

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 19 June 2019

PRESENT: Nick Rogers (*Chair*), Tom Backhouse, Andrew Bloodworth, John Booth (*Vice President*), Michael Daly (*President-designate*), Lesley Dunlop, Joel Gill, Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), Kathryn Goodenough, Sarah Gordon (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Jim Griffiths, Chris King, Andrew Moore, Nik Reynolds (*Vice President*), Katherine Royse (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), Sarah Scott, Gemma Sherwood, John Talbot (*Vice President, Chartership*) and Alex Whittaker (*Secretary, Science*)

APOLOGIES: Bryne Ngwenya, Jessica Smith (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Helen Smyth and Rob Strachan (*Secretary, Publications*)

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*)

The new members of Council were welcomed: Michael Daly, Joel Gill, Kathryn Goodenough, Andrew Moore, Sarah Scott and Gemma Sherwood

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies from Bryne Ngwenya, Jessica Smith, Helen Smyth and Rob Strachan were NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 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

All matters arising covered elsewhere in this meeting's papers or in hand.

5. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

5.1 *Committees, Panels and Boards (CM/30/19)*

Graham Goffey reported errors in the membership of the Finance & Planning Committee, the Investment Committee and *Geoscientist* where additionally the Editorial Advisory Panel was wrongly described as 'Board'. These will be corrected and Council NOTED the membership of the standing committee, the membership of committees, panels and boards which report to Council or to the committees of Council, meeting dates for Council and other committees for 2019/20, the standing list of principal items brought to each Council meeting and the expenses policy, particularly the request to make best use of discounted fares.

SJ

5.2 *Standing List under Regulations R/FP/5 and R/FP/6 (CM/31/19)*

Under Regulation R/FP/5 (Appeals Procedures) and R/FP/6 (Disciplinary Procedures) Council is obliged to maintain "a *Standing List of at least 25 experienced and longstanding Fellows who are not members of Council and who are able to act*

on Panels established under these Procedures. At least two thirds of the List shall be Chartered Geologists or Chartered Scientists. Fellows may resign from the List at any time, and Council may appoint replacements at any time. The names on the List will not be available to Fellows." Matters dealt with under these Regulations include appeals relating to non-election as a Fellow, non-validation of a Fellow as a Chartered Geologist, investigation and resolution of complaints brought by five or more Fellows for removal of a Fellow on grounds of significant misinformation relating to application for Fellowship or validation as a Chartered Geologist, and complaints against the code of conduct.

Council AGREED the membership of the Standing List. The number on the list is the minimum required under Regulation and Kate Royse was asked to take this back to the Professional Committee to identify gaps and those who may be able to fill them, particularly taking into account the need for more diversity. Additional names will be brought back to Council for approval.

KR

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

6.1 Executive Secretary (CM/32/19)

Council NOTED the report. Richard Hughes drew attention to the following two items:-

Burlington House Lease (confidential to Council)

2019 Business Plan

Council was provided with an end-May summary of progress which is satisfactory. The conference team is short of manpower which has impacted in that area. Alex McPherson has done some financial modelling which will be brought to September Council. Richard Hughes gave an update on the 'red' items. Graham Goffey suggested that the status of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project and the Burlington House lease should be 'amber'.

6.2 Development Committee (CM/33/19)

In 2017 Council commissioned a report by the Philanthropy Company into the potential for revenue generation from philanthropic sources. A recommendation of this report was to create a Development Committee to oversee this work.

The Development Committee will supersede the Corporate Affiliates Committee. Terms of reference were discussed by the Finance & Planning committee on 4 June. Past President Malcolm Brown has agreed to chair, John Talbot, Vice President Chartership, has volunteered to join and a couple of members of the Corporate Affiliates Committee have agreed to serve. The committee would like another trustee and is also seeking to appoint a member with dedicated fund raising experience. Richard Hughes asked Council to ponder possible candidates amongst their contacts, and to consider the need for gender diversity. He will bring a membership proposal to September Council.

Council
RH

The objectives of the committee will be defined once the situation with the Burlington House lease is clearer.

RH

Council APPROVED the terms of reference with the inclusion of the term of office as suggested by Kate Royse.

6.3 Director of Finance & Operations (CM/34/19)

Alex McPherson said the process for the Statutory Accounts for 2018 was concluded. Follow up activities will include a review of the preparation process and a review of 2018 expenditure for the purpose of fund attribution and inclusion in 2019 figures. He will report to September Council on the outcome of a re-calculation of free reserves.

AMC

The background to the CRM project was outlined and the work that is taking place to overcome the shortcomings in the system. This includes gap analysis to define 'where we are now vs where do we need to be'.

As at 12 June the Fellowship headcount stood at 11,642 (2018 – 12,382). A telephone chaser campaign has yielded positive results and valuable information. Graham Goffey said it is the first time that there has been a shrinking Fellowship and emphasised the importance of understanding the reasons and addressing them. It has the potential to impact on the budget and should be on the Risk Register. Richard Hughes said a review of membership categories, including what the Society offers, will be done in the second half of 2019. Council had a wide-ranging discussion. They recognised that there is a decline in the numbers taking Earth science in higher education, with numbers down ten per cent. It was suggested that a working group with wide representation is brought together. Richard Hughes is meeting with Nick Rogers and Graham Goffey in the next couple of weeks and will discuss how to take this forward.

RH

The April management accounts suggested an operating deficit at year end of £69k against a budgeted surplus of £379k although there have been some mitigating factors since such as unrealised portfolio gains. The most significant increase in expenditure is the Burlington House rent which is higher than expected.

Conference and event revenue is forecast to underperform by around £140k although this may be the result of an ambitious budget. There are lower delegate numbers at flagship events and a sparse future events calendar. Alicia Newton gave details on the decline in the number of conferences and said that she met with Richard Hughes, Sarah Gordon and Alex Whittaker to formulate a strategy. Alex Whittaker said the number of proposals coming forward has decreased in number and quality. He asked Council members to consider whether they have conference proposals to put forward. Council members made a number of suggestions such as encouraging the Specialist Groups to hold their conferences at Burlington House and repeating conferences. It was also recognised that the cost of accommodation in London has increased.

Council

Risk Register

The Risk Register was NOTED. Alex McPherson said that investigation is ongoing to determine whether risk management can be better addressed with a software solution.

6.4 *Director of Publishing (CM/35/19)*

Neal Marriott reported on progress with major subscribers and Lyell subscriptions. He said that reporting continues to be sub-optimal due to issues with the CRM.

The Society is still on target for eight books to be published in the first six months of 2019 and anticipate an additional eight being published by the end of the year. In addition, there are nine titles in various stages of production and, with further titles due for delivery, a similar number of titles are expected to be published in 2020 with the number increasing in 2021 and beyond.

The Publications and Information Committee will discuss at their 27 June meeting a Request for Proposal document for the hosting of the Lyell Collection. [commercial information removed]

Andy Carter is stepping down as Chief Editor of the Journal of the Geological Society and, after a full recruitment and interview process, will be replaced by Graham Shields-Zhou. Council expressed their thanks to Andy Carter for his service.

Neal Marriott also reported to Council on the developing open access landscape.

6.5 *Director of Science & Communications (CM/36/19)*

Alicia Newton reported to Council on matters relating to policy, outreach, science, education and the conference department. There was a holistic review of the Society's awards, grants and bursaries processes with the aim of identifying and mitigating any perceived instances of unintentional bias to certain demographics. This resulted in a standard nomination form for all Society awards, with the exception of the President's Award which has its own form, and the revamping of the guidance document.

Council APPROVED the recommendation of Lesley Dunlop, Council DEI Champion, to use Chair as standard with reference to committees, instead of chairman, chairwoman, or chairperson.

6.5.i *Proposal to become a signatory to the COPDESS Fair Data Statement of Commitment (CM/37/19)*

The Society has been a signatory to the Coalition for Publishing Data in the Earth and Space Sciences (COPDESS) Statement of Commitment since March 2015. The initial statement has since grown into the Enabling FAIR Data Project, which has developed a framework to encourage publishers, authors, and data repositories to ensure that data is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. This work has led to the development of an Enabling FAIR Data Commitment Statement. This statement affects publishing policies, but also has more general requirements for adhering societies. Specifically, the statement requires that:

“Societies, communities, and institutions will strive to:

- Support and promulgate open and FAIR data principles and practices in their core Earth, space, and environmental science activities and policies.
- Participate in further development of open and FAIR data practices.
- Engage in the development of community standards, infrastructure, tools and services to enable open and FAIR data practices.
- Provide regular education and outreach to their communities regarding these principles and practices.
- Promote open and FAIR data activities as important criteria in promotion, awards, and honors.
- Provide other credit and recognition for researchers that are following open and FAIR data practices and encourage others to include such recognition as part of regular career advancement.”

It is envisaged that the Society will take a light touch to these commitments by, for instance:

- Developing a FAIR data landing page that links out to information for students and researchers. We will also flag up this commitment to winners of research grants.
- Making Burlington House available to Specialist Groups or other scientists that wish to hold meetings or workshops on data best practice.
- Encouraging nominators for awards to consider whether their nominee has engaged in FAIR data practices, if relevant.

Council AGREED in principle to support the Enabling FAIR Data Commitment Statement, although they expressed concern about the confidentiality of data and also the impact on industry standards to which various groups work anyway. The updated Publishing House Data Policy will be tabled at the Publications & Information committee meeting on 27 June for discussion and approval. It will then be taken to the appropriate standing committees (anticipated to be Science, External Relations, Professional and Awards) for approval and, once approved, the statement will be returned to Council with the proposal to agree to become signatories to the Enabling FAIR Data Statement of Commitment.

AN

- 6.5.ii *Outside bodies and associated organisations (CM/38/19)*
Council NOTED the Society's representation on outside bodies.
- 6.5.iii *Geoscience and Decarbonisation – potential Geological Society and British Geological Survey (BGS) collaborative working proposal (CM/39/19)*
The Society and the BGS have collaborated on projects and activities in an ad hoc way in the past such as the co-badging of the 'Geology and UN Sustainable Development Goals' briefing note, co-convening meetings, collaborating on press releases, etc.

The proposal outlined in this paper is a change in working processes because it covers a suite of linked activities. These may include one or two policy documents and meetings. It is recognised that care will be needed to design activities that so as not to compromise the independence of the Society nor the core aims of BGS. Andrew Bloodworth emphasised that BGS is independent of government. He will shortly be taking over the Head of Policy role there and will be involved with this collaboration. Florence Bullough, Head of Policy & Engagement, will lead for the Society reporting to the External Relations committee.

Council AGREED to the proposal.

7. RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE SOCIETY'S INVESTMENT POLICY, INCLUDING THE ADOPTION OF A MORE EXPLICIT ETHICAL INVESTMENT POLICY (CM/40/19)

Graham Goffey said that in June 2018 the Society adopted a formal investment policy which contains a specific mandate to the Finance & Planning committee/Investment committee and must be reviewed and endorsed by Council on an annual basis. He gave details of the current strategy used by the Society's investment managers, Sarasin, and the proposal to shift the portfolio from a strong income focus to a more balanced, and very common growth/income approach, known as a 'total return' approach. Council APPROVED the recommendation to change the Society's investment targets.

AMc

In early 2018 a small group of staff, Trustees and Investment committee members was formed to consider the possibility of adopting a more explicit ethical investment policy. The group also met with Sarasin. Council was presented with a proposed ethical investment policy which they discussed at length. Sarah Gordon is co-convening a conference at the Society in early October 2019 'Responsible Investment in Natural Resources' and suggested that this topic is discussed there, perhaps in a break-out session. It was agreed to bring the matter back to November Council with a brief report on the conference and a secondary document which builds on the document presented today. Graham Goffey was thanked for his work.

SG/GG

8. REMOVAL OF FELLOWS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF THE 2019 FELLOWSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS (CM/41/19)

Council AGREED to remove from Fellowship those Fellows who had not paid their 2019 subscription by 30 June 2019.

Council was asked to encourage as soon as possible those Fellows known to them to pay their subscription and remain in Fellowship.

Council

The Fellowship office will continue to make further strenuous efforts to secure late payments with an additional focus on those with Chartered status.

Alex McPherson will provide information to the Regional Groups so they can follow-up non payers. Nik Reynolds asked for details of the Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellows who have not renewed.

AMc

9. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/42/19)

Council NOTED the reports of the standing committees.

10. ELECTIONS

10.1 *Fellowship (CM/43/19)*

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 19 June 2019.

10.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/44/19)*

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

10.3 *Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/45/19)*

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

10.4 *European Geologist (CM/46/19)*

Council APPROVED those applicants listed as European Geologists.

10.5 *Chartered Scientist (CM/47/19)*

Council AGREED to elect as Chartered Scientists those applicants listed.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 & 18 September 2019