

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting held on 27 January 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: None noted.

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: Legacy Giving Item – Jenny Boland, COP26 item - Flo Bullough

1. APOLOGIES

Mike Daly (MD) NOTED apologies from Tom Backhouse (TB), Michael Kehinde (MK), Helen Smyth (HS) and Lucy Williams (LW) who may join late / leave early due to work commitments.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None noted

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020

Minutes were APPROVED.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising: Alicia Newton (AN) said the diversity audit minutes did not offer a clear decision regarding the removal of paintings. Council AGREED for AN to bring the matter to the External Relations Committee (ERC) for discussion and ask for a recommendation to be made to Council.

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

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

Report of Officers Meeting (verbal)

Mike Daly (MD) said key matters discussed were around staffing, including:

- The recruitment of a new Head of Library Services – planned for March/April
- Maintenance of the building whilst closed and the measures in place
- New poster on external railings to promote the Year of Space: featuring an image of Jupiter's atmosphere.

Council-Staff Interactive Virtual Session (verbal update)

MD said the first session was held today: there were good questions, discussion and a genuine interest from staff to understand the decision-making processes of the Board. Bryne Ngwenya (BN) said the session was useful and proposed allocating a little more time for the next session.

Council Elections:

MD noted the names of Council members retiring June 2021. He said in terms of Council member nominations there were 14 but only one president-designate. Graham Goffey (GG) asked if there were any candidates suitable for Science Secretary in 2022. Alex Whittaker (AW) said he was aware of at least one candidate nomination who would be suitable but may not be able to take on the role due to other work commitments. Richard Hughes (RH) said no particular candidates could be endorsed for the role but the ballot information would specify that Council particularly welcome experienced academics.

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Executive Secretary's report (CM/01/21)

Burlington House (BH): RH said there was a huge amount of activity going on behind the scenes and a letter would go out to the Fellowship from The President on behalf of Council by the end of the week with an update on the entire situation: Council will receive an advanced copy. There is an email address box set up for the purpose of gathering all responses. Council may wish to respond to some emails they receive personally but is asked that any relevant content be forwarded to BH address in order to keep complete records. The launch of the public campaign coordinated by AprilSix would be delayed till late February to receive the latest response from MCHLG. RH said the Antiquaries are also exerting considerable pressure with Tim Loughton MP and 10-15 other fellow MPs.

RH noted a relocation project team had been formed and its first meeting will be held w/c 1 Feb.

Library review: RH said a summary version of the report will be made available to Fellows. The implementation plan will await the recruitment of a replacement Head of Library and Information Services.

Awards 2020: RH said there would be a virtual presentation and the main medal winners would be invited to give public lectures: Wollaston winner's March public lecture was confirmed.

Helen Smyth (HS) left meeting. Gemma Sherwood (GS) joined meeting.

Director of Finance & Operations (CM/02/21)

Membership renewals: Alex McPherson (AMc) said that year-on-year the numbers to date were slightly down, with a total of 3300 still to renew. He said an external communications company was being used contact Fellows with reminders. As the BH lease letter will go out to Fellowship letter this week, Council AGREED the renewals communications should be delayed to avoid any unwelcome impacts.

CRM: Alex said the upgrade had concluded with only minor issues. The next decision would be whether to continue with Felinesoft: currently there is planning for both scenarios.

Insurance: AMc said consideration would be given as to whether to make a claim to Hiscock for business interruption due to Covid-19.

Management Accounts: AMc gave an overview focused on year end. He noted the gains made due to reduction in expenditure, as well as £165k reclaimed through the furlough scheme grants. He highlighted the unrealised gain in investment portfolio due to a change in portfolio approach. He said Fellowship renewals showed a lag of £40k year-on-year on absolute revenue received basis which could in part be the introduction of direct debit payments. He said based on renewals to date, the previously forecasted £150-160k drop would seem pessimistic and indications were that the final outcome would be better which could allow for contingent items.

AMc said currently there was an anticipated surplus of £571k for 2020 but this would likely reduce with final adjustments i.e. impairment of receivables/assets prior to the audit due to start 1st March.

AMc

Director of Science and Communications CM/03/21

CPD: AN noted the first CPD programme's income had been £20k.

Climate Scientific Statement: AN said the responses to correspondence received regarding JGS's publication of the statement had explained the peer review process and also the opportunity to submit abstracts for the forthcoming related symposium. AN said Dan Lunt (DL) had agreed to be the convenor for the symposium on climate change w/c May 24 or 31. LW said there needed to be careful wording to not show bias regarding the submissions.

LW also said clear ground rules would need to be outlined in terms of the abstracts: based on scientific work, and clear guidelines and expectations for debate.

Maggie Simmons (MS) said only one scientific rebuttal had been received so far.

Joel Gill (JG) said we need to be careful as to what we respond to, in particular if letters are critiquing the science without evidence.

Position Statement: Joel Gill (JG) asked what stage it was at. AN thanked Council for all the feedback and said MD, RH, JG and AW would work on the document offline.

AW said there had been a lot of differing comments back from Council and so the project group would work towards a statement that can be agreed by all.

MD said the position should reflect what we are doing as a Society with an emphasis on evidence/data. He said that the statement brought back to Council will be open to further comments, but noted it would not be able to satisfy everyone completely. AN said it would be good to have it ready to tie in with COP 26. John Perry (JP) said the positive role of geologists and what they mean to this process was a really important part of communications in the statement: the cause is important but also accepting where we are and focus on how we are going to address the issue geologically. Jim Griffiths (JGr) agreed.

Theme leaders: AN noted there had been a good response for Geohazards theme leader with 12 applications received.

TB joined the meeting.

Director of Publishing (CM/04/21)

MS gave highlights from her report:

Lyell subscriptions: in 2020 there were 173 subscriptions (2019:172): good success on retention of top subscribers, some corporates signing for multi-year subscriptions till end of 2022 and as well as a large South American consortium.

Read and Publish Agreements: Good progress with 16 UK institutions signed up: Oxford and Imperial College amongst others. This allows authors at these institutions to publish for free on an Open Access basis in GSL-published hybrid journals.

ES3 – Earth Science Systems and Society: launched on 4 Jan. The editorial board is very active with three special issues open related to the strategic objectives: Earth science and the race to net zero; Sustainability and the extractive industry; and Hazards in Society. Last week it received its first submission. Kathryn Goodenough (KG) encouraged Council to promote submissions.

CONFIDENTIAL– Lyell hosting platform (confidential to Council)

7. COMPLAINT (CM/05/21)

Discussion regarding complaint (confidential to Council)

8. RISK REGISTER (CM/06/21)

AMc said risk management software had been acquired.

AMc noted additional BH risks had been added to include relocation and the risk levels reviewed. RH said the BH risk had been broken down into four risk to allow better controls and mitigations.

RH said in terms of medium-long term risks his concerns would be the financial outlooks due to a variety of reasons: open access; the downturn in academic membership; and engagement of next generation of Fellows. MD said in light of these

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concerns that perhaps the risk was not rated high enough and should be re-considered.

NOTED by Council.

9. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/07/21)
NOTED by Council.
10. ELECTIONS (CM/08/21-CM/12/21)
- 10.1 *Fellowship (CM/08/21)*
Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 27 January 2021.
- 10.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/09/21)*
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/10/21)*
Council AGREED to elect as Candidate Fellows and Junior Candidate Fellows those applicants listed.
- 10.4 *European Geologist (CM/11/21)*
Council APPROVED those applicants listed as European Geologists.
- 10.5 *Chartered Scientist (CM/12/21)*
Council APPROVED the applicant listed as Chartered Scientist.
11. FCBR - Fellowship Categories and Benefits Review (CM/13/21)
RH spoke to the PowerPoint presentation and key points.
- Membership peaked 2017, since then there is a downward trend by 3% per year with a decline most notably in academia, students, early career and retention of women members could be better.
 - An upsurge in 2014 due to a student marketing campaign shows potential to grow Fellowship.
 - RH said some of the FCBR project's quick wins were already in progress or in place: payment by direct debit; and easier navigation of the website's membership page and greater clarity on concessionary fees.
 - RH said currently there are 17 membership categories including CGeol, CSci etc. so there was a clear need to reduce categories and simplify language. In parallel, there was a need to maintain income so it was necessary to model structures and economic impact.
 - RH noted a mid-career fee option was proposed as stepping stone from early career to full membership.
 - RH said most significant benefits the Society gives away for free and needed to consider a paywall for some of these.

Nik Reynolds (NR) said it was a fantastic piece of work but cautioned against putting Geoscientist behind a paywall as this was one of the ways for the Society to reach out to the general public.

Michael Kehinde (MK) asked if means-tested fees were an option rather than categories. RH said it would be difficult to model financial risk as to what we might exposing ourselves to. He noted unemployed have a concessionary membership fee which he has proposed to reduce and noted that he can also waive fees if requested. MD said further comments can be shared by email.

RH will extend an invitation for a separate session.

CK suggested that free membership students could include roles and responsibilities to involve younger members. CK will share ideas with RH.

12. LEGACY GIVING (CM/14/21) – *Jenny Boland (JBd) in attendance to present*
JBd said the annual average legacy income for organisations similar in size to the Society was £514k per year so there was significant potential to grow this as a source of revenue. She outlined the proposed legacy giving programme which would include creating a legacy giving pack outlining: estate tax benefits; example models of giving; case studies of legacies received, how they were used and their impact; and also case studies of current legacy givers. JBd said legacy givers would become part of Legacy club: 1807 patrons, with benefits for its members to help build and maintain relationships.
Discussion on legacy giving (confidential to Council).

Council APPROVED all the outlined legacy programme objectives and the proposed name and benefits.

JBd/
Council

13. COP 26 – *Florence Bullough (FB) in attendance to present the item*
AN said COP 26 in November 2021 will give the opportunity to highlight the role of Earth science in solutions to climate issues.
FB said the Society would be part of a collaborative bid in order to increase the Society's chances of success. She said the programme was being organised around five themes The key theme most relevant to the Society is energy transition. She noted:

- There were two applications for access to the conference through separate routes:
Blue Zone, run by UNFCCC, is for observer status only: an application has been submitted and will be confirmed spring/summer; and
Green Zone: will have general public access and is where NGOs, charities and other organisations will be looking for space. The cabinet office is in charge of allocation and all organisations must submit an expression of interest in 1000-word proposal for access to space: applications close 5 March. She is working internally and externally on proposal to make clear the role Geoscience key role the energy transition and communicating the need for investment in Geoscience research.
- She is exploring the option of a side event at local university and is in conversation with earth science departments at Glasgow/Strathclyde.
- Collaboration is key aspect for organisers and the Society is working with other organisations e.g. EFG (European Federation of Geologists), UK Centres for Masters Training in Energy Transitions, EGU, Geology for Global Development to develop a unique proposal.

FB asked for Council to support her proposal to apply for the Green Zone, and explore a fringe event as an alternative.

Andrew Bloodworth (AB) said lots of other organisations would be applying so it will be hard to get in the Green Zone, he advised to plan for both eventualities.
AN said in terms of resources the organisation would not have resources to do both.
KM suggested would it be better to proceed with both for the time being.
AW asked if it would be possible to design something that can work for both green zone or fringe and re-emphasised collaborative approach.
KG said in normally bookings were 18 months in advance so a decision would need to be made sooner rather than later.

The Council APPROVED the proposal to pursue both options for the time being but MD noted a decision should be taken soon that would ensure the Society's position in COP 26.

FB said she would have conversation with Glasgow next week and try to establish options. JG said the Society should also consider having Society representatives involved with other meetings and activities at COP 26 e.g. UNESCO as this would

FB (AN)

ensure the its presence and expertise at meetings in case other things don't take place.

MD said he looked forward to FB's feedback/update in April.

14. ACCREDITATION -

AN to circulate the video from Mark Anderson (MA) - Accreditation Committee Chair. AN said MA has been working with Andy Saunders, Accreditation Officer and the Committee towards a workable less onerous approach. The proposed format's focus would be on learning outcomes and demonstrable skills and behaviours in students which are valued by employers. It would be working closely with QAA standards as a basis, with additional skills particular to the Geology. AN said the focus will be on skillset development which gives value as a geologist and a more streamlined process, including for re-accreditation. AN said there were further ideas re professional log books for CPD to develop a portfolio to bring to job interviews and also helps geologists begin the work towards Chartership.

MD asked regarding the roll out timeframe. AN said everything for undergraduates would be ready for sign off in April and for Masters in June.

JB said the start of CPD record was good and fits in with the model employers are now using.

JGr suggested it could tie in with reviews of categories, providing access to FGS is a real opportunity and could be USP for students for Fellowship.

MD NOTED Council's support for the direction of travel and asked AN to thank MA for his work.

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15. AOB

CPD: AM said the programme started yesterday with 89 people signed up (76 for full course -14 lectures). He noted it would need support for this going forward as another source of income and would require better engagement with specialist groups and regional groups as well. He asked Council to support and promote. AM to circulate flyer with Council.

Diamond open access: KG said we currently offer gold or hybrid but there was interest in the community for Diamond access which means author and readers do not pay, so effectively publisher has to pay for what has to be done. She said the model can only work with a volunteers doing publishing and perhaps sponsorship and was often unsustainable as reliant on volunteers. KG said messaging needs to be positive about Society's publishing, there are costs but we should emphasise the benefits.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7 APRIL 2021 – virtual

There will be a business meeting on the afternoon of 7 April 2021, with an Ordinary General Meeting following.

Other Council dates for 2021: 23 June, 22/23 September and 24 November

AGM: 25 June (11.00am)