

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 29 September 2010

PRESENT: J P B Lovell (*Chair*), P Allen (*Secretary, Science*), S Brough, R W H Butler, A J Fleet (*Treasurer*), S A Gibson, R Herrington, A Law, A R Lord (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), P Maliphant, S Marriott, D A C Manning (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), S Monro, C P Summerhayes, J Tellam, G W Tuckwell, J Turner (*Secretary, Publications*), D J Vaughan and N R G Walton

APOLOGIES: M Brown, M Daly, R A Hughes, J Ludden

In attendance: E F P Nickless (*Executive Secretary*), N Bilham (*Head of Strategy & External Relations*), M Kyriakides (*Head of Finance*) and S L Jones (*PA to Executive Secretary*)

The Chair welcomed John Tellam to his first meeting of Council.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Council members were asked to declare if they had an interest, as defined in the Society's policy, in any of the items on the agenda. There were no declarations.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies as above were noted.

ESSENTIAL BUSINESS

3. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2010

These were agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 BGS Core Store

In the absence of a representative from the British Geological Survey and no report from the Petroleum Group discussion was held over until the November meeting of Council. . The Chair said that the Society's position on this matter continues to be that there must be no damage in transferring the cores.

4.2 Development & Fundraising Committee

Colin Summerhayes, Vice President with responsibility for the Development & Fundraising Committee, said that the committee met in July. One of the outcomes from this very positive meeting was to organise a corporate affiliates' event on 17 November at Burlington House to which existing as well as potential corporate affiliates have been invited. Nick Petford will talk about the recent volcanic eruption in Iceland. Members of Council were invited to attend.

4.3 Guiding principles in responding to invitations to comment (*CM/53/10*)

At their meeting in June 2010 Council were asked to comment publicly on the possible prosecution in Italy of seven geologists in relation to the earthquake in L'Aquila in

April 2009. There were other examples of the Society being asked to intervene or comment on actions planned by other organisations. A policy had been drafted by the Head of Strategy & External Relations and reviewed by the President, Secretary for External & Foreign Affairs and the Executive Secretary.

Council approved these guiding principles as attached at Annex A and noted that they will be reviewed from time-to-time in the light of working practice.

The Secretary, Professional Committee said that he had been asked on occasion by Fellows to comment on matters relating to individuals and it may be helpful to draft similar guidelines to use in those circumstances.

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4.4 Submission to NERC call for evidence: Integrated Ocean Drilling Programme

NERC had asked individuals rather than representative bodies to comment and although the Society had not been invited NERC had said that they would receive a submission. This had been prepared by the President, Secretary for External & Foreign Affairs, Colin Summerhayes, the Executive Secretary and the Head of Strategy & External Relations, together with Mike Bickle and the Director of the British Geological Survey. It had been circulated as a late paper for Council to consider whether it met the guiding principles just approved. Some amendments were suggested and it was agreed that the final submission would be approved by the President, Colin Summerhayes, the Executive Secretary and the Head of Strategy and External Relations.

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Fellowship matters – striking off (CM/54/10)

4.5 It was noted that 445 Fellows and Candidate Fellows were removed from Fellowship at the end of June.

5. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

5.1 Honorary Fellowships (CM/55/10)

See confidential annex for names put forward.

It was noted that the Secretary, External & Foreign Affairs will put a paper to November Council about Honorary Fellows and how they might best be asked to represent the Society.

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6. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT (CM/56/10)

There has been one reported incident when a member of staff bruised her finger by trapping it in the Library door. Council noted the report, that all outstanding items relating to the fire report on Burlington House had been completed, the outcome of the Display Screen Equipment Assessment at the Publishing House, and that a further member of staff at Burlington House is now a First Aider.

7. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

7.1 Report of the Management & Finance Committee (CM/57/10)

The substantive items of the meeting held on 15 September were the Budget for 2011 and the Business Plan 2011-2013.

The committee had also discussed Careers Day which was scheduled to take place in November. There had been a large decrease in the number of supporters who had come forward and the committee had suggested that the event should be postponed to early 2011 and held at Burlington House. Council agreed and noted that the Chair, Professional Committee will write to the Chair of the Committee of Heads of

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University Geoscience Departments and invite her to work with the Society on a revised programme.

7.2 July Management Accounts (CM/58/10)

There was a shortfall of approximately £15k within month due to lower than anticipated book sales and lower than expected investment income against a budget which was spread evenly across the year. There was also an exchange gain loss of £8k as the dollar depreciated against the pound from £1=\$1.50 in June to £1=\$1.56 in July. The year end forecast showed a surplus of £101k.

7.3 Investment Committee (CM/59/10)

The Investment Committee met on 2 August. The Treasurer said that the Society's investment managers, UBS, are on track to yield the income requirement of £200k from investments and this committee, as well as the Budget & Programme Committee will be discussing whether this target figure should be increased.

7.4 Serious Incident Reporting (CM/60/10)

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.

8. ELECTIONS

8.1 Fellowship (CM/61/10)

Council agreed to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed in CM/61/10 should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 29 September 2010.

8.2 Chartered Geologists (CM/62/10)

The applications from Fellows to become Chartered Geologists listed in CM/62/10 had been approved by the Chartership Panel and were agreed by Council.

8.3 Candidate Fellowship and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/63/10)

Council agreed to admit those applicants listed in CM/63/10 as Candidate Fellows and Junior Candidate Fellows.

8.4 Chartered Scientists (CM/64/10)

Council agreed to elect the candidates named in CM/64/10 as a Chartered Scientists.

9. BUSINESS PLAN 2008-2010 (CM/65/10)

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

- The appointment of a new Fellowship Services Manager.
- The Geophysics Review will report to Council at the present meeting.
- The full Library Review, working to broadened terms of reference agreed by

Council in June, will report to Council at its November meeting.

10. BUSINESS PLAN 2011-2013 (CM/66/10)

The Head of Strategy & External Relations said that the Budget & Programme Committee met on 13 September and the Management & Finance Committee on 15 September. Both committees had reviewed the work on the Plan to date. The main change is that it will be a three-year rolling plan.

They were supportive of the approach taken, and of the content of the plan so far. They recognised that developing the sectional/ project plan summaries behind the main grid, particularly the financial analysis, will take considerable work, and with that in mind, the intention is to retain the focus on projects (new and continuing) for now, with a view to extending this treatment to areas of core activity at a later stage. Council said that it was important not to spend a disproportionate amount of time completing the information, that the new process must be used as a tool not the main driver, and that emphasis should be placed on resource intensive projects and those with greatest reputational risk.

In later versions, greater prominence will be given to the strategic objectives which projects are intended to address and, at the request of the Management & Finance Committee, thought is also being given to how the hierarchy of supporting documentation and data (budgets, detailed project plans, etc) can be made available electronically in an easily accessible way, so that in addition to the overview given by the business plan itself, Council and committee members can explore the supporting material if they so wish .

Council was content with the progress to date and the process. It noted that the final version of the plan will come to the November meeting of Council for approval.

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11. BUDGET 2011 (CM/67/10)

Council noted that the current version of the budget had been reviewed by the Budget & Programme Committee on 13 September and by the Management & Finance Committee on 15 September.

The Treasurer said that the budget had gone through two substantial iterations and he thanked the Executive Secretary, Head of Finance and Head of Strategy & External Relations for their work. A final version will be brought to November Council for approval. The key changes were:

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- Costs have recently been identified by the landlord regarding the external and internal fabric of Burlington House, which are expected to average £130k per annum, and both committees agreed that the Society should aim to make sufficient surplus to cover these costs, while recognising that this might not be achievable from 2011 (the first budget year in which these costs have been known).
- Historically the surplus produced by the Publishing House had been under-budgeted and, after considerable discussion by both committees, it was proposed to increase the anticipated surplus by £50k. The Director of Publishing had expressed his doubts about the achievability of this.
- Both committees agreed that provision must be made for publish ahead of print and the cost associated with the UK Register of Ground Engineering had been included.
- Salary costs – the Budget & Programme Committee originally put forward an increase of up to 3% which was discussed at length by the Management &

Finance Committee who, taking into account the prevailing Retail Price Index of 4.5%, proposed a figure of 4%. This cap would inform the work of the Remuneration Committee which meets at the beginning of November.

- Bids will be included for a catalogue system for Archives & Records, consultancy regarding international sales prioritisation, building links with overseas organisations and capacity building in developing countries.
- (see also separate confidential annex.)

Council agreed with these proposals. They noted that the deficit of £16k would be funded from reserves and also that the Budget & Programme Committee will be reviewing the reserves policy including the matter of free and designated funds.

12. REPORT OF THE CHARTERSHIP AUDIT COMMITTEE

In January 2009 the Society introduced radically new procedures for the validation of those applying for Chartered Geologist and Chartered Scientist (which is administered by the Society under licence from the Science Council). Those procedures had a number of new features and it was agreed in April 2009 to establish a Chartership Audit Committee to report annually on the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Ruth Allington presented the first report of this committee which she chaired, assisted by Robert Chaplow, Michael de Freitas and Vanessa Banks who were thanked for their assistance. Ruth Allington thanked all of those who contributed to the report and particularly George Tuckwell and David Manning as Chairs of the Chartership Committee and Professional Committee respectively. George Tuckwell replied that scrutineers were owed a great deal of thanks.

The overall findings of the review were that the introduction of the new system represents enormous change within the professional activity of the Society and has brought great benefit. The Committee identified a number of areas where changes are needed to procedures and documentation to improve effectiveness and to reduce the risk of variable standards being applied with the potential for introducing consequential unfairness.

There was a full and wide-ranging discussion of the report. It was agreed that the Chairs of the Professional and Chartership Committees together with the Executive Secretary, Chartership Officer, Executive Secretary and Fellowship Services Manager will meet to consider the report in detail, list the recommendations and formulate an action plan which will be brought to November Council. This action plan will include a recommendation on how the content of the report should be disseminated.

Ruth Allington and her team were thanked again for a very thorough and detailed report.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE STATEMENT (CM/69/10)

In January 2010 the then President, President-designate and Secretary for Foreign & External Affairs convened an expert group, chaired by Colin Summerhayes, to prepare a text for Council to consider issuing as a public statement of the Society. This proposal was motivated by several factors:

- There is a substantial and growing body of geological evidence relating to past climates, atmospheric carbon levels, and their relationship. This body of evidence is not widely appreciated outside the Earth science community, and is largely

independent of the better known climate modelling and atmospheric science base.

- Earth science underpins some key mitigation and adaptation strategies that may be adopted in response to environmental change (e.g. CCS, coastal zone management), which are among the priority policy areas identified by External Relations Committee to be addressed through our 'science-led communications strategy'. Our message to policy-makers, the media, those in education and other non-specialist audiences will be more coherent if it includes an explanation of the geological evidence for past climate variation, against which postulated anthropogenic impacts may be assessed.
- The Society has received a number of enquiries from Fellows and members of the public, asking us what the Society's view is, and seeking information.
- Many other scientific societies have issued position statements on climate change, though their type and quality varies considerably. There is a growing expectation that this Society should also make such a statement.

Considerable thought was given to what the audience might be, what the scope of the statement should be, and how it might be read and interpreted:

- The group agreed that the statement should not aim to refute the 'sceptics'. Instead it should implicitly recognise that good science is based on scepticism and not on the acceptance of statements based on 'authority'. While it was recognised that there are some Fellows and members of the public who are sceptical of the human role in climate change, it was agreed that this should not be addressed directly in the document.
- To ensure the statement is intelligible to the widest possible audience it should be written at the level of an intelligent 14 year old. Rather than reciting facts, it should address what are seen as commonly asked questions.
- The statement should focus on hard data (what is observed and certain), and geological interpretation, recognising that there are uncertainties of varying significance. References should be provided for key points.
- The statement should say what has occurred based on geological evidence and interpretation, and what may occur based on a projection from geological evidence.
- The group noted that palaeoclimatic evidence is not well covered by the IPCC's chapter on climate change (IPCC Working Group I, IPCC 2007), so an authoritative GSL document could prove informative for the wider community. The statement should focus on times when the Earth had a tectonic plate configuration broadly similar to that found today, while recognising that lessons could come from exceptions during the break-up of Gondwanaland.

The Secretary, Foreign & External Affairs thanked Colin Summerhayes and his colleagues. He said that a draft of the report was sent to the External Relations Committee in August who debated the content and purpose, suggesting minor drafting changes to the chairman of the working group although they saw their role more as peer reviewers. The final draft had been seen by the same committee who recommended to Council that it should be adopted as the Society's public statement on climate change.

Council approved the statement although they suggested a minor drafting change which will be put to the expert group. Council noted the communication plan.

14. GEOPHYSICS REVIEW (CM/70/10)

In April 2009 Council approved the request by the Environment and Industrial Geophysics Specialist Group (EIGG) to change its name to the Near-Surface Geophysics Group, but asked George Tuckwell to head a small panel to review if any other action was needed to increase the visibility of geophysics as a whole within the

Society.

George Tuckwell thanked the panel which comprised John Arthur, Tony Watts and the Executive Secretary. Mike Kendall and Adam Law had been invited to participate and though unable to attend had the opportunity to contribute by correspondence.

Despite the impression held by many, the panel concluded that the Society is doing quite a lot to support geophysics, particularly running a many diverse meetings and in publishing a large amount of material. The panel recommended that:

- i. The Science Committee should seek to explore opportunities to further support geophysics, particularly in the areas identified in the report. Perhaps a champion or a group of individuals should be identified from the relevant specialist groups including the BGA. There are potential opportunities to develop novel research-in-progress type meetings particularly in association with others and this might be explored in discussion with the BGA and perhaps the RAS.
- ii. The Education Committee of the Society should look at the recommendations of the enquiry into geophysics education in the UK and their continued currency, and seek opportunities to raise the profile of geophysics.

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Council thanked George Tuckwell and the panel members and asked the chairs of the Education and Science Committees to report back to April 2011 Council.

ROUTINE ITEMS

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

15. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/71/10)

Information Management Committee
External Relations Committee
Science Committee

16. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT (CM/72/10)

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is 24 November 2010

GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

REQUESTS FOR THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY TO COMMENT OR INTERVENE
REGARDING THIRD PARTY ACTIONS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The Geological Society has recently been asked by individuals among the Fellowship to comment on or otherwise intervene regarding actions planned by other organisations. Such approaches might be expected to become more frequent as public sector cuts are implemented. Recent instances include:
 - The BGS's plans to relocate its core store
 - Keele University's decision to withdraw the geology option on its PGCE course (to train secondary school teachers)
 - The NHM's decision to close its micropalaeontology department
 - The possible prosecution in Italy of seven geologists, in relation to the earthquake in L'Aquila in April 2009

2. In deciding whether and how to respond in such cases, the Geological Society may face competing pressures, and expectations on the part of some in the Fellowship and the wider Earth science community that we will take action. There is a risk of reputational damage, whether or not we do so. In order to ensure that we deploy our efforts and authority effectively, minimise the risk of reputational damage, and can defend ourselves against charges of acting inconsistently from case-to-case, we should agree some general principles which guide our decision making regarding such requests.

3. These guiding principles might include:
 - The Society will only comment publicly, or otherwise intervene, when a strong argument is made that a proposed third party action will impact negatively on society at large, the Earth science community or part thereof, either regionally, nationally or globally.
 - The Society should not attempt to interfere, or be seen to do so, in the management or proper business of other institutions, and should seek only to place responsibility for regional, national or global needs at the door of appropriate bodies.
 - The Society should respond only by taking actions which have a real prospect, alone or in combination with the actions of others, of positively affecting the outcome.
 - The Society should give thought to the likely level of support any action taken would be likely to attract from the Fellowship, and the interests of all parts of the Earth science community and wider society should be borne in mind.
 - The Society should consider whether any action it takes might impact negatively on its capacity to have continuing influence regarding the particular or general issue at hand.
 - The Society should seek to make common cause with those who share its interest, avoiding turf battles and fragmentation where possible, both within the Earth science community and the broader science and engineering sectors.

- If it chooses to intervene, the Society should aim to work constructively with any institutions whose actions or plans it comments on, providing relevant advice and support rather than simply criticising.
 - Specialist Groups, Joint Associations and Commissions of the Society should not comment publicly or otherwise intervene (thereby invoking the Society's imprimatur) without the approval of Council.
 - Staff, Council members and other Fellows who comment in a personal capacity should make clear that they are doing so, and should not cite their Geological Society affiliation.
4. Representations for support from the Geological Society should be directed to the Executive Secretary, who will liaise with the President, the Secretary for Foreign and External Affairs, and the Head of Strategy and External Relations initially. This group will decide upon appropriate action, in accordance with the principles set out above, or will consult Council if the case is judged controversial or if application of these principles does not suggest a clear way forward.

Nic Bilham
15 June 2010
rev 27 July 2010