the monetary value of some of the Awards particularly to encourage nominations of young geoscientists. This is connected with the support of Research Grants and engaging with academics. The Science Committee will be taking this forward over the next six months.

ME

Mike Young said it is still in the early stages of discussion but there is the possibility of a new medal for mid career work in the field. It will be self-funding.

6.5 *Fundraising – Philanthropy Company project (CM/18/17)*

The Philanthropy Company was commissioned in January 2017 to prepare a report on the Society's potential for fundraising from all sources, including high-value philanthropic giving, 'grass roots' member giving, corporate sponsorship and grant-making foundations. About 30 people have been interviewed by Yvonne Rainey, Director of the Philanthropy Company. Her report, including recommendations, is expected by the end of April.

As well as identifying interviewees, Officers and the directors provided input to a document, presented here, which sets out initial thinking about objectives and potential projects for fundraising to inform Yvonne Rainey's work. The document was NOTED.

7. REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (CM/19/17)

Doug Fenwick, Chair of the Audit Committee, and Don Bawtree, Partner and Head of Not For Profit at BDO LLP, the Society's auditors, joined the meeting.

Doug Fenwick gave his report and said the Audit Committee met with the Society's auditors and staff on 16 March.

The Society is tendering for its audit services. This is good practice and normal discipline and no reflection on BDO. It was last done three years ago when it was decided not to tender but to continue with BDO. The recommendation will be ready

for approval at this year's AGM.

There has been good progress on the Risk Register in terms of its presentation and the Audit Committee will review how well it is working at their October meeting.

Don Bawtree said there were some unadjusted audit differences and it had been agreed with Jonathan Silk that these will be adjusted in 2017. The auditors and Jonathan Silk have been working together to reconcile various bank accounts as closely as possible. Where this has not been possible it has been agreed with the Audit Committee that they will be written off.

The Committee formally recommends that Council accepts the 2016 Audited Accounts.

8. 2016 AUDITED ACCOUNTS (CM/20/17)

Jonathan Silk said the Accounts were considered by the Finance & Planning Committee (FPC), and the Audit Committee who both recommend acceptance. The Society returned a surplus of income over expenditure of just under £270k. The net movement in funds was £1.122m compared with £235k in 2015. The main reasons for this increase were foreign exchange rate gains and the large net gains on the investment portfolio just before the year end. These were paper gains.

The Geological Trading Company returned to profit and donated a small residual amount to the Society.

Don Bawtree said he was able to sign an unqualified audit report. He said that, if they were not re-appointed, BDO had enjoyed working with the Society for a number of years. He cautioned keeping a close watch on the regulatory regime and in particular mentioned the 'official warning' letters that can be sent to trustees at their home addresses. Charities are increasingly in the media spotlight and trustees must remain aware of this.

Council formally APPROVED:-

- i. the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2016 which were signed by the President and Treasurer; and
- ii. the letter of representation which was signed by the President.

9. FELLOWSHIP FEES FOR 2018 (CM/21/17)

Council agreed in April 2015 that Fellowship fee increases would be linked to the rate of Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) as measured in February of each year.

The increase for 2016 and 2017 was 0%, based upon low CPI rate increases in January of each year. Last year it was indicated that rates would almost certainly have to increase for 2018, possibly over the rate of inflation.

The FPC considered a range of options for Fellowship Fees. Inflation is starting to rise again in the UK economy and as at February 2017 CPI stood at 2.3% (as opposed to 0.3% in both January 2016 and 2015). Looking almost a year ahead to 2018, FPC considers it is likely, with the effects of Brexit starting to be felt within the economy, that the rate of inflation will climb higher and that the costs of providing services to Fellows in 2018 will reflect this. In making its recommendation, therefore, FPC is also minded that the fee should cover the cost of services provided.

FPC recommends, therefore, an average increase to Fellowship fees of 2.9%, being the CPI increase of 2.3% for 2017 plus the two 0.3% increases deferred from 2015 and 2016. For UK Fellows in the 34 to 59 age band this equates to a rise of £6 for the year, from £198 to £204. The rates for Junior Candidate Fellows and Candidate

Fellows remain unchanged at £10 and £15 respectively.

There was full discussion particularly about fees of other organisations and benchmarking. It is recognised that there is important work to be done on marketing the Society and its benefits and reminding Fellows of these benefits. It was agreed that an article should go into *Geoscientist* before September.

Council APPROVED the proposed increase in Fellowship fees for 2018. The proposal will be published in May *Geoscientist* and go forward for adoption at the AGM on 7 June.

10. STRATEGY AND BUSINESS PLAN (CM/22/17)

At its meeting on 1 February, Council approved the Society's strategy for 2017-2027. Design of the public strategy documents is underway, and a copy of the A6 concertina handout will be sent to every Fellow with the May issue of *Geoscientist*.

In agreeing the strategy, Council also noted a scheme for its implementation alongside 'business as usual' activity. The main vehicle for this will be a three-year rolling business plan of which Council will have ownership.

The FPC will take delegated responsibility for the development, maintenance and delivery of the business plan, working with the other standing committees and the staff. It is intended to bring the first working version to the June meeting of Council.

NB

Nic Bilham outlined the initial thinking about the business plan, the points considered by FPC and the main conclusions of this discussion. The new Executive Secretary will play a leading role in the development, maintenance and delivery of the business plan and this will be an early priority for SLT to discuss on his arrival. In addition there will be staff meetings in Bath and London on 12 and 15 May.

Progress will be very closely monitored by the SLT and it will be a standing item on the agenda for all committees. It was noted that it is not expected that this will be a routine item for FPC and/or Council but it was suggested that there is a rolling programme of Officers reporting to Council on annual objectives once a year with SLT reporting in between as part of their standing reports.

A key requirement is to clearly identify ownership, responsibilities and accountabilities for strategic projects. There is a lot of work to be done to allocate work between the standing committees and it was suggested that this is done at the September residential.

With regard to new ideas, these must relate back to the strategy and be fitted into an individual committee's work. Priorities to be clearly defined so that when new opportunities are identified they can be fitted into the plan.

11. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/23/17)

The reports of the standing committees were NOTED.

Council AGREED a minor change to the Code of Publishing Ethics (the addition of the words in italics): 4.4 Reviewers should treat the manuscript *and their review* as confidential.

12. ELECTIONS

12.1 Fellowship (CM/24/17)

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the OGM on 1 February 2017.

12.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/25/17)*

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

12.3 *Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/26/17)*

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

12.4 *European Geologists (CM/27/17)*

Council NOTED the names elected as European Geologists at the 16 March meeting of the European Federation of Geologists.

12.5 *Chartered Scientist (CM/28/17)*

Council AGREED to elect as Chartered Scientist the applicant listed.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none except to thank those members of Council who will be standing down at the AGM for their service:-

Nigel Cassidy
Chris Eccles
David Hopkins
David Norbury
Michael Young

Chris Eccles thanked Malcolm Brown and Graham Goffey for the work they had done for the Society during the period without an Executive Secretary.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21 June 2017