

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 17 April 2019

PRESENT: Nick Rogers (*Chair*), Andrew Bloodworth, John Booth (*Vice President*), Lesley Dunlop, Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), Sarah Gordon (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Jim Griffiths, Chris King, Rob Larter, Colin North (*Secretary, Publications*), Sheila Peacock, Nik Reynolds (*Vice President*), Katherine Royse (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), Keith Seymour (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Jessica Smith, Rob Strachan, John Talbot (*Vice President, Chartership*) and Alex Whittaker (*Secretary, Science*)

APOLOGIES: Naomi Jordan, Bryne Ngwenya and Helen Smyth

ABSENT: Tom Backhouse and Jason Canning

In attendance: Richard Hughes (*Executive Secretary*), Neal Marriott (*Director of Publishing*), Alex McPherson (*Director of Finance & Operations*), Alicia Newton (*Director of Science & Communications*) and Stephanie Jones (*Administrative Secretary*)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Sheila Peacock is a member of the Council of the Royal Astronomical Society and may be conflicted on matters relating to the Burlington House lease and publishing. She will leave the room when Open Access is discussed. Richard Hughes said he chairs the GeoScienceWorld board but does not believe there is any conflict. Jessica Smith said two of the candidates for election as Chartered Geologists are known to her.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies NOTED.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2019

The minutes were APPROVED. A version of the minutes will be published on the website, with an explanation if items have been removed or reduced.

SJ

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 *Item 6.2: Specialist & Regional Groups contact details, banking arrangements and training for Treasurers* – Alex McPherson will take this forward. There is a specific item on fraud at the May meeting of Specialist Groups.

AMc

5. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

5.1 *Result of ballot for Council*

Nick Rogers reported the results of the advisory ballot conducted by Electoral Reform Services. 2055 valid votes were cast for the election of the President-designate and 2040 valid votes for the remaining five vacancies which compared with 2062 in 2018. Candidates have been informed of the outcome and the names of the successful will go forward for formal election at the Annual General Meeting on 6 June.

5.2 *Report of Officers' Meeting*

Officers met this morning and the discussion was staff-related. The revised employee benefits package was approved which was the subject of consultation with staff.

- 5.3 *Honorary Fellow nomination (CM/15/19)*
 The External Relations Committee commended the nomination of Prof Dr Khin Zaw for Honorary Fellowship. Council AGREED to ask this nominee if he would accept the honour before advertising it in *Geoscientist* followed by formal election at an OGM. SJ
- Sarah Gordon said the External Relations Committee is currently reviewing Honorary Fellowship status and a paper will come to Council in due course. SG
6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS
- 6.1 *Director of Science & Communications (CM/18/19)*
 Alicia Newton said that George Jameson, Executive Officer, is reviewing the process for the Society's Awards with an ambition to see the diversity of nominations for the medals and funds increase.
- An analysis of the gender breakdown of Society Awards was presented to the EGU annual conference in Vienna.
- There were sixteen applications from across the UK for the Hazel Prichard bursary which was awarded to Joana Cabre, MSc student at St Andrews.
- The Research Grants panel met on 8 March and reviewed 28 applications totalling just over £51k for the various Society research funds, slightly less than 2018. Grants were agreed for 21 applicants totalling £31,550.
- The pilot of the Primary School Geoscience Education Academy was held on 15 February exclusively for Primary Science Teaching Trust Fellows. Lots of useful feedback was gained about how the Society might offer training to primary teachers later this year and into 2020.
- The Schools Geology Challenge Final took place on 28 March with 11 teams (around 70 sixth formers) gathering at Burlington House from all over the country. Altrincham Grammar School (representing the NW Regional Group) took home the trophy. Feedback is still being analysed and the Society will also look at how schools where there is no Geology teacher can participate.
- Plans are underway to mark the 100th anniversary of female fellowship. These include a History of Geology Group (HOGG) conference on 21 May, the anniversary date, at which Robbie Gries, President of the Geological Society of America, will speak. The Society will also be collaborating with HOGG on an oral history project to capture the memories of some of our long standing female members.
- Sir David Attenborough Hon FGS attended the launch of a new publication *William Smith's Fossils Reunited* on 22 March, Smith's 250th birthday. An interview with Sir David on the importance of William Smith to the history of geoscience is forthcoming in *Geoscientist*.
- In response to a request from Graham Goffey, Alicia Newton will ask the Head of Events to produce a matrix showing income and attendance at Society events. AN
- Jessica Smith asked about the Code of Conduct and its circulation to the Regional Groups. Alicia Newton will speak to the Head of Fellowship Services. AN
- 6.2 *Director of Publishing (CM/19/19)*
 Neal Marriott reported on progress with annual subscriptions where there is a reduction on this time last year because of the shortcomings of the CRM system. Substantial progress has been made with major subscribers.

The number of books entering production has begun to slow because of the commissioning shortfall from 2017; however, increased commissioning through the second half of 2018 has resulted in nine book proposals accepted in the first quarter of 2019 and many more in the pipeline. Publishing output should be back to its usual level in 2021 with online appearing sooner.

The first books have launched in Knovel, Elsevier's engineering book database. In total, 73 titles from the backlist will be included with additional new engineering-related titles being added as they are published.

Bath staff participated in a half day workshop on staff engagement, the aim of which was to identify more effective and efficient working across the various publishing functions. Neal Marriott will report to the Senior Leadership Team on results.

Colin North said the post of Chief Editor of JGS will soon become vacant and Council was asked to encourage applications.

Council

6.3 *Executive Secretary (CM/16/19)*

Richard Hughes said the 2019 Business Plan objectives were reviewed with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure they remain realistic and achievable. As a result of this, two objectives in the Science & Communications and Operations areas have been re-scheduled. Publishing House objectives will be reviewed at end-Q2.

Discussions are ongoing regarding the creation of a new Development Committee and its relationship with the existing Corporate Affiliates Committee. Terms of Reference for this committee will come to June Council for discussion and approval.

RH

The internal 'Marketing Working Group' has been replaced by the 'Business Development Steering Group' with the main remit of income generation and diversification.

The House of European History in Brussels wishes to borrow the 'Discussion on the Piltown Skull' painting for their 'Fakes and forgeries in European history' exhibition from May 2020 until April 2021. Council AGREED to this request.

Richard Hughes briefed Council on the Burlington House lease situation [confidential to Council]

6.4 *Director of Finance & Operations (CM/17/19)*

Alex McPherson said two members of staff have joined his team – Jonathan Hope is the new Facilities Manager and Alexandra Sarney is the Professional Qualifications Officer.

The completion of the February management accounts had been delayed because of the extended preparation time spent on the statutory accounts for 2018. The intention is to conclude them after Easter when they will be circulated to the Finance & Planning Committee (FPC) followed by Council.

Collection of 2019 renewal fees is progressing. Further chase up letters will be sent by email and post until 30 June at which time those who have not renewed will be struck off following agreement by Council. It is intended to instigate telephone contact to encourage renewal and better understand reasons for not doing so.

The membership categories review is still in progress with some work concluded on benchmarking against other similar organisations. Work will progress in quarters 3/4 as resources allow. Council was provided with a copy of the Fellowship Survey. This

was for information and will come back for further discussion as part of the membership categories review.

The performance of the CRM system is still sub optimal and remedial activity slow. Discussions with the supplier continue. A consulting company has been retained to undertake an assessment of where we are vs where we should be.

7. REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (CM/20/19)

Roger Dunshea, Chair of the Audit Committee, and Nick Sladden, Partner at RSM, the Society's auditors, joined the meeting.

Roger Dunshea gave his report. The 2018 Accounts should have been brought to Council today for approval but there were valid reasons for the delay not least of which was the change of Director of Finance during 2018.

The Audit Committee met on 4 April 2019 and reviewed the draft accounts, the work of the finance team and their systems. Alex McPherson, who succeeded Jonathan Silk, has started to make changes in processes which are on track. Progress has been made on a number of matters, including bank reconciliation, but there is a lot to be done.

The audit conducted by RSM was very thorough and they produced a very helpful report with useful recommendations. The Audit Committee will be monitoring progress against these but he asked Council to read it carefully and ask questions to ensure they understand what is required.

Roger Dunshea and Graham Goffey will review the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee during the coming year.

GG

Roger Dunshea thanked Doug Fenwick for his service as Audit Committee chair and his colleagues on the Audit Committee.

8. 2018 AUDITED ACCOUNTS

Graham Goffey apologised that the Accounts were not ready for sign off today. They will be circulated to Council and time given for questions to be asked before seeking approval. The Society will be reporting a deficit of around £750k and Graham Goffey gave the background to this.

AMc

Nick Sladden, Partner RSM, said a clean audit report will be given for the Society and Geological Trading Limited. A lot of progress had been made on producing the final accounts since the Audit Committee meeting on 4 April and they are nearly complete. An important comment made to the Audit Committee was that in terms of numbers that were being reported there was little adjustment. There was a good degree of reliability around the figures and an improvement to processes over the previous year. The biggest challenge was turning the figures into statutory charity accounts, and the challenge for the current year will be to take the management accounts into the statutory format. An impediment to the timely production of the accounts was the poor performance of the CRM system. There are recommendations in the report of the auditors which will have resource implications.

Council will also be asked to approve the letter of representation which says that all the information has been provided.

(Council approved the 2018 Accounts by email on 3 May 2019)

9. FELLOWSHIP FEES 2020 (CM/22/19)

Council agreed in 2015 that Fellowship fee increases would be linked to the rate of Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) as measured in January of each year. The rate of CPI for January 2019 was 1.8%.

FPC considered the proposal at their March meeting to increase most categories by 1.8% but to make no change to the lower priced categories. They recommend the adoption of these rates to Council. The table presented to Council includes a readmission fee of £40. This was not approved by the FPC and is not recommended at this time. It will be discussed further as part of the membership categories review.

Council APPROVED the proposal which will be published in May Geoscientist and go forward for adoption at the AGM on 6 June.

10 OPEN ACCESS – CONFIDENTIAL TO COUNCIL (CM/23/19)

11 CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP REVIEW (CM/24/19)

Jenny Boland, Head of Development, joined the meeting.

The Geological Society's Corporate Affiliate scheme was established in 2001 as a means of engaging industry with the Society. In the last five years Corporate Affiliate income has shown a slight trajectory of decline. In response to this the Corporate Affiliate Committee has undertaken a review of corporate membership. Committee members met with eleven Corporate Affiliates to seek feedback on the corporate membership scheme. A cost analysis was undertaken of our corporate offering and benchmarked against peer organisations.

The outcomes were discussed by the Corporate Affiliate Committee on 8 March and by the Business Development Steering Group on 14 March. The following proposals have been developed and agreed by both groups:-

- Change name of Corporate Affiliate scheme to Corporate Patron scheme
- Introduction of an Ambassador level contact within the member organisation
- Amended benefits and price
- New membership category to attract income from start-up/small companies

Jenny Boland was congratulated by Council on her report. They were supportive of the proposals but keen that there should be put in a place a clear due diligence/'know your donor' policy along the lines of the ethical investment policy. This policy must also state that patronage of the Society does not buy influence. Information is available on the website of the Institute of Fundraising. Richard Hughes and Jenny Boland will take this forward.

RH

Council APPROVED the changes to the current Corporate Affiliates scheme.

12 REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/25/19)

Council NOTED the reports of the standing committees.

Colin North reported the concerns of the Publications & Information Committee about the impact of the continued delays with the CRM project. In response to a question about Council and committee papers and minutes, Graham Goffey said there is an item in the Business Plan for an FTP site which Alex McPherson said is recognised as a priority.

13 ELECTIONS

13.1 *Fellowship (CM/26/19)*

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 17 April 2019.

13.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/27/19)*

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

13.3 *Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/28/19)*

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

13.4 *Chartered Scientist (CM/29/19)*

Council AGREED to elect as Chartered Scientists those applicants listed.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Council recorded its thanks to those members of Council who will be stepping down at the Annual General Meeting on 6 June:-

Jason Canning
Naomi Jordan
Robert Larter
Colin North
Sheila Peacock
Keith Seymour

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19 June 2019