

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 21 June 2017

PRESENT: Malcolm Brown (*Chair*), John Booth, Jason Canning, Lesley Dunlop, Graham Goffey (*Treasurer*), Sarah Gordon (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Tricia Henton, Naomi Jordan, Rob Larter, Jennifer McKinley, Colin North (*Secretary, Publications*), Sheila Peacock, Christine Peirce, Nik Reynolds, Nick Rogers (*President designate*), Katherine Royse (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), Keith Seymour (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Jessica Smith, John Talbot (*Vice President, Chartership*) and Alex Whittaker

APOLOGIES: Rick Brassington, Liv Carroll and Marie Edmonds (*Secretary, Science*)

In attendance: Richard Hughes (*Executive Secretary*), Nic Bilham (*Director of Policy & Communications*), Neal Marriott (*Director of Publishing*), Jonathan Silk (*Director of Finance & Operations*) and Stephanie Jones (*Administrative Secretary*)

The new members of Council were welcomed: John Booth, Lesley Dunlop, Nick Rogers, Jessica Smith and John Talbot

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies from Rick Brassington, Liv Carroll and Marie Edmonds were NOTED.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2017

The minutes were APPROVED. A redacted version will be published on the website.

SJ

4. MATTERS ARISING

These were all in hand or covered elsewhere in the agenda.

5. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE

The directors reported on activity in their departments since the last meeting of Council.

5.1 *Executive Secretary (CM/29/17)*

Richard Hughes said that since joining the Society in early May his focus had been deliberately inward facing with a lot of time spent meeting and listening to staff in London and Bath and familiarising himself with the remits and operations of the standing committees.

As already identified by Council and Officers many of the Society's internal systems are outdated or ineffective and in urgent need of review and work has started on the following items:-

- The HR Manager is leading a review on Pay and Reward;
- There is a lack of resilience in the ICT systems and an absence of business continuity/disaster recovery plans. Consideration is being given to commissioning an independent review of ICT services and staffing;
- There are examples of very good Health and Safety practices in place but

there is a general need to increase visibility and awareness across the organisation. This is now a weekly business item for the Senior Leadership Team;

- Good progress has been made on the Risk Register (separate item on agenda).

On 16 May a complete evacuation of the building was necessary because of a discarded cigarette in one of the air vents from the boiler. The Fire Service was very complimentary about the way the evacuation was handled. An internal 'lessons learned' exercise has been undertaken by Jonathan Silk which has identified items that need to be done better in a similar incident. This report will be circulated to Council.

JZS

The Met Police undertook a review of Burlington House some three years ago which was mainly focused on theft and crime. A representative will be visiting again at the beginning of July to advise specifically on locking down the site in the extremely unlikely event of a terrorist-related incident. Council will be kept advised. The Run Hide Tell video has been circulated to all staff and posters drawing attention to it have been placed around both buildings.

RH

Main activities prior to the next meeting of Council will be:-

- Development has already started on a 3-year rolling business plan and budget, a high priority over the next few months (separate agenda item);
- If approved, work will begin on implementing the recommendations of the report from the Philanthropy Company; and
- A first draft of a 'Burlington House Space Review' document has been produced. The objective of this review is to identify how the premises might be used more effectively. This report will be circulated to staff shortly and their views gathered at an all staff meeting.

Richard Hughes also reported on key items relating to the Library where the current key challenge is to keep all elements of the development work for the Plate Tectonics Archive project on track.

5.2 *Director of Finance & Operations (CM/30/17)*

Jonathan Silk said the summary Management Accounts to end March 2017 show a forecast year-end position of £257k surplus against an original budget for the year of £22k surplus, however, it is too early to give an idea of what the year-end figure will be.

The CRM/Finance Implementation Project is on track to go live over the next 6 – 8 weeks.

There were several matters that required the approval of Council:-

Overdraft facility of £250k:- the Bye-laws state that the Society cannot borrow money without the unanimous approval of Council. It has 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 is low. An overdraft facility avoids having to realise investments should the market be unfavourable.

All members of Council present 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 will also be asked to give approval. *(Post meeting note: those members of Council not present in person at the meeting gave their approval.)*

SJ

Bank and Investment Management mandates:- Council AGREED to add Richard Hughes to the bank and investment management mandates.

Council AGREED that Richard Hughes should be issued with a credit card from the Society's bank.

Chartered Scientist (CSci) annual fee and Chartership (CGeol) application fee: The Society has been informed by the Science Council that the CSci annual fee will increase from £25 to £45 from September 2017 and for new applicants the fee is being increased to £120. The Society does not retain any part of this fee which is passed in full to the Science Council. Furthermore, to avoid a disparity between the application fees for CSci and CGeol, the Professional Committee recommends that the CGeol application fee is also increased to £120. Council APPROVED (i) an increase in annual fees for CSci to £45; and (ii) an increase in application fees for CSci and CGeol to £120.

Society endorsed/accredited training for non-geological professionals: The Society was approached with a proposal to develop a Society endorsed or accredited training courses aimed at non-geological professionals. This initiative was seen as needing to be driven locally rather than centrally so the Regional and relevant Specialist Groups were asked for their insights into the potential demand for such training. The conclusion of this exercise, which was discussed with the President, Executive Secretary and Professional Committee, was that there is not a sufficiently large gap in the market or potential financial return and that the Society already has a well-established 'light touch' scheme for endorsing training courses. Council ENDORSED the recommendations of the Professional Committee that the proposal be rejected but that the Society expands its existing training endorsement scheme to include training courses aimed at non-geological professionals.

It is a requirement that the trustees as a matter of routine should take reasonable steps to assess and mitigate any risks to the charity's activities or beneficiaries and to confirm that any serious incidents have been reported as part of the annual return. Serious incidents include loss of funds, significant sums of money or other property donated from an unknown or unverified source and unlawful activity by a member of staff or trustee. Jonathan Silk said that the Society's bank (Couetts) contacted Orane Lewis, Financial Controller and primary bank contact, to advise that two separate transactions had been input to the online electronic payments system but rejected due to warning flags raised by the banking software. Jonathan Silk informed Council of all the steps that had been taken to reduce the risk of future incidents. The incident was reviewed by the Finance & Planning Committee who recommended that Council fulfils its obligations as a trustee body and reports the matter to the Charity Commission. Council AGREED with this course of action.

John Booth said he attended a very useful course on incidents of this sort run by NatWest. Jonathan Silk was asked to investigate courses offered by our bank and to consider what could be offered to the Regional Group Treasurers. He will also investigate the DBS requirements for Regional Group Treasurers.

JZS

5.3 *Director of Policy & Communications (CM/31/17)*

Nic Bilham said the theme for 2019 will be the *Year of Carbon*. Specialist Groups will be notified in the next few days. The Year of Risk is progressing well as is planning for 2018 (*Year of Resources*).

Council AGREED with the Science Committee proposal that the *Geological Society London Lectures* are renamed the *Geological Society Public Lectures*. Nic Bilham said the conference office will be working with the Regional Groups on how to take the lectures around the country.

Over the past three years the Society's Stratigraphy Commission has been considering a proposal that the Society should adopt the international spelling set out by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) for terms in the stratigraphic column. This refers to the five canonical levels of the International Chronostratigraphic Chart (Eonothem, Erathem, System, Series, Stage) and their

geochronologic equivalents (Eon, Era, Period, Epoch, Age). The main effect of this proposal would be to replace 'ae' by 'e' in a number of terms (e.g. Eon, Archean, Paleo-Archean). The matter has been considered by the Science Committee, GSL Chief Editors' Round Table and various editorial boards with no objections. Soundings were taken externally and Professor Stan Finney (then chair of the ICS) wrote in May 2016 welcoming the proposal for harmonisation and noting that it would be appreciated by the international community. Science Committee discussed the matter again at its May meeting, and RECOMMENDED that Council approve the proposal. In doing so, it noted that the promotion of a standard nomenclature was part of the Society's purpose at its foundation and within our remit to advocate the adoption of the international standard spellings across the wider geoscience community.

Council APPROVED adoption by the Geological Society of the ICS spellings for terms in the Stratigraphic Column, and the advertising of this policy to the UK and international geoscience community. This will include an article in *Geoscientist*.

NB

The Society responded to the following consultations and inquiries: DBEIS Consultation on Industrial Strategy (April 2017) and Industry Strategy Commission – Open call for evidence on the Industrial Strategy (May 2017). A briefing report on geoscience, industrial strategy and economic development is in preparation, building on the Society's substantial response to these consultations.

Work continues on the output report from the 'Future Science' research vision meeting held in February with the BGS, RAS and UGUK.

Council NOTED the list of Society Representatives on Outside Bodies. Representatives are asked to make an annual report through their committees at least once a year. Nic Bilham asked Council members to advise him if they know of other bodies on which the Society had representation.

Council

Chris Eccles, EFG Council member, and Flo Bullough attended the EFG Council meeting in May (Nic Bilham is also a Council member but was not able to attend). The EFG wants to move its legal seat from Paris to Brussels where it has been situated since 2004. This requires a change to their statutes which are determined by the EFG Council. Richard Hughes, Chris Eccles and Nic Bilham have discussed this matter and are of the view that there is no substantive difficulty with this but want to make further enquiries about a couple of matters before giving approval. Council AGREED with this course of action subject to being alerted if there was anything substantive to report.

NB

Council NOTED progress on Diversity, Equality & Inclusion which Nic Bilham is taking forward with Tricia Henton and George Jameson. The first workshop to support university departments applying for Athena SWAN status is on 22 September. Jennifer McKinley was thanked for her assistance. Nic Bilham did not envisage any difficulty in other types of organisations participating but the focus will be on universities because of their particular challenges. Tricia Henton said the Social Mobility report was published today and she will be discussing this with Richard Hughes and Nic Bilham.

TH

5.4 *Director of Publishing (CM/32/17)*

Neal Marriott said that although the subscription renewals environment continues to be challenging, especially with respect to the corporate markets, overall receipts are just ahead of the same point in 2016. Renewal of corporate and remaining academic library subscriptions are also challenging but the staff is working hard to maintain and build communication channels with existing and new overseas representatives.

Work on selling online archives of the Special Publications continues, with sales this year to China, Singapore, India and the US. A sizeable sale in France is pending.

A new Production Editor, Lucy Bell, has joined the Society. Her primary responsibility will be the journal, Petroleum Geoscience, but she will also be working on books.

QA work has started on our journal and ebook sites on GeoScienceWorld. The plan is to launch new sites on the Silverchair platform in September.

The upgraded Lyell Collection sites for journals and key book series launched on 20 June. This went very well and Sarah Gibbs and Maxine Smith were thanked for their hard work. The sites will be kept under close watch.

The Micropalaeontological Society (TMS) has decided that it wishes to publish its journal on a wholly open access basis and from January 2018 will move to Copernicus. The Society is working with all parties to make this a smooth process and wishes the TMS well.

In March of this year both the Publications & Information committee and Finance & Planning committee discussed concerns regarding the ability of the Publishing House to continue its level of work and output based on current staffing levels. The past ten years have seen the Publishing House transform itself from a print business with an online element, to an overwhelmingly digital subscription business. The processes required to remain attractive have grown increasingly competitive and the Publishing House must remain active on a widening range of fronts.

The recent increase in business and the development of the range of services mean that a position of tension has been reached where the staff is fully stretched in managing complex day-to-day operations with insufficient time remaining to undertake required developments.

At their recent meeting, the Finance & Planning committee agreed to RECOMMEND to Council that three new posts are created (Development Editor, Production Manager and Marketing Assistant).

Council discussed the proposal in full and APPROVED the budgetary provision as set out in the paper. NM

Richard Hughes noted that there is currently no process in place enabling consideration of additional staffing requirements on a Society-wide basis. This situation is a barrier to operational and financial planning, and will be addressed during the coming months during the business and resource planning exercise.

6. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

6.1 *Officers Meeting*

Matters discussed were mainly staff related, particularly the proposal for the staffing at the Publishing House which Officers supported.

Officers also discussed the Awards Committee membership. Malcolm Brown said that the Society's Awards are mainly given to academics, although academic membership is low (15%). Although this is entirely appropriate for some of the medals, which reward cutting edge science, others are intended for industry. However, industry nominations are very limited, in part because the committee is mainly comprised of academics. More input is required from industry. He and Richard Hughes will be working over the summer to try and improve this situation. Nic Bilham reminded Council that the Science Committee are also looking at the Society's Awards and Research Grants in the round. MBr
RH

6.2 *Committees, Panels and Boards (CM/33/17)*

Council NOTED the membership of the standing committee, the membership of committees, panels and boards which report to Council or to the committees of Council, meeting dates for Council and other committees for 2017/18, the standing list of principal items brought to each Council meeting and the expenses policy, particularly the request to make best use of discounted fares.

- 6.3 *Standing List under Regulations R/FP/5 and R/FP/6 (CM/34/17)*
Under Regulation R/FP/5 (Appeals Procedures) and R/FP/6 (Disciplinary Procedures) Council is obliged to maintain “a *Standing List of at least 25 experienced and longstanding Fellows who are not members of Council and who are able to act on Panels established under these Procedures. At least two thirds of the List shall be Chartered Geologists or Chartered Scientists. Fellows may resign from the List at any time, and Council may appoint replacements at any time. The names on the List will not be available to Fellows.*” Matters dealt with under these Regulations include appeals relating to non-election as a Fellow, non-validation of a Fellow as a Chartered Geologist, investigation and resolution of complaints brought by five or more Fellows for removal of a Fellow on grounds of significant misinformation relating to application for Fellowship or validation as a Chartered Geologist, and complaints against the code of conduct.

Council AGREED the membership of the Standing List. The number on the list is the minimum required under Regulation and the Professional Committee is identifying gaps and those who may be able to fill them.

- 6.4 *Petroleum Group Constitution and Concordat (CM/35/17)*
The Petroleum Group (PG) has drafted a revision to their constitution to bring it in line with current practice. The changes are non-controversial. It includes a ‘concordat’ which is unique to the PG and details the more practical aspects of the interaction between the PG and the Society, and in particular recognises the need for a greater degree of financial flexibility than would normally be available to a Specialist Group.

Council APPROVED the changes to the Petroleum Group’s Constitution and the Concordat.

SJ

- 6.5 *Honorary Fellow Nomination (CM/36/17)*

The External Relations Committee commended the nomination of Min Huh for Honorary Fellowship. Council AGREED that this nominee will be asked if he will accept the honour before it is advertised in *Geoscientist* and formal election takes place.

SJ

- 6.6 *Dewey Medal*
Malcolm Brown reminded Council that Richard Hughes wrote to them at the end of May seeking approval for the new Dewey Medal, generously financed by John Dewey. This will be awarded to mid career geoscientists to recognise major contributions to geology based on detailed field mapping and observation. There was unanimous approval by the previous Council and the new medal was announced at the Annual General Meeting.

RH

Council RATIFIED this decision and recorded its thanks to John Dewey.

7. REMOVAL OF FELLOWS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF THE 2017 FELLOWSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS (CM/37/17)

Council AGREED to remove from Fellowship those Fellows who had not paid their 2017 subscription by 30 June 2017 unless they were in discussion about their subscription with the Fellowship Office. It was noted that the attrition rate is similar to previous years and the level of strike off is a worse case as some will have paid since the list was produced and others will be in the process of paying.

JZS

Council was asked to encourage as soon as possible those Fellows known to them to pay their subscription and remain in Fellowship.

Council

The Fellowship office will continue to make further strenuous efforts to secure late payments with an additional focus on those 50 Fellows with Chartered status.

Sarah Gordon asked if the Society conducts 'exit interviews' when Fellows lapse their membership. Nic Bilham said this is something that needs to be developed alongside taking forward the new strategy. Richard Hughes said that a membership survey is long overdue and will be carried out in Q1/2 2018

8. FUNDRAISING – PHILANTHROPY COMPANY (CM/38/17)

The Philanthropy Company was commissioned in December 2016 to undertake a 'fundraising audit' to assess the Society's potential to raise money from philanthropic sources and to help identify how this might be achieved.

Their findings included the following recommendations:

- undertake a Fellowship survey to understand views on the Society in general and attitudes towards donations in particular
- focus initial efforts on three to four specific, priority projects rather than capital or an endowment fund to secure the lease
- develop a compelling Case for Support that sets out the Society's position and its fundraising vision
- recruit a professional fundraiser to establish this platform and be responsible for the raising of gifts
- commit to extending the Society's public profile and outreach
- commit the leadership team and Executive Secretary to support of the fundraising programme and to building relationships with supporters

There was full discussion around the key points of the proposal. Council APPROVED in principle the recommendations subject to fully worked-up cases and financial proposals being included in the budget process for 2018. Jonathan Silk will bring a further paper to September Council.

JZS

9. DELIVERING THE STRATEGY (CM/39/17)

A three-year, rolling Business Plan and budget are under development. A template was presented to the Finance & Planning committee who were supportive of the approach taken. Richard Hughes will be developing this further with the Senior Leadership Team and it will come back to the September residential meeting. Council was asked to go back to Richard Hughes with any comments.

Council

Council NOTED the progress made on the Business Plan to date.

10. RISK REGISTER UPDATE (CM/40/17)

The Finance & Planning committee and Senior Leadership Team have both reviewed the Risk Report and the underlying, detailed Risk Register although it is still a work in progress. The Audit Committee also signalled their satisfaction with progress at their March meeting. The matter will come back to the September residential because it ties into the Business Plan.

Council NOTED the progress on the Risk Register to date.

11. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/41/17)

Council NOTED the reports of the standing committees.

12. ELECTIONS

12.1 *Fellowship (CM/42/17)*

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the OGM on 21 June 2017.

12.2 *Chartered Geologists (CM/43/17)*

The applications from Fellows listed to become Chartered Geologists had been approved by the Chartership Panel and were AGREED by Council.

12.3 *Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/44/17)*

Council AGREED to elect as Candidate Fellows and Junior Candidate Fellows those applicants listed.

12.4 *European Geologists (CM/45/17)*

Council NOTED the names elected as European Geologists at the 10 June 2016 meeting of the EFG.

12.5 *Chartered Scientist (CM/46/17)*

Council AGREED to elect as Chartered Scientists those applicants listed.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Tricia Henton

Council congratulated Tricia Henton on her award of an MBE in the Birthday Honours List.

Katherine Royse

Council congratulated Katherine Royse on her professorship at the University of Nottingham.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

20 & 21 September 2017