

# SOCIETY NEWS

## SOCIETY BUSINESS

### RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT POLICY

**Council has recently approved a new policy for the Society's financial reserves that are invested to generate income and capital growth for the Society, writes Treasurer Graham Goffey.**

The Society's directly held investment portfolio comprises mostly large, 'blue chip' companies. Under the responsible investment policy, environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations are incorporated into the investment manager's selection of, and interaction with, companies within the portfolio. The policy is intended to reflect the Society's values of sustainability, responsibility and stewardship and to more explicitly align its investment portfolio with Paris Accord targets.

The extractive sector is a particular policy focus and the Society is clearly well placed to consider the crucial role of geoscientists and extractive companies in the responsible supply of sustainable energy and critical minerals through the energy transition and beyond. Demand is growing for critical minerals e.g. for electrification and power storage, whilst in the absence of radical demand reduction, continued investment is needed to meet global hydrocarbon demand for energy and feedstock for plastics, pharmaceuticals, fertilisers, etc.

The energy transition requires a focus on demand reduction and science-based policies that ensure emissions from domestic and industrial activity are substantially reduced, not simply offshored. The use of carbon capture and storage (CCS) to reduce net global

emissions has long been advocated by the Society, which recognises that extractive companies are best positioned through expertise and capital to deploy CCS. Gas is also likely to be utilised with CCS in the production of decarbonised 'blue' hydrogen fuel, whilst extractive companies are increasingly aware of the need to reduce the carbon footprint of their activities. The responsible investment policy will

prioritise any Society investment holdings in this sector into well-managed, responsible companies undertaking or working towards sustainable extraction.

The Society will avoid investment in companies involved in certain emissions-intensive fossil fuel extraction and combustion activities, unless significant mitigating factors are identified; for example, emissions reduction via CCS. Investment exclusions are also applied to tobacco, alcohol, arms companies, etc. Preferred extractive companies are those working to appreciably reduce their carbon footprint and which are in the vanguard of strategic and operational change towards meeting Paris Accord goals.

Through its deep understanding of the critical role of the extractive and energy sectors, the Society is not anti-fossil fuels. Its investment policy reflects a balanced consideration of how to best achieve the Paris Accord targets and encourage progress towards meeting of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For full details of the Responsible Investment Policy, refer to [www.geolsoc.org.uk/About/policies](http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/About/policies)



### RESEARCH GRANTS

Applications are invited for the 2021 round of the Society research grants. Please download the form from the Society Awards and Research Grants page at [www.geolsoc.org.uk/grants](http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/grants) where you will also find information about all the grants.

The Research Grants committee meets once annually. Applications must reach the Society no later than **12 noon on 8 February 2021** and must be supported by two Fellows of the Society who must each complete a supporting statement form. The committee will only consider complete applications on the appropriate form.



### PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES



**Virtual Public Lecture: 'Reading the ground' to reduce hazards and risks in engineering projects**

**Speaker:** Andrew Hart, Atkins' Ground Engineering practice  
**Location:** Online  
**Date:** 3 December  
**Time:** 6pm GMT

#### Further information

The lecture will be streamed online using Zoom. To book your virtual ticket, and for more information, please visit [www.geolsoc.org.uk/readingtheground](http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/readingtheground)

Contact: The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG T: +44 (0) 20 7434 9944 E: [conference@geolsoc.org.uk](mailto:conference@geolsoc.org.uk)

What your society is doing  
at home and abroad



## SOCIETY BUSINESS

### THE FUTURE OF *GEOSCIENTIST*

2021 will see major developments in *Geoscientist*. Online delivery will increase, providing current news and allowing more opportunities for timely contributions from Fellows and others. Printed copies will be published quarterly, focus on in-depth features and aim to be quality issues that you want to return to and thumb well.

These changes have been planned for a number of reasons, and were considered and endorsed by Council in September. Firstly, the ways people access news have changed and continue to do so. Online access is now the first choice of most. There's an expectation of following developing news as it happens and discovering new findings as they are released. Online *Geoscientist* will aim to meet these expectations, developing with the Society's website and social media channels. Opinions and comments will be welcomed and build on the letters' section that is already a feature of the website.

Secondly, moving to quarterly issues of *Geoscientist* will enable us to focus our resources on a quality magazine that can take long, in-depth views of topics and provide wide perspectives, both visually and in scope. The contents of these issues will dovetail with the news and views on the website, and each issue will continue to be available online. The vibrancy of the new quarterly issues will be reinforced by a new design and production process, which has just been tendered for.

Lastly, and just as critically, the editorial team has been looking at how best to use its resources and find what savings can be made. Developing the magazine on-line and focusing on fewer, but quality, printed issues makes best use of the resources available. Fewer printed issues also reduce print and distribution costs, as well as environmental impacts, and you will have seen that the Society has offered for you to opt out of receiving a print copy.

I hope you will appreciate the reasons for the changes I have outlined above and be pleased with the results. *Geoscientist* depends on your interest, contributions and opinions. Please keep involved, feed us your ideas and let us know your views on the new developments as they unfold.

*Prof. Andy Fleet, Editor-in-Chief, Geoscientist magazine*



### STICKS & STONES

This issue marks the final instalment our Sticks & Stones cartoon. Dalston, Gibbet, Morag and Edgar are off to pastures new, and you can find out what happens to them by visiting [www.stonechatproductions.co.uk](http://www.stonechatproductions.co.uk). On behalf of the Editorial Team and our Fellows, I offer sincere thanks to Dave Hughes for introducing us to these quirky characters (in whom I'm sure many of us recognise some familiar character traits) and for the regular chuckles.

*Amy Whitchurch, Editor, Geoscientist magazine*

### THE YEAR OF SPACE



We are now at the eve of the Society's 2021 Year of Space. Back in July we celebrated the launch of the NASA *Perseverance* rover with an online Q&A with a group of planetary geologists (you can find the full Q&A on the Society's Instagram Stories <https://www.instagram.com/geolsoc/>), and now the rover is on its way to Mars where it is due to land on 18 February 2021. You can follow *Perseverance*'s journey live on the NASA website (<https://mars.nasa.gov/mars2020/>)—as of November, *Perseverance* was travelling at an incredible 61,260 mph (relative to the sun)!

For the Society's Year of Space, we're still busy working on a number of projects and activities. We're excited to announce there will be an entire virtual lecture series on the '*The Geology of Other Planets: A geological journey through our solar system and beyond*'. Tune in as planetary geologists take you on a tour of the rocks and landscapes found on other planets and rocky bodies across the solar system and beyond! We'll learn about the geology of Mercury, our Moon, Mars, the asteroid belt and more in this fantastic lecture series open to all. Information on dates, speakers and how to register will be available on our website here: <https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/space21>.

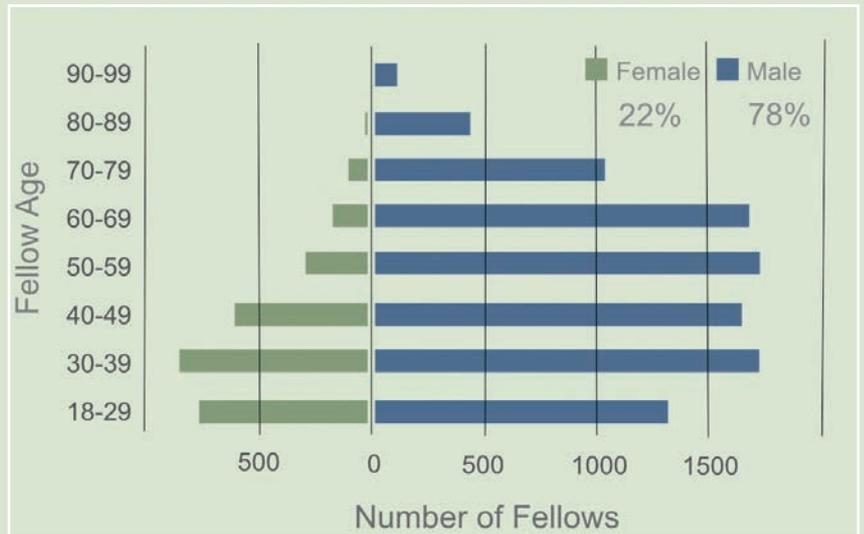
Along with this dedicated lecture series, there will also be some space-themed lectures as part of our popular Public Lecture series. The 2021 series will be held virtually and so will be available wherever you are! Stay tuned for announcements on our space-themed events as part of our regular research conference programme, including a 2-day conference on the *Moon and Early Earth* on 29-30 November 2021.

Look out for an extension to the 100 Great Geosites, but this time with sites in SPACE, as well as education and outreach activities, such as a workshop on planetary landscapes, education resources on planetary geology and some excellent fun facts about rocks across the solar system and beyond!

*Flo Bullough, Head of Policy and Engagement*

# SOCIETY NEWS

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE SOCIETY'S STRATEGIC OPTIONS REVIEW



*Membership Demographics: Gender and age distribution*

The Society’s President, Mike Daly, recently reported that a ‘Strategic Options Review’ was underway to ‘consider our future direction and specifically the relevance of our science and membership programmes’ (Geoscientist 30(7), 16-19, 2020). Megan O’Donnell and Richard Hughes report on the outcomes of that review and the directions our Society will take.

### Emerging challenges

Membership numbers have been in decline since their peak in 2017, and some demographics and marginalised groups are underrepresented. There is a perception that the Society has not kept up to date with emerging trends in the Earth sciences, and has a reputation for traditionalism and exclusivity that acts as a barrier to some.

Record low enrolments in Earth science degree programmes suggest a decreasing popularity of our science, and evidence suggests that the Society is falling out of favour with the next generation of Earth scientists, who communicate and network differently to their predecessors.

### Strategic objectives

Over the past several months, a team of Society staff working with pro bono support from an international consultancy firm and extensive stakeholder input, sought to review and recommend the ways in which our Society could strengthen itself against these challenges. In September, the Society’s Council agreed upon four key strategic objectives aimed at bringing new focus to the science programme, strengthening our existing professional development and education work, tackling diversity challenges and catalysing progress on key operational fronts.

#### 1. Advance multidisciplinary Earth science to inform global issues

In order to offer a high-profile and relevant science program that connects our members across key societal issues, drives innovation, investment and

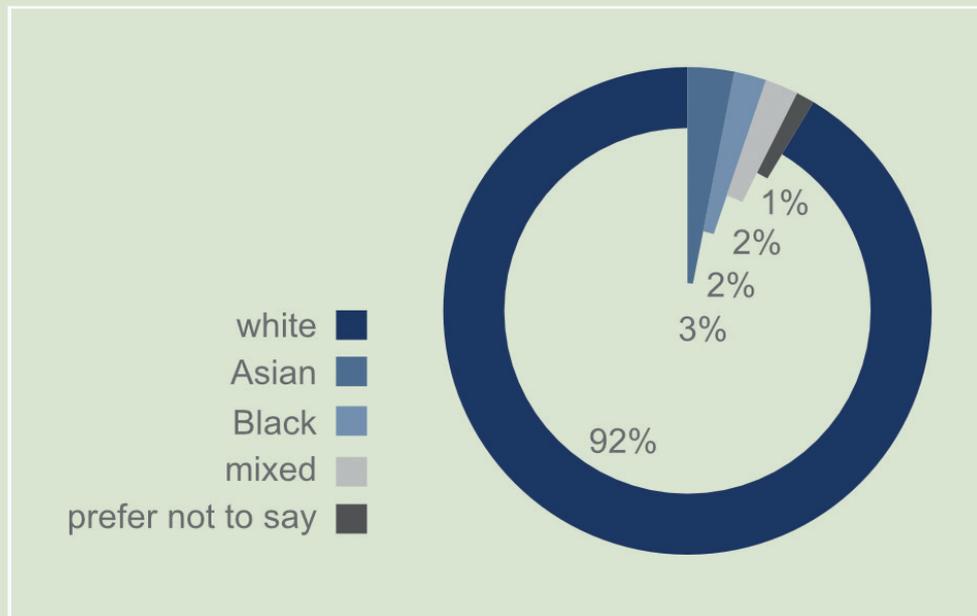
“ THE SOCIETY’S MEMBERSHIP SHOULD REFLECT THE BREADTH OF OUR COMMUNITY, OFFERING A ‘HOME’ FOR EVERY EARTH SCIENTIST. ”



## What your society is doing at home and abroad



Membership  
Demographics:  
Ethnicity



collaboration, and informs public debate, the Society will bring new focus to five key science themes: geohazards, geoengineering and georesilience; climate & environmental change; the energy & materials transition; planetary science; and digital & technological innovation in the Earth sciences.

### 2. Support professional development, careers and education in Earth science

Advocating for the Earth sciences and communicating the societal relevance of the discipline to prospective students will be integral to fostering a diverse, inclusive and high-calibre future generation of experts. Stronger links with academic institutions will be key, supporting educators, researchers and technicians by offering an accessible Society membership structure for all.

The Society recognises its pivotal role in supporting the education and development of Earth scientists across the breadth of the education spectrum. Its unique position as the accreditor of degree courses, as well as the sole offering body for professional qualifications such as Chartered Geologist, provides a strong basis upon which to guide the subject and its practitioners to excellence at every stage in their career.

### 3. Be the inclusive and collaborative home for UK Earth scientists, and increase our international orientation

The Society's membership should reflect the breadth of our community, offering a 'home' for every Earth scientist. To do this, we need to establish both mechanisms and initiatives to drive change, and we welcome input from those already active in this area. Deploying an equitable and accessible membership model

is the Society's greatest priority in this area, and a review and consultation period is underway. Specifically, the Society recognises the need to attract and retain female, Black, Asian, and minority ethnic Earth scientists across the breadth of its membership to claim a truly inclusive and representative community.

### 4. Become a dynamic and responsive organisation with a strong digital identity

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital solutions at a revolutionary pace. The Society will be challenged to meet its members' rapidly evolving expectations for virtual conferences, field trips and meetings, digital networking platforms and discussion forums. Prioritising digital solutions that drive member engagement and enable sector-wide participation will be key.

Finally, adopting a consistent and strong visual brand across the Society's many communication channels will enable the Society to stand out clearly, professionally, and recognisably as the national body.

### Optimism

The four strategic priorities outlined above build upon and bring focus to our 2017-27 strategy. They were developed following detailed research, extensive consultation, reflection, and robust discussion. We head towards 2021 with pride in our accomplishments and with great optimism for our future. We hope you will join us on our journey towards a new future for the Society, confident of its place in the Earth sciences ecosystem.

# SOCIETY NEWS

What your society is doing  
at home and abroad



## GEOCONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEMBER MATTHEW PARKES

The Society is saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Dr Matthew Parkes. Matthew was Assistant Keeper for Earth Science collections at the National Museum of Ireland and a long-serving member on the Society's Geoconservation Committee, as well as the Geological Curator's Group where he was chairman until 2019. His areas of expertise were Irish collections, palaeontology and geology, and his passions included promoting Ireland's geological and mining heritage through publication and outreach activities.

One of his greatest legacies is the Irish national programme of County Geological Audits, which Matthew initiated in 2004 with the publication of counties Sligo and Carlow. He continued to have a central role in each County Audit to the present day and was the author of several follow-up outreach books and exhibitions.

He was also instrumental in securing Ireland's only geological monument, the Valentia Tetrapod Trackway in Kerry, through the purchase of the site by the Government of Ireland.

Matthew held numerous offices throughout his career: he was a proactive, long-term Irish representative with the European association for the conservation of geological heritage (ProGEO); a Chairman of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (MHTI); and the Editor of Earth Science Ireland.

Matthew was a founding member of the Institute of Geologists of Ireland (IGI) and was involved in several IGI working groups, including the Ethics Committee on which he had served on since 2010.

In terms of his work with the Society, his efforts in helping to put together the 2018 Geoconservation Annual Gathering Dublin, where he worked closely with Society staff, were critical in the facilitation of discussions and the sharing of geoconservation projects and challenges across the island of Ireland, as well as the sharing of best practice for geoconservation practitioners.

The Society extends its sincere condolences to his colleagues, friends and family.

*Flo Bullough, Head of Policy and Engagement*

## REMINDER: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO COUNCIL AND TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT

Fellows are reminded that the closing date for the receipt of nominations for Council and for President designate is **12noon on Friday, 8 January 2021**.

You can play an active role in the delivery of the Society's strategy, with opportunities to influence a refreshed and forward-looking Strategy and science programme, to facilitate the communication of science to the media, public and policy makers, and to the certification of best practice in education and the profession.

Council appointment is open to any Fellow irrespective of age, gender, employment or career stage. Nominations from candidates with trustee experience and expertise in scholarly publishing and fundraising are particularly welcome. We strongly encourage nominations from post-doctoral researchers, early and mid-career academic scientists.

Council convenes five times a year (usually Wednesday): four of those meetings take place in the afternoon 14.00 - 17.00. In addition, there is normally a two-day meeting, usually in late September, to discuss strategic issues. All members of Council also serve on one of the standing committees which usually meet three or four times a year. Currently all meetings are held virtually and virtual attendance will continue to be an option. The typical time commitment is eight to ten days annually for ordinary members of Council.

The President-designate nominees will have distinguished themselves in their chosen sector of geosciences and will have achieved further recognition in industry, academe or government. The President chairs the Council meetings and the Elections and Awards Committees, and has the option to introduce some of the public lectures which are held at Burlington House. The presidential term is June 2022- June 2024 and could involve in the order of ~25 days work a year preparing for and chairing Council and general engagement in Society business. The year preceding (June 2021-June 22) they serve as President designate.

Details of the process and the nomination forms for Council and for the position of President-designate are located on the Governance section of the website. Here you can also see the names of those members of Council due to retire at the AGM in June 2021. Please visit the Governance section of the website: [www.geolsoc.org.uk/councilelections](https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/councilelections) or for further queries or additional information please contact [christinamarron@geolsoc.org.uk](mailto:christinamarron@geolsoc.org.uk)

## THE ROYAL COMMISSION FOR THE EXHIBITION OF 1851

The President of the Society is an ex-officio Commissioner of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. Applications are open for their various awards, including Research Fellowships. For further information please go to: [www.royalcommission1851.org/awards/](https://www.royalcommission1851.org/awards/)

## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR CLOSURE

The Society (London and Bath) will close to Fellows at 15.00 on Thursday, 23 December, re-opening at 09.30 on Thursday, 7 January 2021.

Please note that due to Covid-19, visits are by pre-appointment only. Please see our website for more details: <https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/contact>

