

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 1 February 2017

PRESENT: Malcolm Brown (*Chair*), Rick Brassington, Chris Eccles (*Vice President, Chartership*), Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), David Hopkins, Naomi Jordan, David Norbury, Colin North (*Secretary, Publications*), Sheila Peacock, Christine Peirce, Nik Reynolds, Keith Seymour (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Alex Whittaker and Michael Young (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*)

APOLOGIES: Jason Canning, Liv Carroll (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), Nigel Cassidy, Marie Edmonds (*Secretary, Science*), Sarah Gordon, Tricia Henton, Rob Larter, Jennifer McKinley and Katherine Royse

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 (Administrative Secretary)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies from Jason Canning, Liv Carroll, Nigel Cassidy, Marie Edmonds, Sarah Gordon, Tricia Henton, Rob Larter, Jennifer McKinley and Katherine Royse were NOTED.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2016

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

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4. MATTERS ARISING

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

- 4.1 *Review of Society's Awards*: Jonathan Silk said that Marie Edmonds chaired a meeting on 31 January attended by Andy Fleet, David Shilston, Ted Nield and Sarah Day. Sarah Gordon also contributed. There were a number of suggestions made and Marie Edmonds will draft a paper to come to Council. It is hoped that the revisions will be in place for the 2018 Awards round.

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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/01/17)*

Jonathan Silk said preparation of the annual accounts for 2016 is underway and indicate an outturn close to original budget.

The Management Accounts to the end of November 2016 show a forecast year-end position of £173k surplus against an original budget for the year of £193k surplus.

The Finance & Planning committee reviewed the financial outturn for the year at their meeting on 18 January. The final version will be presented to Council for approval in

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April to accompany the financial statements.

CRM/Finance Implementation Project: the 'Discovery' stage has been completed and the project is now entering the implementation stage which will be in two phases:- Sage implementation and CRM/Web portal. The costs, which are still within budget, have increased by around £50k primarily from the additional complication of working with the existing website and the decision to implement finance in two stages.

Amendment to Regulation R/FP/3 – Rules for Candidate Fellows and Junior Candidate Fellows: in November 2016 Council approved in principle a proposal to extend eligibility for Candidate Fellow status for up to one membership year following graduation. The current scheme allows Candidate Fellows 12 months from qualification to upgrade, but not to renew. The Professional Committee proposed that Candidate Fellows are allowed to renew for the following calendar year (in addition to the existing route to upgrade) giving them more time to seek graduate employment. Council APPROVED the amendment to Regulation R/FP/3.

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The Careers Days held in November at Nottingham and Edinburgh had lower turnouts than expected although travel disruption was a contributory factor for the Nottingham event. Feedback from both events was positive. The Professional Committee is discussing how to make the event more attractive.

The Corporate Affiliate committee has discussed ways of developing engagement with the small but growing Forensic Geoscience community as well as the established Petroleum industry. One suggestion, yet to be developed, is a new class of affiliate membership to attract individuals or small consultancies.

Council NOTED that there was a health and safety incident at the Publishing House when a member of staff twisted his arm lifting a box in the warehouse. This has not resulted in any lasting injury and consideration has been given to further care in the handling of items in the warehouse.

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 2016 Financial Year and prepare Financial Statements for approval; continue to move the CRM/Finance System Project through implementation stages; develop draft IT Strategy; and prepare for Audit tender in April 2017.

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

Nic Bilham said the Year of Risk is well underway. Brexit continues to pose considerable uncertainty. Nic Bilham highlighted the following topics from his report.

The first Bryan Lovell meeting in November on 'Water, hazards and risk. Managing uncertainty in a changing world' was a great success. Speakers included Professor Ian Boyd, Chief Scientist at DEFRA. A briefing note is being prepared and a risk communications toolkit will follow.

Three major conferences are planned as part of the Year of Risk, together with other related events and activities. These include a conference in July on opportunities for learning about risk across sectors, partnering with the Institute of Risk Management.

The London Lectures programme for 2017 opened with a lecture by Malcolm Brown

on risk in oil and gas exploration. He will be giving this talk to a number of Regional Groups.

The Society is hosting 'Future Science: a vision for the next 25 years' on 21-22 February. This is a joint initiative with the British Geological Survey, University Geoscience UK and the Royal Astronomical Society and will involve representatives of other institutions as well as academics from across geoscience. It is aimed at developing a shared vision as the basis for representations to research funders and decision-makers and a writing group will convene on the afternoon of the second day for this purpose. Council members were asked to advise Nic Bilham if they wished to participate.

Council

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

- House of Commons Science and Technology Committee: Inquiry into Ocean Acidification (January 2017)

and is planning or considering responding to the following:-

- Northern Ireland Government: Review of Permitted Development Rights for Mineral Extraction (February 2017)
- Labour Party Industrial Strategy Consultation (February 2017)
- House of Commons Science and Technology Committee: Inquiry into Research Integrity (March 2017) (possibly with University Geoscience UK)
- HEFCE: Consultation on second Research Excellence Framework (March 2017) (with University Geoscience UK)
- DBEIS: Consultation on Industrial Strategy (April 2017)

The Education Committee will be meeting on 2 February and Council will be updated on their activities as the year continues. One of the items the Committee will be discussing is its terms of reference. Amy Ball joined the Education team fairly recently as Education Assistant and is making a significant contribution.

A work plan for diversity, equality and inclusion matters is in preparation and will be brought to April Council for information. The Society took part in the launch of the joint Science Council and Royal Academy of Engineering Diversity and Inclusion Progression Framework. George Jameson, External Relations Officer, spoke at the event. A meeting took place with the UK representatives of the International Association for Geoscience Diversity (IAGD) to discuss possible Associated Society status and the establishment of a UK chapter of the IAGD.

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Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting:- planning for the Year of Risk (2017) and Year of Resources (2018); Future Science meeting and outputs; communication and implementation of the new strategy, and initiating work on the business plan.

5.3 *Director of Publishing, Library & Information Services (CM/03/17)*

Neal Marriott said there are challenges in renewing subscriptions in the current climate but revenues to date are strong, assisted by favourable exchange rates from overseas buyers.

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

Work on the Lyell platform upgrade continues but there has recently been a major slippage which is being investigated.

Four book titles have been published so far this year, and there are likely to be 24/25 during the year. Thirty-one book titles are currently in various stages of production.

The revised Open Access policy which was agreed by Council in November 2016 will be implemented on 1 February and applied to papers submitted after that date.

Arrangements are in hand to replace Sally Oberst, Production Editor *Petroleum Geoscience*, who has managed the journal for over a decade.

Subscription sales revenue for 2017, as of end 2016, stood at £1.002million, some 17% ahead of the same point last year. The increase is due in part to exchange rate gains. Chevron, one of the Society's largest subscribers, has cancelled its Lyell Collection subscription. Our North American agent is in contact with them to see if we can service their needs in a different way. The BG Group subscription was also lost as the company became part of Shell. On the positive side, there are discussions with library consortia in North America, Germany and elsewhere.

The Plate Tectonics Archive website will be launched ahead of the *Plate Tectonics at 50* conference in the autumn.

The project with Elsevier to integrate Map Library content into Geofacets continues although there are copyright issues which require resolution before content is made available to subscribers. Colin North said this project demonstrates how difficult it is to monetise the Society's collections.

Principal activities prior to the next Council meeting are:- Continue work for launch of new HighWire platform; work closely with developers to ensure timely launch of Plate Tectonics Archive website; recruit Production Editor to take responsibility for *Petroleum Geoscience*; complete ten-year review of Publishing House activity in order to form a foundation for the development of a publishing strategic plan.

6. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

6.1 *Recruitment of the Executive Secretary (CM/04/17)*

The process is complete and Richard Hughes has accepted the position. Malcolm Brown thanked all those Officers and members of Council who had been involved in the process and Marie Burke, HR Manager.

6.2 *Report of the Officers' Meeting*

Malcolm Brown said the main item of business was looking at the terms of reference for Marie Burke's tasks. It is hoped this will be ready for Richard Hughes' arrival.

6.3 *Report of the Elections Committee*

In spite of best endeavours there is only one nomination for President-designate. Although this is allowed under the Regulation it is not ideal and the Elections Committee will consider how to improve identification of potential candidates in the future.

There are nine nominations for the remaining four vacancies. One of these has been endorsed by Council – John Talbot who has agreed, if elected, to take on the post of Vice President Chartership.

Electoral Reform Services will be running the election. Voting information will be despatched by email and post on or around 13 February. The closing date is 31 March.

(post meeting note: two Secretaries are standing down at the June 2017 Annual General Meeting - Michael Young, Secretary, Foreign & External Affairs and Liv Carroll, Professional Secretary. Sarah Gordon and Katherine Royse respectively have agreed to take on these roles. Council AGREED by email to these nominations)

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7. STRATEGY 2017-2027 (CM/05/17)

Nic Bilham presented a revised version of the strategy which has been the subject of extensive discussion and repeated revision since the November meeting of Council. He thanked Officers, other Council members, fellow Directors and other staff for their input.

The strategy will comprise:-

- Short public version (which will be distributed as a mini handout);
- Long public version (primarily for online use, but probably with a few printed copy to distribute to key stakeholders); and
- Internal working version (includes notes to feed into the business plan, which will take forward the strategy, and other implementation documents)

It is proposed to bring the business plan to June Council for approval. A report on work in progress will be made in April.

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Key points which were noted were:-

- 'Stepping stones' have been removed from the two public versions and the content from these sections has been moved into the implementation notes in document 3 as 'early steps to implementation';
- The new strapline 'Serving science, profession and society' is the main title of the strategy;
- The fundamental underpinning role of our science base across all the Society's activities is brought out more strongly; and the interdependence of the three pillars of the strapline is reflected in the purpose and values and runs throughout the strategy;
- There were a number of alternatives suggested for 'interest in the physical world' such as 'interest in the Earth' or 'interest in our planet' but it was pointed out that these exclude the science of other planets.
- Staff were updated on progress at the December staff meeting and the revised version was circulated to them. This brought a number of supportive comments and no changes to the public documents.

Some suggestions were made and Nic Bilham asked Council to let him know today if they had any further comments on the text which he would then circulate but not for further comment.

Council

Council APPROVED the public versions of the strategy for 2017-2027, subject to agreement by email of any final amendments to the text.

8. PROPOSAL FOR THE SOCIETY TO APPLY TO THE ENGINEERING COUNCIL FOR A LICENCE TO AWARD CHARTERED ENGINEER (CM/06/17)

A paper was presented to Council in June 2016 outlining the advantages of the Society awarding Chartered Engineer status. Council asked a sub group of the Chartership committee to develop a full proposal to take to the Chartership committee and the Professional committee before bringing a final version to Council for approval. Chris Eccles said both committees discussed the proposal at their meetings on 24 January and were supportive.

Council APPROVED in principle the proposal that the Society offers Chartered Engineer status. It will be further developed and the final details brought back to Council.

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9. UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIETY'S FINANCES

Jonathan Silk gave a presentation to assist Council members with interpreting the Society's annual report and financial statements.

10. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/07/17)

The reports of the standing committees were NOTED.

11. ELECTIONS

11.1 *Fellowship (CM/08/17)*

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

11.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/09/17)*

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

11.3 *Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/10/17)*

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

11.4 *Chartered Scientist (CM/11/17)*

Council AGREED to elect as Chartered Scientist the applicant listed.

11.5 *European Geologists (CM/12/17)*

Council NOTED the names elected as European Geologists at the 24 January meeting of the European Federation of Geologists.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 *Contaminated Land Specialist Group*

Nik Reynolds said the first meeting of this group is the same day as Professional Committee – 29 March – and members of Council would be most welcome.

Council

12.2 *Travel arrangements to the USA*

Sheila Peacock asked if the Society is intending to make a statement about the US President's Executive Order regarding travel to the USA. Nic Bilham said some points have been drawn together and sent to Malcolm Brown and Michael Young for comment. Council will be kept informed. Sheila Peacock suggested a review of the Risk Register to see if the travel ban impacts on the Society's activities.

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13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

5 April 2017