

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 22 April 2009

PRESENT: L E Frostick (*Chair*), P Allen, I D Bartholomew, A M Carbray, M G Culshaw, M Daly, E Derbyshire (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), A J Fleet (*Treasurer*), A Lord, J Ludden, D A C Manning (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), N W Rogers (*Secretary, Publications*) and G W Tuckwell

APOLOGIES: C M R Fowler, R E Holdsworth, R Herrington, A Law, J D Marshall, M O Rivett, J Turner, A B Watts (*Secretary, Science*), R S White and R A W Wood

In attendance: E F P Nickless (*Executive Secretary*), N Bilham (*Data Manager*), M Kyriakides (*Finance Director*) and S L Culver (*PA to Executive Secretary*)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies as above were noted.

ESSENTIAL BUSINESS

2. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2008

These were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Environment Group (*CM/08/09*)

It was noted that an Environment Co-ordinating Group has been established comprising Lynne Frostick, Philip Allen, Mike Rivett, Eva Valsami-Jones, Mike Ellis and Edmund Nickless. This group has been established to identify topics for potential multi-disciplinary meetings, the first of which is the William Smith meeting entitled *Environment, Pollution and Human Health* being held at the Society from 21 - 23 September. This meeting will also be used as an opportunity to re-invigorate the Environment Group and to attract new members to serve on its Committee. The Secretary, Professional Matters said that a potential new Committee member had been identified at the last meeting of the Professional Committee. He will advise the name to the Executive Secretary.

Council endorsed this approach.

3.2 Regional Groups Governance (*CM/09/09*)

The report has been received and is being circulated to the Science and External Relations Committees for comment as a number of recommendations impact on the work of those committees. Martin Culshaw agreed to incorporate any comments made by those committees into the final version which will be brought to Council in June. Although Martin Culshaw will no longer be a member of Council at the June meeting he was asked to attend to present the final report. *Martin Culshaw*

DM
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subsequently advised that he will not be able to attend June Council.

4. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2009

With some minor typographical amendments these were agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Nomination for Honorary Fellowship – Professor A K Singhvi

Council recently agreed to adopt a new policy on the awarding of Honorary Fellowship, which stipulates that it should be conferred on individuals who have rendered signal service to science, and geoscience in particular, or who have the potential to render such service from their positions in the wider world; and who by association with the Society send out a clear message about the Society's strategic aims and objectives. Council was also mindful of the need to boost the numbers of distinguished geoscientists in Honorary Fellowship from certain under-represented parts of the world. India is one such country.

The Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs reported that the External Relations Committee has recommended that Honorary Fellowship be conferred upon Professor Ashok Kumar Singhvi in view of this global reputation for his substantive and fundamental contributions to Quaternary geology, climatology and tectonics. Professor Singhvi is Dean of the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad and is a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences. He is a frequent visitor to the UK and is very aware of the Geological Society.

Council agreed that Honorary Fellowship be conferred upon Professor Singhvi.

6. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

6.1 Report of the President-designate and Council ballots (CM/11/09)

The President reported the results of the electronic and postal consultative ballot for the President-designate. A total of 785 valid votes were cast.

The President also reported the results of the electronic and postal consultative ballot for Council. A total of 802 valid votes were cast compared with 746 in 2008.

All candidates have been informed of the outcome.

It was noted that the number of Fellows participating in voting represents around 7% of the electorate which is very low and it was agreed that the Elections Standing Committee will consider and make recommendations to Council on actions that might be taken to improve participation and widen representation.

6.2 Friendship & Schools Affiliate Schemes (CM/12/09)

A proposal was approved by the Management & Finance Committee at their last meeting to establish these two schemes. The detail of both schemes remains to be worked up. Council noted that the Friendship Scheme will only be open to those who are not eligible to seek election as a Fellow of the Society.

Council endorsed the proposal.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT (CM/13/09)

Council noted that there had been one reported incident since their last meeting when a member of staff received what was believed to be an electric shock. An Accident Report form was completed. An electrician was called in and all circuits and appliances were thoroughly checked. No faults were found. The cause has since been identified as a static shock. The whole area has now been treated with an anti-static product. BBi Alternative Solutions carried out a hazard audit on 6 April. Staff will be attending a counter terrorism session on 16 June 2009. There are now six members of staff who have completed the First Aid at Work qualification.

8. REPORT OF THE AUDIT PANEL (CM/14/09)

The Treasurer reported that a number of actions have been identified by the Audit Panel both in relation to the 2008 Audit and other matters. These were in hand. The Treasurer also confirmed that the Society's auditors, BDO, had been re-appointed for a three year period following a tendering exercise.

9. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

9.1 Report of the Management & Finance Committee (CM/15/09)

The Treasurer reported that the substantive business of the meeting held on 1 April was the Accounts for 2008. Other items were:-

- Progress on real time broadcasting of events held at the Society where a reliable and highly cost effective solution has been identified to allow delivery and participation in conferences and other Society events which it is proposed to test on President's Day. For events attracting a registration fee there is still some detail to be worked up on determining appropriate online access charges.
- Donations policy - a draft as below was discussed by the Management & Finance Committee and recommended for approval.

From time to time the Society receives unsolicited requests for financial support. In considering these, the Society will not:-

1. *donate to 'commercial' organisations*
2. *donate to 'publicly funded' bodies, including universities*
3. *donate to individuals*
4. *donate to requests which could be construed as a Research Grant.*
5. *make up funding shortfalls in the general running of charities/organisations*

6. *Donations should be for specific one-off purposes where costs are clearly defined*

7. *Ideally there should be an identified relationship between the applicant and the Society and/or a shared interest in the activity*

Maximum for any one donation should be £1k but there could be exceptions if funds allow. It was also suggested that the Society should set aside a maximum of £5k each year within the budget for donations.

Council approved the policy.

- A prospectus put together by the Development & Fundraising Committee

outlining the work of the Society and identifying possible areas of collaboration with outside bodies had been printed. It was included with delegate packs at PGCVII and was sent with the renewal notice to Corporate Affiliates. Council thanked those involved with producing this attractive brochure.

9.2 February Management Accounts (*CM/16/09*)

Noted.

9.3 2008 Audited Accounts (*CM/17/09*)

Andrew Stickland, Partner at BDO, joined the meeting. There is a smaller surplus than in previous years but this is only to be expected in the current economic climate. Council raised the issue of the valuation of the Library stock and Andrew Stickland reported that the treatment of this may change with changes in accounting standards for heritage assets. Council urged the Auditors to follow this up as a matter of urgency bearing in mind the deleterious impact that the valuation has, for example, on fund raising efforts.

Council questioned whether the Society is doing enough to demonstrate its status as a registered charity and Andrew Stickland confirmed that the Society's objectives fulfil the public benefit test.

The Finance Director will be undertaking an exercise to see whether some of the restricted funds can be released.

Council approved the audited accounts which were then signed by the President and Treasurer.

9.4 Auditors' Management Letter (*CM/18/09*)

The letter had been discussed by the Audit Panel and Management & Finance Committee. There are a number of operational and financial control issues which have not had a negative impact on the accounts but which need to be tightened up. The Finance Director will be addressing these and reporting to the Auditors on a quarterly basis; he will also prepare an action plan of items and dates for regular reporting to the Management & Finance Committee.

The Treasurer reported that the Audit Panel had been concerned about the lack of accounts from some Specialist Groups. He asked that any Council member involved with these groups should try to ensure that the accounts are submitted. The Data Manager said that as part of the Business Planning process Specialist and Regional Groups will be asked to report on their activities during the year and this process will highlight whether any financial report is required. Council approved this approach. It was noted that the financial activities of the Regional and Specialist Groups are the ultimate responsibility of the Society.

9.5 Serious Incident Report (*CM/19/09*)

Council noted that there have been no serious incidents to report since the last meeting.

9.6 Research Grants (*CM/20/09*)

The total amount requested by applicants was circa £29k and the budget for this year was £10k. The review panel had agreed to award just under £13k with one award receiving part-funding from the Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust which had contributed £1k. Council ratified the grants made.

10. FELLOWSHIP FEES FOR 2010 (CM/21/09)

In the period 2004-2008 Fellowship subscription fees were increased by 50% in real terms the objective being that Fellowship fees should cover the cost of Fellowship services. An exercise undertaken recently showed that Fellowship income broadly matches the cost of Fellowship services. The Budget & Programme Committee recommended that there should be no increase in the 2010 fees from the 2009 level. This proposal was taken to the Management & Finance Committee on 1 April and was agreed. The Society wished to encourage a larger number of younger people into Candidate Fellowship and it was suggested that the rate should be reduced to £15 from its current level of £31. It was also suggested that a new category of Junior Candidate Fellowship should be introduced for those aged 18 or less which could also be used to build a relationship with schools. In addition it was proposed that as from 2010 all journals should be provided electronically and that those wishing to receive a hard copy should pay a supplement of £10. Thought might need to be given to allowing Fellows who subsequently resign enduring access to the journal of choice for that period during which they were in membership. The Executive Secretary also agreed to look at the subscription rate for MSc students and report back to the next meeting of Council. A wider issue was if the Society should move to open access.

Council commended the proposals for approval at the Annual General Meeting on 3 June.

11. ACCREDITATION PANEL POOL (CM/22/09)

The Accreditation Panel is charged with accrediting university under graduate programmes. A pool of members is available from which names are selected reflecting the particular emphasis of the programme applying for accreditation. The Panel has recently introduced a 5 year term, but with the option for reappointment.

There have recently been some retirements from the pool and new members have been identified , namely:-

- Richard Teeuw, Portsmouth
- Kate Brodie, Manchester
- David Hodgson, Liverpool
- Mike Wilson, Environmental Services Group Ltd

Council approved the appointment of these four new members.

12. SPECIALIST GROUPS

12.1 Environment & Industrial Geophysics Specialist Group (EIGG) (CM/23/09)

The EIGG wishes to change its name to the Near-surface Geophysics Group. Their view is that the current name is outdated and no longer provides an accurate reflection of the broad range of specialisms and expertise of EIGG members. The proposal was discussed at the Science Committee and subsequently all specialist groups were invited to comment on the proposal. One comment has been received to the effect that it would be preferable to style the group "Geophysics Group" as that would have a broader appeal and be more inclusive.

Council approved the change of name to the *Near-surface Geophysics* Group but asked George Tuckwell to head a small committee to review if any other action was needed to increase the visibility of geophysics as a whole within the Society.

12.2 Joint Association for Quaternary Research (CM/24/09)

The Joint Association for Quaternary Research has dissolved and the Quaternary Research Association wishes to apply for affiliated status with the Geological Society.

A copy of the proposed new constitution was requested but not received. This item was therefore withdrawn from discussion at this Council meeting.

13. ELECTIONS

13.1 Fellowship (CM/25/09)

Council agreed to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed in CM/25/09 should be elected as Fellows at the OGM on 22 April 2009.

13.2 Chartered Geologists (CM/26/09)

The applications from Fellows to become Chartered Geologists listed in CM/26/09 had been approved by the Chartership Panel and were agreed by Council.

13.3 Candidate Fellowship (CM/27/09)

Council agreed to elect those applicants listed in CM/27/09 as Candidate Fellows.

13.4 European Geologists (CM/28/09)

No applications.

14. BUSINESS PLAN 2008-2010 (CM/29/09)

The latest version, reflecting developments since it was last reviewed in November, was noted. Key changes were:-

- The Virtual Conference review has been completed and the action to implement real time online participation in Society events has been added to the Business Plan;
- The new Chartership arrangements are now in operation and a Chartership Officer has been appointed; and
- Two new items, Friends of the Society and Schools Affiliate schemes, have been added.

15. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE JANUARY RESIDENTIAL (CM/30/09)

At its January residential meeting, Council discussed three major themes:

- The scope of the Society, the ways in which Earth science is evolving, and ideas about how the Society should influence or react to these processes
- Presence in overseas markets and communities, including China, India and Europe
- Skills, including career-long professional support, mothers returning to work, and lifelong learning

A number of actions and areas requiring further work were identified. Council agreed the actions to be taken against each item as listed at Annex A.

ROUTINE ITEMS

Council noted the following items, which were taken as read:-

16. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/31/09)

Science Committee
Publications Committee

Information Management Committee
Professional Committee

17. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT (CM/32/09)

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

The President thanked those members of Council standing down in June:-

Alex Carbray
Martin Culshaw
Bob Holdsworth
Mike Rivett
Nick Rogers
Tony Watts
Bob White
Rachel Wood

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is 17 June 2009

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE JANUARY RESIDENTIAL (CM/30/09)

A number of actions and areas requiring further work were identified. Progress against these items, suggested next steps or agreed actions are as follows:

- a. A major rebranding of GSL was proposed, as a springboard for more effective communication of who we are and what we do. Further work is needed before an informed decision can be made as to whether this would be beneficial and worthwhile.

Proposal: to be developed by staff initially, and brought back to Council for substantive discussion later in the year.

- b. It was proposed that we try to develop an agreed GSL position on the policy and practice of research funding allocation, before engaging with NERC and government about this issue. This needs to be informed by our initiatives to address the skills agenda, considered alongside MSc funding, etc. Considerable further research of the data will also be required.

Proposal: Council returns to this issue once the industry-academia Geoscience Skills Forum is established (see below).

- c. There were a number of proposals from the breakout groups on India and China to produce policy papers on making professional support services available, open up the Lyell Collection and Shell London Lectures, forge links with the Academy of Sciences, etc. There was also discussion of the benefit of acting in concert with European partners, and the view that engagement in Europe was not worthwhile was rejected. It was agreed that any new initiatives to engage with India or China should be driven by strategic requirements, and that a prerequisite was therefore to identify what the drivers are for such engagement, and what GSL's aims are.

Proposal: the External Relations Committee is asked to look at this initially, and to report back to Council.

- d. It was agreed that Science Committee should look at opportunities to take a more active role in EGU, by sponsoring symposia, etc. Annual GSL conferences in Europe, in collaboration with local geological societies, were also discussed – FP7 themes might sometimes be the basis of some of these meetings, recognising that a key driver is to build influence and credibility at a European level in terms of policy making.

Proposals: the Science Committee is asked to examine the scope for engagement with EGU and the establishment of GSL European conferences; and External Relations Committee looks at the broader issue of building influence and policy engagement in Europe.

- e. The need to look at the Honorary Fellowship system, and how it can be used to help deliver the Society's strategic objectives, particularly overseas, was agreed. Work on this has started, but is not yet complete.

Action in hand - the External Relations Committee will report to Council shortly.

- f. Establishment of a 'Women in Geoscience' group was agreed – to act as a support group, raise consciousness, and generate ideas for Council to consider.

Action: this needs a champion on Council to get the group underway.

- g. It was agreed that there was work to be done examining how the Society operates, and how this might be made more family friendly, noting that this is not just a concern for

women. A particular concern is the timing of events (within the day, and within the year). Since the January meeting, Shell London Lectures have been run in the afternoon as well as in the evening. Childcare facilities at conferences were also flagged.

Proposal: the staff should be asked to carry out a wider review, and report back to Council.

- h. Council agreed that a short term working group should be established, to give a steer to the Education Committee in developing a plan for Lifelong Learning, aimed at a range of non-professionals with an interest in geoscience. This group, which includes the chair of the Education Committee, has now met, and a report is in preparation.

Action: this will be considered by the Education Committee at its meeting in May, and a report will be made to the next meeting of Council.

- i. It was agreed that while the Society offers a great deal in the way of professional support services, these could be joined up and communicated to current and potential Fellows more effectively.

Proposal: now that the new Chartership arrangements are in place, the Professional Committee is asked to consider this initially, as work on Fellowship recruitment and retention gets underway. Staff have had initial discussions about these issues, and remain in communication with the IChemE, whose Chief Executive, David Brown, addressed Council at its residential meeting.

- j. It was agreed that a group should be set up to address workforce and skills issues – this might be called the ‘Geoscience Skills Forum’, and include representatives of employers, academics, and other interest groups. Issues which this group might address include areas of skills shortage, university curricula, training, and funding of postgraduate education and research. This group should be the springboard for engagement with NERC and government on these issues.

Proposal: a short term working group is established to agree a model and terms of reference for the continuing group.