

THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting #34

21 JANUARY 2008 - BURLINGTON HOUSE

Present

Prof. Edward Derbyshire (ED, Chair), Mr Edmund Nickless (Exec. Secy.), Dr Ted Nield (TN, Secy.); Mr Adam Edwards (AE), Dr Richard Fortey (RF, President), Mr Tim Radford (TR).

Apologies

Mr Iain Bartholomew (IB), Ms Susan Brown (SB); Prof. Mary Fowler (MF), Dr Kevin Hiscock (KH), Ms Judi Lakin (JL - Education Officer), Prof. Dave Sanderson (DS) Prof. John Underhill (JU), Mr Steven Veal (SV - AAPG); Prof. Bob White (BW).

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Following the addition of Edmund Nickless to the list of those present, the minutes of meeting #33 were approved *nem con.*

4. Matters arising from the minutes

ED noted that in connection with Item 6 – Peter Styles had been persuaded to stand as President of the IUGS, and that this nomination had gone forward to the 33rd IGC. He also reported that Iain Stewart, Jan Zalasiewicz and one other had agreed to be put forward as IGCP Science Board representatives for the UK. Dr Stewart was, he believed, a particularly appropriate candidate in view of the IGCP's call for experts in hazards.

5. Chairman's report

ED raised the impending deadline for a UK report to IUGS and asked the Committee's permission to take Chairman's action. This was granted eagerly.
Action ED/TN.

6. Council Strategy - ERC Response

TN reminded the ERC that it had been asked to produce a response to Council Strategy. This it had done, but not in conformity with the structure required for the Council paper going forward to the Strategy Meeting (due to start on the following day). He had therefore taken the liberty of drawing one

up under the guidance of Nic Bilham who was compiling that paper. The result was attached for information. ERC had succeeded in bringing about a slight but important change to the wording of one of the Council's strategy objectives.

7. A Society statement on Creationism, Creation Science and Intelligent Design

TN introduced the paper, setting out the reasons for bringing forward this statement, at the behest of *Geoscientist* correspondents. ERC did not object to the idea of the Society adopting such a statement. TR, RF and EN suggested various drafting changes, which will be implemented. A revised version shall be brought forward to the next ERC meeting for approval, submission to Council, and subsequent adoption at its discretion.

TN is now eagerly anticipating the challenge of writing a statement that is at once "unequivocal" (RF) and "bland" (EN).

7. International Matters

ED introduced the paper, explaining that he had just submitted a report to IGCP that had fallen far short of the standard that once characterised UK reports – and evidenced this by circulating sample reviews from the past. The present state of desuetude into which the process had fallen since the Society had taken over adherence from the Royal reflected badly on the UK, he said.

A discussion then ensued over what form the Society's submissions should take, what form (if any) was imposed by UNESCO, and what information we needed to make such a report possible.

ERC concluded that following the transfer of adherence, the lines of communication that had formerly connected UNESCO with the Royal were probably not transferred, as the Society was not receiving the information necessary to enable it to emulate the reports formerly submitted by the Royal. This would require a list from UNESCO of all current IGCP projects involving UK participation. ERC decided that to obtain such a list each year in future, inquiries should be made of Robert Missotten at UNESCO and Ruth Cooper at the Royal Society in an attempt to restore communications to their former state.

ED would seek meetings with both and report back to ERC. Perhaps a piece in *Geoscientist* could be linked to a request for comment from the Fellowship?

Action ED/TN

ED then introduced attachments to the main paper, which he said were largely provided as background information for the Committee. He pointed out the substantial changes that had occurred to the way in which the IGCP

was managed since its reorganisation. These had given IGCP a narrower focus than before, though it retained 20% of its budget for "non-theme" proposals. We would have to wait and see how this system worked, he said – particularly the fact that IGCP in Paris was now charged with raising additional money for societally-relevant themes (not only from member states, but also from industry).

EN asked who the current GSL rep on the UK National Commission for UNESCO was. ED said it was currently Dr Mark Maplin (Aberystwyth). ED was also on the Commission, *ex officio*. ED asked whether in view of Dr Maplin's patchy attendance over the last 3 years, the time might not be right to thank him for his work and seek another candidate – perhaps one who could make the journey to Whitehall more easily. This was **agreed**. **Action TN**

ED circulated to the meeting, for information, copies of the first bulletin of the UK UNESCO Commission's Intergovernmental Science Programmes (ISP) Leaders' Working Group. He also circulated copies of the new IGCP brochure written by himself and TN. The PDFs of both items would be obtained and linked to the website pages for IGCP. **Action ED/TN**.

The paper on the IYPE Global Launch Event was introduced by TN. There was no discussion.

ED spoke briefly about the 33rd IGC in Oslo this year. Good progress was being made, and a very attractive and informative website had been created. The collaboration with IYPE had resulted in themed days, with relevant sessions and Q&A sessions well integrated. The original proposal for symposia reflecting each of the Year's 10 themes had been scaled down, and subsequent difficulties had been encountered over the IGC's unwillingness to cover the expenses of session leaders at the same rate as invited speakers. This matter had been remitted to higher committees within IGC but resistance continued and ED was worried that this reluctance would weaken session leaders' resolve to attend, or even to organise symposia at all.

EN asked how the overall programme was developing. He had noted the extension of deadlines for submission of abstracts and had concluded from this that the programme had been slow to build – possibly as a result of the high costs associated with a Scandinavian venue. ED acknowledged that there had been rumblings of discontent in many quarters over the high costs of the event, and not only from scientists from countries with weaker currencies.

8. DONM

The date of the next meeting, provisionally set at the previous meeting for **Monday March 31** was confirmed. The ERC is asked to note. **Action ALL**

ERC agreed to arrange provisional meetings in the last 2 weeks of May and mid September. TN would check room availability and book accordingly, informing the Committee in due course.

9. AOB

ED said he had been sent a nomination form for BA Fellowship. TR, already a BA Honorary Fellow, proposed Richard Fortey. The motion was carried. TN shall submit the form on ED's behalf. **Action TN.**

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 15.10.

ENDS