

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting held on 30 June 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdown restrictions.

PRESENT: Mike Daly (*Chair*), Neil Frewin, Joel Gill (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Kathryn Goodenough, Martin Griffin, Jim Griffiths (*Secretary, Professional & Chartership Matters*), Pete Loader, Andrew Moore, Keith Myers (*Treasurer*), Amanda Owen, John Perry, Gemma Sherwood, Lucy Thomas, Alex Whittaker (*Secretary, Science*) and Lucy Williams

APOLOGIES: Jo Alexander, Mark Allen, Ruth Allington (*President-Designate*), Jennie Gilbert, Michael Kehinde, Sarah Scott, Jessica Smith (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Rob Strachan (*Secretary, Publications*)

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*)

In attendance: Item: Jenny Boland (*Head of Development*) & Item David Shilston (*Chair, Relocation Project Group*) and

1. APOLOGIES

Mike Daly (MD) NOTED apologies from Jo Alexander, Mark Allen, Ruth Allington, Jennie Gilbert, Michael Kehinde, Sarah Scott, Jessica Smith and Rob Strachan

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Pete Loader noted one of the applicants for Chartered Geologist is his ex-student so he will recuse from this vote.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 APRIL 2021

Minutes were APPROVED. Christina to update to include Joel Gill (JGi) and Rob Strachan (RS) as attending.

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*)

MD noted the papers for the Council to note.

Standing Committees List (*CM/24/21*): The Chair of Regional Groups to be taken off the Professional and Chartership Committee's list of attendees.

Standing List (*CM/35/21*): Council approved the list.

Report of Officers Meeting (verbal)

MD said key matters discussed were:

Hybrid working policy: Policy approved with a few minor amendments recommended.

New events assistant 0.6FTE: Officers approved a fixed one year 0.6 FTE role to help backfill on events to allow sufficient staff resource to develop CPD programme.

Complaint update: on agenda

Digital/IT and CRM: Alex McPherson (AMc) gave an update on progress re CRM.

Digital Steering Group (DSG): MD noted the implementation of the DSG to ensure digital oversight of all projects and digital progression across the organisation.

CM

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Executive Secretary's report (CM/36/21)

RH spoke to the key items of note:

Burlington House (BH):

- Since the last Council meeting, the Courtyard Societies have received a revised offer of a 3% annual increase (previously 8%). Although a significant reduction, it is still unaffordable and rents will reach full commercial rates for a building of this type by 2080. The 3% increase comes with caveats e.g. it requires the Societies open their collections to the public. To afford such rents the Society would need to become increasingly commercial, but it would be preferable to invest any future surpluses on delivering our charitable objectives.
- The Westminster Hall debate on 8 June was led by Tim Loughton MP and is available to view. The four Societies' Presidents followed up the debate by writing to invite Under Secretary of State Eddie Hughes to visit Burlington House but the invitation has been turned down. A letter has been sent by Sir David Attenborough to the PM giving his support to the learned societies.
- Relocations options project: David Shilston, chair of the project group tasked with looking at alternative locations, will provide an update as part of agenda items.

Scientists for Global Responsibility: Following past correspondence, RH explained that SGR's letter of 8 June 2021 welcomed the Society's improvements e.g. its Gift Acceptance Policy and Responsible Investment Policy but had other items to address. A response letter was sent addressing all points and offering constructive dialogue.

September: 22 Sept Council Meeting and 23rd Strategic Session

RH said items for consideration at the strategic session include:

- Strategic options review and a recap on the last year's progress.
- Governance structure: the current structure is antiquated and needs review. Council welcomed this item
- Education and outreach programme: discussions to bring together major earth science organisations in discussions on education e.g. BGS and Natural History Museum.

Business Plan 2021: RH noted the appended report detailing the status of objectives and a progress summary. Lucy Williams (LW) queried two objectives with "red" status. Early Career Group's report on best practice: Alicia Newton (AN) said the early career network had been re-approached re getting involved in governance however if there is not a response, the alternative is to reach out to specialist groups' early career members. Stakeholder mapping: AN said it was discussed at the External Relations Committee (ERC) and further work would be done over this summer. MD noted stakeholder mapping would be important in progressing marketing of events and membership.

Director of Finance & Operations (CM/37/21)

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

Alex McPherson (AMc) noted highlights:

Fellowship: 11585 renewals (2020: c.11700) were comfortably ahead of budgeted income by c. £120k. AMc said ordinarily at the June Council a list of Fellows who have not renewed would be presented to be struck off, however with the Covid pandemic this practice is paused with concessions offered to encourage Fellows to continue as members noting struck off Fellows could lose FGS and Chartered Geologist status. MD said it was good to see a focus on vitalising and retaining membership and that the aim was to continue in this direction.

CRM: AMc noted a huge effort this year to get the CRM (Client Relation Management) platform to better serve stakeholders and be a central customer hub for Fellowship data e.g. renewals/subscriptions, book purchases and events. AMc said options to move to

new framework with the current platform or to move to an alternative provider both are currently under review.

KM said he was keen to address the CRM's high costs and ensure value for money.

Martin Griffin (MG) asked if the CRM stored diversity data and AMc agreed to check.

Christina Marron (CM) to share recent diversity work.

IT resilience: Moving in the right direction including a migration of our knowledge assets to the Cloud in order to de-risk the potential for loss.

AMc
CM

Annex A: Management Accounts: AMc said the expected surplus in April of £145k is likely to increase and that the operational outturn showing a deficit and was likely to reduce. The investment portfolio performance is expected to have end of year surplus of £195k. He noted the better than predicted outcome was due to the positive renewal figures, good CPD revenue and continued downward pressure on costs.

Annex B: AMc said the Council as part of the Investment Policy requirements were asked to note the Investment Portfolio Parameters. He emphasised all metrics are currently on policy or in the range of the policy.

The Council NOTED the Investment Portfolio Parameters and its content.

Annex C: AMc said the migration to the Risk Management software was nearing completion: data was populated and being honed. He said training and deployment was expected to be within 6-7 weeks. He said the software would allow better reporting across a range of stakeholders. AMc to give update at September Council and to look into the risk register's metrics/criteria for measuring impact and criticality.

AMc

AMc gave an overview of the composition of the £7.5m portfolio. He noted three categories of funds: unrestricted, restricted (constraints on how it is spent) and endowment. He said £5m of the portfolio is unrestricted but noted there is an ongoing review of funds by Wise Owl.

MG and Lucy Thomas (LT) said it would be good to see risk opportunities incorporated as well as threats. AMc said it was unlikely to be possible with the current software but agreed it would be good to tabulate opportunities in the same way. RH said there was an opportunities pipeline: an internal business development group which he hoped to reconvene e.g. the online CPD.

Standing Committee chairs to be sent information on risks for which they have oversight. AMc to generate reports for the Chairs for the end of July.

AMc

Pete Loader (PL) asked how the Society ensured ethical investments. KM said Sarasin's ESG assessment criteria is used alongside the Society's Responsible Investment Policy. KM said it would be good for Council to have training session on risk and the new software: quantum of impact and mitigation. Action: AMc to look into and to organise a session once rolled out to staff.

Director of Publishing (CM/38/21)

MS gave highlights from her report:

Library: Reopened to in-person visits 20 May - every Thursday by appointment. As of 1 July 2021 the Library would be under Science and Communications directorate.

Publishing House: Lyell collection subscriptions are 147 with 7 more under negotiation. MS said it was not expected to reach last year's numbers, but the budget would be met due to special publication archive sales (11 so far this year).

Transformative Read and Publish Agreement: there have been three recent signups: Bangor, Sheffield and London Southbank which means corresponding authors from these institutions can publish in journals without an article publishing charge. In regards 2022 subscriptions PIC has approved reaching out to our editorial contacts and libraries to encourage them to use transformative agreement in order for the Society to be able to compete with larger publishers

ES3 open access journal: 5 submissions so far. MS said Council were encouraged to consider and promote journal.

Lyell collection (confidential to Council). Petroleum Geoscience journal: (confidential to Council). MS said the focus for rest of year were 2022 subscriptions: Transformative Agreements, and the commissioning of articles for ES3. Kathryn Goodenough (KG) said low submissions was an issue with other journals also struggling for the kind of papers we are looking for.

LT asked if submission were welcome from industry also. KG confirmed all were welcome but said that the open access journal's £2000 funding for article processing was often a challenge for those in industry. KG said they were offering some waivers but there needed to be a balance.

MG said it would be good to publish online some articles to attract other submissions. MS and KG said this would be able to be actioned shortly.

Director of Science and Communications CM/39/21

Alicia Newton (AN) spoke to highlights:

Climate Change Symposium: It had over 200 attendees with 24 submitted abstracts including some critical of the published climate change statement. In addition, there were five early career researchers invited as speakers for the shorter sessions. The event was viewed positively and it was hoped to do a similar symposium every two years. In Q4, the Society will seek its theme leader for climate change theme.

COP26: The Society's joint bid was unsuccessful with over 4000 applications, however it will have a space at fringe event at Glasgow. It is hoped to do some of the events planned for the exhibition as online programme but this is pending confirmation as to if the event will be in-person or a virtual event.

CPD: Three more courses are planned for the Autumn.

TORs for Science Committee: AN and Alex Whittaker (AW) have updated the TOR to give clarity on role of the conference liaison and clearer responsibilities around budget.

AGI (American Geoscience Institution) Diversity Framework (CM/40/21)

AN said the framework was the outcome of a change.org petition started August 2020 which had received over 26,000 signatories. She said it focusses on diversity and outlines initiatives to attract geoscientists of all backgrounds. She said ERC had recommended the Society sign on to framework noting most initiatives were covered by current programme of delivery so will not stretch in terms of additional work.

Council APPROVED becoming a signatory to the framework.

7. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/41/21)

Council NOTED the reports.

8. ELECTIONS (CM/42/21-CM/46/21)

Fellowship (CM/42/21)

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 30 June 2021.

Chartered Geologists (CM/43/21)

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

Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/44/21)

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

European Geologist (CM/45/21)

Council APPROVED those applicants listed as European Geologists.

Chartered Scientist (CM/46/21)

Council APPROVED the applicant listed as Chartered Scientist. PL recused himself from voting.

9. COMPLAINT - RECOMMENDATIONS OF DISCIPLINARY PANEL (CM/47/21)
(Discussion confidential to Council). Council APPROVED the disciplinary panel's recommendations.

RH to write a letter to the respondent.
NF rejoined the meeting.

RH

AW recommended clear processes so Council's role is to endorse recommendations and not to review evidence. JGi agreed the governance documents could make clearer the trustee role and responsibilities.

RH to follow up with the President Designate regarding the regulation review.

RH

10. STRATEGIC OPTIONS REVIEW: PROGRESS UPDATE (CM/48/21)

Jenny Boland, Head of Development in attendance to present on visual brand.

MD gave an overview of the strategic work in 2020. RH outlined the high level objectives resulting from the strategic options review, including one to overhaul our visual brand.

JB said the strategic options review had shown a lack of brand continuity and an internal working group recommended the following.

Logo: Recommended removing strapline of logo as it reduces impact of the logo in some scales as well as causing issues for those visually impaired.

Name: 'The Geological Society' to be used across all branding. The Geological Society of London only to be used in legal documents or where a differentiator is desirable e.g. international audience.

Colour palette: To be reduce colour palette (currently 18) to be used by all departments and the Lyell collection.

Council APPROVED removal of the strapline from the logo to strengthen brand appeal and improve reproducibility and accessibility.

Council APPROVED adoption of 'The Geological Society' for use across all visual branding channels.

Council APPROVED simplification of the colour palette to improve consistency and improve accessibility.

In regards the purpose statement:

JP suggested the word 'humanity' could be modified to include geoscientists work re biodiversity and the environment, a view supported by LT.

Richard to take into account these suggestions and Council to contact Richard if have any further comments.

RH

JB left the meeting and David Shilston (DS) joined.

11. RELOCATION PROJECT UPDATE (CM/49/21)

RH gave the background to the Relocation Project Group.

DS noted the Relocation Project Group's Terms of Reference and said as part of exploring the alternatives the project group had identified two work streams:

1. Looking other organisations' recent relocation experiences and learning,
2. Looking at requirements for any new location.

DS outlined the guiding principles for the potential re-location of GSL's headquarters.

Space calculations: DS said 5000 - 6000 sq. ft. was the minimum requirement with space allocated as: 1/3 for staff, 1/3 library, 16% meeting space and the rest would be common areas.

RH noted that a heritage architect would be consulted to look at what internal modifications could be considered to enable the Society to operate on a reduced footprint at BH.

Amanda Owen (AO) asked if public spaces was accounted for the space calculations. DS said public spaces would be also meetings spaces: he noted other organisations had made these spaces flexible to be used for a variety of purposes.

(Discussion confidential to Council).

Council APPROVED the direction of travel.

AOB

CM to share by email a Declaration of Interest form for all Council members to complete.

CM

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

22/23 September (virtual) There will be a business meeting on the afternoon of 22 September 2021, with an Ordinary General Meeting following. The strategic planning meeting is on 23 September.

Other Council dates:

24 November

2 February

6 April

23 June