

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 17 June 2009

- PRESENT: L E Frostick (*Chair*), P Allen (*Secretary, Science*), M Brown, E Derbyshire (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), A J Fleet (*Treasurer*), C M R Fowler, R Herrington, R A Hughes, B Lovell (*President designate*), P Maliphant, S Marriott, S Monro, G W Tuckwell, D J Vaughan and N R G Walton
- APOLOGIES: I D Bartholomew, M Daly, A Law, A Lord, J Ludden, D A C Manning (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), J D Marshall and J Turner (*Secretary, Publications*)
- In attendance: E F P Nickless (*Executive Secretary*), N Bilham (*Head of Strategy & External Relations*), M Kyriakides (*Finance Director*) and S L Culver (*PA to Executive Secretary*)

The new members of Council were welcomed: M Brown, R Hughes, B Lovell, P Maliphant, S Marriott, S Monro, D Vaughan and N Walton.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies as above were noted.

ESSENTIAL BUSINESS

2. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2009

These were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Regional Groups governance and model constitution (CM/33/09)

At its April meeting Council noted that a report on Regional Groups governance had been made under the chairmanship of Martin Culshaw and submitted to the Professional Committee. It had then been circulated to the Science and External Relations Committees for their comments prior to being re-submitted to Council. Council agreed the report and its recommendations as follows:

- 1) *The Regional Groups should remain under the Professional Committee for governance purposes.*
- 2) *The Regional Groups Coordination Committee should be abolished and Chairs of Regional Groups become full members of the Professional Committee.*
- 3) *The Professional Committee agendas should include matters of strategic and operational importance to the Regional Groups. Information-related matters should be communicated by email and/or a Regional Groups web forum with the Fellowship Services Manager being the 'hub' for communication.*
- 4) *The Young Geoscientists Group should come under the Professional Committee for governance purposes with the Chair of the YGG being a full member of the Committee. The Vice President for Regional Groups should act as a champion for the Young*

Geoscientists Group, as for the Regional Groups.

- 5) *The position of Vice President for Regional Groups should remain but Terms of Reference should be prepared and approved that reflects any changes to the current role resulting from this Review.*
- 6) *The Regional Groups are an important part of the Geological Society, providing a link to it for those who cannot attend events in London. They need increased encouragement and support, not abolition.*
- 7) *The current structure of the Regional Groups does not need altering. Suggestions for change should usually come from the Regional Groups themselves. Regional Groups should be asked to comment on the structure in their annual returns.*
- 8) *The Geological Society needs to collate data on Regional Group Committee turn-over and meeting attendances to be able to monitor the 'health' of the Regional Groups. Criteria should be established to 'flag-up' potentially failing Regional Groups and initiate remedial action.*
- 9) *Changes to the Regional Group structure in Scotland are not proposed. The Central Scotland Regional Group should continue to hold occasional meetings in Aberdeen. Similar action should be taken by the Northern Regional Group with regard to West Cumbria.*
- 10) *The role of the Regional Groups should be expanded to include aspects of the changes in the Chartership application process. This change should be incorporated into the Regional Groups' constitution.*
- 11) *The model Regional Group constitution will need redrafting to take account of the recommendations in this Review. Appropriate changes are proposed. The maximum number of ordinary Committee members allowed should be increased from 4 to 8.*

Council approved the model constitution noting that it will be tailored to reflect any individual group's specific needs and/ differences. At discussion under item CM/46/09 (Standing Committees) it was agreed that the chairs of the Regional Groups should be given the authority to delegate another member to attend meetings of the Professional Committee.

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3.2 Honorary Fellowship – Professor Singhvi

Council noted that his name has now been advertised in *Geoscientist* and, barring objections, will be put forward for election to Honorary Fellowship at the September OGM.

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3.3 Subscription rates for MSc students (CM/34/09)

At its April meeting Council approved a reduction in the Candidate Fellowship rate for 2010 and asked the Executive Secretary to look at the subscription rate for MSc students. The current rate is £49 and Council were asked to consider reducing the rate to £35. Council agreed that the rate should be reduced to £35 from October 2009 and asked that those eligible have information about membership and the rate early in their course.

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4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

4.1 Dates of meetings of Council and sub committees (CM/35/09)

Noted.

ALL

4.2 PERC Code 2008 (CM/36/09)

The Society, with the Institute of Geologists of Ireland, the Institute of Mining, Mineralogy and Materials and the European Federation of Geologists has been active in promoting a Pan-European Reserves and Resources Reporting Code, the first edition of which was issued in 2001 and has now been updated as PERC Code 2008.

As a sponsoring organisation of the Code all Fellows of the Society who work on reserve and resource reporting are bound by it under the Society's Code of Conduct.

EN

Council endorsed the updated version of the Code and its enforcement on Fellows.

4.3 Archiving and Obituaries

Bernard Leake, former President of the Society, raised this issue at the Annual General Meeting and had subsequently written to the President. His view is that present archiving of Society activities and of Fellows contributions to the science, the profession and the public good is unsatisfactory and must be improved as a safeguard for the future. This is particularly important with information that appears on the web site and e-mail bulletins. With regard to obituaries only around 150 members out of over 9,000 have deposited any account of their lives. He suggested that Council should review the list of deceased Fellows and try to suggest possible obituary writers and Fellows should also be encouraged to deposit with the Society accounts of their lives or, if preferred, their professional activities only. He was also concerned that as the Fellowship is now made up of around 80% non academics it is not so easy to uncover their professional activities as those who have an extensive record of publications.

Council agreed that these matters must be addressed and asked R Hughes, as Secretary of the Information Management Committee, to discuss them at its next meeting. The issue of archiving modern records will also be raised at the Library Advisory Committee. A new policy is required to encourage Fellows to lodge accounts of their lives and this will also be discussed by the External Relations Committee.

RH

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5. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT (CM/37/09)

Council noted that there had been one reported incident since the last meeting when a member of staff cut his finger on a paper guillotine. The injury required his attendance at a walk in clinic and an Accident Report was filed. A new guard had been ordered for the guillotine which will not be used until this has been fitted.

The Health and Safety Audit was tabled. Council noted that several items had low scores and the Executive Secretary said that the report had only recently been received and that he would report back to the next meeting on what remedial action had been taken. Council also asked him to find out from the Health and Safety Auditors whether 78% as shown in the summary was a satisfactory score.

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It was also suggested that an environmental audit should be undertaken and the Executive Secretary said he would look into this.

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6. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

6.1 April Management Accounts (CM/38/09)

It was noted that there was nothing untoward to report and that the management team continues to exercise close scrutiny and will advise the Management & Finance Committee if there is any significant deterioration in the pattern of income or unforeseen or large unbudgeted expenditure.

6.2 Overdraft Permission (CM/39/09)

The Bye-laws stated that the Society could not borrow money without the unanimous approval of Council. It had therefore become customary to ask each new Council for permission to seek an overdraft facility, should the need arise over the summer months when income was low. An overdraft facility would avoid having to realise investments should the market be unfavourable. All members of Council agreed that the Treasurer could seek an overdraft of up to £250k should the need arise and it was noted that if the facility is taken up the Treasurer will write advising Council: those members of Council not present would also be asked to give approval (*this was done and unanimous approval was given*).

6.3 Serious Incident Reporting (CM/40/09)

The auditors have drawn attention to the requirements of charity law and that the trustees as a matter of routine should take reasonable steps to assess and mitigate any risks to their charity's activities or beneficiaries, and to confirm that any serious incidents have been reported as part of the annual return. These incidents include significant loss of funds, significant sums of money or other property donated from an unknown or unverified source, unlawful activity by a member of staff or trustee including links to proscribed (banned) or terrorist organisations.

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

7. FELLOWSHIP MATTERS

Removal of Fellows and Candidate Fellows for non-payment of the 2009 subscriptions (CM/41/09)

Council agreed to remove from Fellowship those Fellows who had not paid their 2009 subscription by 30 June 2009 unless they are in discussion about their subscription with the Fellowship Office. Council was asked to encourage those Fellows known to them to pay their subscription and remain in Fellowship.

ALL

Council said they would be interested to know the conversion rate from Candidate Fellow to Fellow and it was suggested that this topic is trailed at November Council and then discussed in detail at the January Residential.

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8. ELECTIONS

8.1 Fellowship (CM/42/09)

Council agreed to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed in CM/42/09 should be elected as Fellows at the OGM on 17 June 2009.

8.2 Chartered Geologists (CM/43/09)

The applications from Fellows to become Chartered Geologists listed in CM/43/09 had been approved by the Chartership Panel and were agreed by Council.

8.3 Candidate Fellowship (CM/44/09)

Council agreed to elect those applicants listed in CM/44/09 as Candidate Fellows.

8.4 European Geologists (CM/45/09)

Council noted the names listed who were elected European Geologists at the European Federation of Geologists' meeting on 16 May 2009.

9. COMMITTEE AND PANEL MEMBERSHIPS

9.1 Standing Committees (CM/46/09)

Council noted that the Regional Groups Co-ordinating Committee no longer exists and that the Chairs of all Regional Groups will be invited to attend Professional Committee. Council agreed that the Chairs of these Groups should have the authority to delegate attendance at Professional Committee and that the constitution discussed at item 3.1 should be amended accordingly.

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It is important that there are strong links between various committees and Council noted that members have been appointed to ensure this. Council asked that this practice continues in future years. R Pankhurst is the link between Publications and Science, A Lord between External Relations and Science and D Vaughan between Publications Management and Information Management. R Herrington agreed to be the linking member between Science and Information Management.

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9.2 Disciplinary Panel (CM/47/09)

The membership of the Disciplinary Panel was agreed although a senior chartered representative is required from the mining industry. The list will be brought back to the September meeting of Council with proposals from that industry.

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9.3 Committees and Panels (CM/48/09)

Council noted the membership of committees and panels reporting to Standing Committees. Two amendments were made: S Marriott has agreed to join the Library Advisory Committee and A Fleet is not a member of but is in attendance at the Audit Panel (to be renamed Audit Committee). The reason for this change of name is to avoid confusion with the newly created Chartership Audit Panel which has been put in place as a result of the new Chartership validation procedures. It reports direct to Council and is chaired by R Allington. Other members are V Banks and R Chaplow with M de Freitas in an advisory capacity for the first year.

10. BUSINESS PLAN 2008-2010 (CM/49/09)

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

- The reviews of Regional Group governance and Lifelong Learning have been completed. The implementation of the recommended changes to Regional Group governance and the development and implementation of a Lifelong Learning plan have been added.
- Replacements for retiring Officers and Committee chairs have been identified. Council owners for Environment Group and Friends of the Society need to be identified.
- Two new items, Friends of the Society and Schools Affiliate schemes, have been added.

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There are two new items, not mentioned in the report to Council, which have been added and which will appear in the next version of the Business Plan as items A27 and A28. These are:

- A review of GSL geophysics coverage (services, Specialist Groups, etc) to be led by George Tuckwell, as agreed in April (this followed on from the discussion about renaming the EIGG (Environmental and Industrial Geophysics Group))

- The establishment of a Geoscience Skills Forum, which came out of the January meeting and was agreed at the April meeting, to help join up the needs of employers, national skills needs, and education provision

Council asked about the situation with the GAIA group. The Executive Secretary replied that a solid scientific core has yet to be established but that the group is being encouraged to have a series of meetings.

The Environment Group was discussed. The Executive Secretary said that the original group is defunct but that a co-ordinating group has been formed to generate some meetings, the first of which is the William Smith meeting in September, and it is hoped that there will be attendance from enthusiastic and interested Fellows who might be willing to sit on the re-formed committee of the Environment Group. It was suggested that the specialist groups are asked to report regularly on their meeting topics to identify whether these include issues relating to the environment. It was agreed that the Science Committee should take forward this suggestion and in addition identify topics of interest for a newly-formed Environment Group. It may be useful to share these topics with other organisations, such as the Royal Astronomical Society, to explore opportunities for joint meetings.

PA

It was noted that the External Relations Committee is also looking at links with other organisations and will be reporting to Council, perhaps as a topic for the January residential meeting.

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11. LIFELONG LEARNING (CM/50/09)

At its January residential meeting, 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 geosciences.

This group met on 14 April and the Education Committee considered the output of this group at its 19 May meeting. It welcomed the report as a helpful starting point for developing a Lifelong Learning plan for the Society - a task with which it is charged. The main points raised in discussion were:

- The Committee endorsed the clear distinction drawn between Continuing Professional Development (CPD), aimed at professional geoscientists, and Lifelong Learning, intended for non-professionals.
- It recognised that the non-professional audience covers a wide range, from those with a passing interest in a particular topic to those looking for longer term involvement, who may be quite knowledgeable.
- Given the constraint on resources, including staff time, the Society should act primarily as a portal, directing people to useful resources and providing reliable information, and stimulating activity where there are gaps.
- The Society's own activities should be carefully targeted, building on existing activities (such as developing online materials and activities in support of Shell lectures) and focusing on topical issues (for example, providing FAQs and fact sheets).
- The Committee supported the idea of extending the GSL Course Endorsement Scheme, which currently applies only to CPD courses, to third party Lifelong Learning courses, but recognised that this would need careful examination, and would have resource implications.

Council had a wide ranging discussion. It was noted that the Society is already engaged in several initiatives such as the Shell Lectures, Friends of the Society Scheme and public engagement with politicians to help bring the geosciences to a wide

audience. It would also be useful to find out what geological interest groups there are around the country and it was suggested that the help of the Regional Groups may be sought. S Monro and S Marriott will discuss how to take this forward.

SMo
SM

S Monro and the working group were thanked.

ROUTINE ITEMS

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

12. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/51/09)

Science Committee
External Relations Committee
Professional Committee

13. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT (CM/52/09)

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

N Walton suggested that a method of increasing membership is to get children interested in geosciences at an early age. He mentioned Earthwatch which was previously sponsored by Shell and distributed to schools. The Education Committee will discuss finding sponsorship.

NB

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is 23 September 2009