

# The Geological Society of London

## COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting held on 7 April 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdown restrictions.

PRESENT: Mike Daly (*Chair*), Jo Alexander, Tom Backhouse, Andrew Bloodworth, John Booth (*Vice President*), Jennie Gilbert, Joel Gill (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), Kathryn Goodenough, Jim Griffiths (*Secretary, Professional & Chartership Matters*), Chris King, Andrew Moore, Keith Myers (*Co-opted – Treasurer designate*), Bryne Ngwenya, John Perry, Nik Reynolds (*Vice President*), Sarah Scott, Gemma Sherwood, Jessica Smith (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Helen Smyth, Rob Strachan (*Secretary, Publications*), Alex Whittaker (*Secretary, Science*) and Lucy Williams

APOLOGIES: Helen Smyth, Michael Kehinde

In attendance: Richard Hughes (*Executive Secretary*), Alex McPherson (*Director of Finance & Operations*), Alicia Newton (*Director of Science & Communications*), Maggie Simmons (*Director of Publishing*) and Christina Marron (*Executive Assistant*)

Attended: Mark Law, RSM, and Roger Dunshea, Audit Committee Chair, attended for Audited Account items. Mark Anderson for Accreditation Review item

### 1. APOLOGIES

Mike Daly (MD) NOTED apologies from Michael Kehinde (MK) and Helen Smyth (HS) due to work commitments.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None noted

### 3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2021

Minutes were APPROVED.

### 4. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising: All other actions NOTED as in progress, discharged or are on today's agenda.

### 5. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS (*confidential to Council*)

Report on ballot for Council

MD said a total of 2173 valid votes were cast for Ruth Allington who will go forward to the AGM for election as President-designate. He said 2,132 valid votes were cast for the seven vacancies on Council (2,056 voted last year) with the results are as follows:

<b>Candidates</b>	<b>No of Votes</b>	<b>% of total votes</b>
Lucy Thomas	1,587	74.4%
Amanda Owen	1,195	56.1%
Martin Griffin	1,028	48.2%
Mark Allen	952	44.7%
Keith Myers	920	43.1%
Pete Loader	900	42.2%
Neil Frewin	749	31.1%

These top seven will go forward to the AGM for election.

Report of Officers Meeting (verbal)

Mike Daly (MD) said key matters discussed were:

Council/staff session: There was positive feedback and staff and Council had both agreed it would be good to allow more time next session.

Head of Library and Information Services: There are 6 applications to-date.

Facilities Manager: Five of fifty applicants are to be interviewed: noting the role was 0.6 FTE with a requirement for HSE knowledge as well as Facilities.

Opening of offices: Burlington House (BH) is was not ready to re-open yet. It was noted that although a lot of staff were keen to work from home in the future the forward looking model was likely to be hybrid.

*John Booth joined the meeting.*

Education intern: Officers approved the recruitment of an intern on 6-month basis to support on big events coming up in the summer incl. Year of Space. He noted the Education team is just one person following Amy Ball moving on last year.

Staff wellbeing survey: Key words arising were “fine” and “overworked” which are likely to relate to the changes from furlough and redundancies. MD said management will look to support staff by revising job specifications and prioritisation of work.

Library Review: (confidential to Council). MD noted the William Smith Conference in October will showcase Society maps which was a positive event for the map archive.

Performance Appraisals: All processes have been completed and Officers have approved the full amounts of performance related pay to be paid in recognition of the efforts by staff in a very difficult year.

Complaint: (Confidential to Council).

CRM: Ongoing CRM issues were outlined with Keith Myers (KM), Richard Hughes (RH) and Alex McPherson (AMc) agreeing to work towards a resolution and a decision towards summer as to whether to continue with current CRM product.

## 6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Executive Secretary's report (CM/16/21)

A typo was NOTED in the Executive Business paper, the second paragraph of the letter to be corrected to “later this week”.

RH spoke to the most significant items:

Burlington House (BH): He noted:

- The campaign has made good progress and over 100 Fellows have written to their MPs.
- Alongside letters/emails to support staying at BH, approximately a third of the letters were in favour of leaving BH, noting particular support for this on social media.
- Tim Loughton and another 10+ MPs are lobbying and helping to raise awareness.
- The webinar on 1 April to discuss the matter with Fellows had been well received.

Strategic Options short-term priorities: RH said good progress had been made including:

- Fellow Categories and Benefits Review (FCBR) to be discussed as an agenda item.
- More digitally enabled organisation: Maggie Simmons (MS) will take on executive lead for the digital strategy which will give the impetus to move forward the strategy development and implementation.
- Visual brand: Strong progress is being made and a report will be made to Council in June.
- Purpose Statement: This has been progressed with staff and will next be brought to small group of Council members before being presented in June. RH asked for interested Council members to contact with him for a meeting to be diarised.

Director of Finance & Operations (CM/17/21)

incl: Management accounts/outturn 2021 YTD and Risk Register Update

Risk Register: AMc said a new Risk Register software, 4Risk from RSM, had been acquired. The software was now available and data populated but was being updated and fine-tuned. He said an update would be brought to Council in June.

Renewals: There are still 1600 members to renew but there are 450 new joiners so a net reduction of ~1200 compared to last year. However, in terms of income profile it is 18k above budget with a telephone campaign about to take place so fellowship renewals are heading in the right direction.

Management Accounts December 2020: AMc said December accounts are broadly in line with previous information with an overall ~£437k surplus due to gains in investment portfolio and currency. However, in terms of operational outturn there was a £200k negative return primarily due to the impact of Covid. AMc said it would be important to explain these outcomes to staff in a town hall so they had a clear context of staffing decisions made in 2020.

February Management 2021 accounts: AMc said there was a strong focus on Fellows to renew with a professional telemarketing company engaged to focus on re-engaging Fellows with the aim of ensuring further renewals of ~£150k.

KM queried if there were any expected deviations in the budget. AMc said IT operational costs were higher than budgeted and would be monitored, but said the costs were related to planned work regarding the CRM, website and the digital strategy and would need to be part of reforecast in the March accounts. He added that there would also need to be a re-evaluation re recruitment and salaries as they were likely to be slightly higher on budget.

AMc said Lyell income was as expected but would be received later than expected.

KM asked when the reserves policy review would be delivered. AMc said an organisation, Wise Owl, had been engaged to review reserves and to recommend minimum reserve levels required.

Director of Science and Communications CM/18/21

Alicia Newton (AN) spoke to her report and related papers noting:

Theme Leader: Anna Hicks (BGS), was appointed theme leader for the Geohazards, Geoengineering and Georesilience alongside two deputies, Aggeliki Georgiopoulou and Irene Manzella announced in a press release on 31 March, she said the group were already working on exciting and creative ideas.

COP26: The exhibition proposal in collaboration with other organisations was submitted well ahead of the deadline. In addition, a smaller hydrogen proposal also has gone through to Glasgow University: the Society will be able to ramp up its input on the proposal depending on success of the exhibition application.

a. ToR for Working Group - Policy on Memorialisation CM/19/21)

AN said Terms of Reference were for the working group who would develop the three policies: 1. To assess requests for future named awards, 2. To assess existing named awards and grants 3. To assess the display of representations and works from current and historic geologists.

All would be assessed against the Society's core aims and values and proposed pathways for remediation if required.

AN noted the panel would be led by Jenni Barclay and other members recommended by ERC and specialist groups.

MD advised seeking more external representation as the current composition was too staff heavy. Jennie Gilbert (JeG) suggested bringing in more historian expertise and KM recommended (name omitted).

Council APPROVED the ToR but asked AN to review the membership to include a greater balance of representation and expertise.

AN to update Council on membership.

b. Science Committee ToR (CM/20/21)

AMc

AN

Alex Whittaker (AW) said that in order to ensure the Science Committee's composition and aims were compatible with delivering on its strategic objectives, the Science Committee had reviewed and redrafted its terms of reference. He said the proposal idea was to re-balance the Committee with representatives from specialist groups and involvement of theme leaders: an evolution of past models and partially motivated by feedback from early career representatives. He said the model would allow the Committee to draw on others also for their expertise.

Lucy Williams (LW) asked if this meant each conference would have a representative from Science Committee. AW confirmed there would be someone from the Committee "a liaison" to give oversight.

Gemma Sherwood (GS) asked if the Science Committee take responsibility for outreach to specialist groups to make them feel part of the society. AW confirmed this was in place and would continue.

Graham Goffey said few conferences generated a surplus and asked if more could be done in terms of sponsorship income and making the Committee more financially mindful in conference planning. AW said that this would be part of the liaison's role but agreed that it could be made clearer in the ToRs. Kathryn Goodenough (KG) proposed adding "a need to be aware of potential financial considerations and be financially responsible in its decisions being mindful of the appeal of conference themes."

The number of Committee members was discussed. AW confirmed that ~15 members attended which a suitable number and not dissimilar in numbers to other organisations.

Council APPROVED the ToRs but requested the role of the conference liaison and their responsibilities including budgetary considerations be made clearer.

AN

Director of Publishing (CM/21/21)

MS gave highlights from her report, noting:

Library: Remote services would be resuming with library staff being on site more frequently. A recent virtual event on Mary Anning had generated a lot of interest and more were planned.

PH 20 biggest subscribers had renewed which was equivalent to c. £0.5m.

Four further UK institutions had signed up to the transformative agreements: 18 institutions in total. MS encouraged Council to be aware of the benefits and inform colleagues.

Earth Science, Systems and Society: Three special issues are open now and articles can be submitted.

Other matters discussed (confidential to Council).

## 7. 2020 AUDITED ACCOUNTS (CM/22/21)

Mark Law (RSM) joined the meeting with Roger Dunshea, chair of the Audit Committee.

AMc noted a surplus due to the investment portfolio and said the accounts would be ready to sign in next week or two. He thanked his team.

Graham Goffey (GG) confirmed the accounts whilst not finalised were at the point where no material changes were needed.

Mark Law (ML) gave the audit report findings noting the audit process had gone well with only a few items outstanding, including: RSM doing a second internal review of going concern as part of its own internal process requirements; an adjustment of the post balance event review; and finally the specialist groups review had been received but this showed a small difference in balances which he would clarify with AMc. He confirmed there were no items of material concern.

ML noted the implementation of the recommendations rolled forward from last year with good progress in terms of audit and its processes. He thanked the Finance Team.

8. REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE + APPROVAL OF THE ACCOUNTS  
(verbal report)  
Roger Dunshea (RD) gave his report. He said that the Society was in a much better place this year in terms of preparing accounts and that the remote audit had worked well and been successful. He said the Audit Committee were confident that all matters would be cleared by the end of month. RD said the Audit Committee would recommend APPROVAL of the accounts by email once the final updates were made.
- RD noted the Audit Committee had raised a slight concern regarding the risk register and their risk oversight. Due to the move to the risk management software, the Committee did not have sight of the risk register at the last meeting so this is something that it will monitor. RD said it is part of the Committee's remit to ensure risks are being identified, measured and mitigation put in place. AMc said that normally the Audit Committee would have sight of the Risk Register twice year but the move to the new risk management software had meant a hiatus but assured Council that the register would be ready for review at next Audit Committee in Autumn 2021. AMc
- MD noted the progress made in audit processes.  
Council AGREED to approve the accounts for 2020 remotely once all final items were addressed and updated and the Audit Committee gave their recommendation for the signing off of the accounts. AMc
- 9 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK (CM/23/21)  
GG said the biggest source of income for the Society was the Publishing House followed by Fellowship revenues. He said MS had updated the Publishing House forecasted financial trajectory regarding income for the next 10 years but noted it was hard to predict the impact of Covid at this stage.  
He noted the slides looked at four location scenarios documented in same way: with anticipated change/losses in portfolio to provide an outlook.
- Discussion (confidential to Council)
- Council NOTED the paper.
10. ELECTIONS (CM/24/21-CM/28/21)
- 10.1 *Fellowship (CM/24/21)*  
Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 7 April 2021.
- 10.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/25/21)*  
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/26/21)*  
Council AGREED to elect as Candidate Fellows and Junior Candidate Fellows those applicants listed.
- 10.4 *European Geologist (CM/27/21)*  
Council APPROVED those applicants listed as European Geologists.
- 10.5 *Chartered Scientist (CM/28/21)*  
Council APPROVED the applicant listed as Chartered Scientist.
11. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/29/21)  
NOTED by Council.

12. PROFESSIONAL AND CHARTERSHIP COMMITTEE (P&CC) ToR (CM/30/21)  
Jim Griffiths (JGr) said the P&CC's Terms of Reference have been updated in line with the merging of the two Committees. The Committee has approved the new ToR and once accepted by Council they would be in situ for a year before being fully enacted. JGr asked for a Vice President (VP) on the Committee when Nik Reynolds (NR) steps down in June. He said having a VP on the Committee demonstrates the commitment to Chartership and ideally the VP would be from another field other than engineering geology.  
GG asked if it could be made clear in the ToR the prime role/responsibility for the P&CC was the attraction and retention of members. JGr accepted the Committee's responsibility to attract members but said retention was broader than P&CC and had implications for other Committees.  
JB said bye-laws regulations allow for at least 4 VPs to be appointed and could be co-opted. JGr said he felt it was important to have VP on the P&CC to illustrate its professionalism and maintain a high profile.  
Council ACCEPTED the new ToRs and in principle the retention of a VP on the Committee.

13. FELLOWSHIP CATEGORIES AND BENEFITS REVIEW (CM/31/21)  
RH said the FPC had discussed the financial risks involved with moving to the new structure at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March and AGREED its support of the new fee structure.  
He said it was also endorsed by the P&CC at its last meeting.  
RH reminded Council that the proposal was developed through a large and active project group including Council members since last August.  
He spoke to new proposed membership/fee structure. Discussion confidential to Council.  
RH said the Fellowship Team have confirmed that there is no issue with model being implemented. However, all changes to the fees need to be approved at an AGM so the proposal will be brought to the AGM in late June for approval.

Discussion confidential to Council

Council APPROVED the new fee structure shown in the slide.  
Council APPROVED the changes to the benefits as outlined in the slide.  
Council AGREED there should be not increase in line with CPI to the Fellowship and Chartership fees: it APPROVED keeping the cost base flat.  
AW noted that there would need to be early communication regarding research grants requirements and clear advice for applicants to apply in good time to become Fellows.

CM

14. GIFT ACCEPTANCE POLICY (CM/32/21)  
*Presented by Jenny Boland, Head of Development*  
Jenny Boland (JBo) said the policy outlines guidelines for accepting or refusing philanthropic donations and companies. The Fundraising Regulator guidance is to not refuse donations unless absolute necessary, and if refused the organisation is to keep a record of the reasons. The onus is on the Society to identify where donations would not be appropriate i.e. funds from criminal activity that could be damaging to its reputation.  
JBo said the proposed policy lays out circumstances where we might refuse and a framework and has been updated in line with the new *Responsible Investment Policy*. All donations will be processed through the Head of Development following due diligence and any red flag donations passed to the Development Committee to review with the ultimate decision by Council to accept. She noted that all donations over £10k would by default go to Development Committee to have sight prior to acceptance.  
JB said care was required in refusing with companies related to geology. JBo said that this should not be an issue: the *Responsible Investment Policy* puts a high bar.  
GG said the policy should be subject to review if found that donations are being

turned down regularly. Item confidential to Council. Andrew Bloodworth (AB) said the Society would be exposed to this issue and therefore a balanced judgement made in each scenario regarding the merits and reputational risk.

AB said it was unlikely to receive donations from the alcohol industry however the policy may raise issues as alcohol is served at Society events/dinner and it may seem hypocritical. GG said this came from the *Responsible Investment Policy*. It was agreed that the wording relating to alcohol this should be changed in both the Responsible Investment and Gift Acceptance policies.

Council conditionally APPROVED the policy conditional on the amendment of wording around donations/sponsorship from the alcohol industry.

JB updated Council on legacies. She said the legacy brochure was being prepared and encouraged donations to broad designated funds ie. education, library. She said it would be ready the second week of September for “*remember a charity week*”.

#### 15. ACCREDITATION REVIEW

Presented by Mark Anderson, Chair of the Accreditation Review

Mark Anderson (MA) spoke to the paper asking Council’s approval for the basic recommendations/principles with smaller details resolved by the accreditation panel: He said the outstanding issues are:

1. Minimum requirement for fieldwork: clearer guidance was needed
  2. Benefits of accreditation: MA to work with Jim Griffiths re Chartership accreditation.
- He noted a widespread acceptance that accreditation is needed.

Learning outcomes: MA said that the QAA benchmark review’s chair has now been appointed, Sian Davies-Vollum so the accreditation requirements learning outcomes will be developed in tandem with the QAA benchmark review noting there was a strong link between the accreditation review panel and the QAA team.

AW praised the learning outcomes approach but noted a strong desire for guidance on number of days’ fieldwork and how to report that. He noted clarity was also need regarding MSc course and how requirements would change from 3 to 4-year course. This question was also discussed in terms of laboratory work.

MA said panel will aim to adjust the requirements based on the type of project. AW said it would be good to have loose categories noting that if too bespoke it created too great a demand on staff time. MA agreed and this was recognised by the panel. MA said that the panel would also look at advice around training requirements around independent projects.

RH asked regarding the communications of the new accreditation scheme. MA said they were imminent and allow leniency for clients to choose timings to move from the previous system to the new.

MA noted the departments would be asked to complete a full accreditation when their next accreditation was due.

MD noted a quite a diverse approach to fieldwork ranging from none to lab based to two-week field camp. He said it would be good to share with community the different approaches to give them confidence in their approach. MA said UGUK is working to find out the types of work being done and will share with all departments.

MA added there would be statements from the Accreditation Committee to provide updates regarding fieldwork and revised statements to recognise that departments are doing what they can and that it is a national issue. JeG noted the UGUK section of the website seems to out of date so it would be good to see it brought up-to-date for those who don’t attend can access information.

Council APPROVED the accreditation review panel’s recommendations.

AN

16.

AOB

MD, on behalf of the Society and Council, thanked the departing Council members who would stand down at the AGM on 25 June 2021: Andrew Bloodworth, John Booth, Bryne Ngwenya, Graham Goffey, Helen Smyth, Tom Backhouse, Nik Reynolds and Chris King.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30 June 2021 (virtual) There will be a business meeting on the afternoon of 30 June 2021, with an Ordinary General Meeting following.

Other Council dates for 22/23 September and 24 November  
AGM: 25 June (11.00am)