

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 24 Feb 2016 at 12:00pm

Present: Tim Minshull (Chair), Jon Gluyas (Chair-elect), Mark Anderson (Executive Secretary), Hugh Rollinson (Treasurer), Gordon Curry

Apologies: Peter Burgess, Arlene Hunter, Mike Lovell, Dorrik Stow

In attendance: George Jameson (Executive Officer)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies as set out above were noted.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other items were identified by the Committee.

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Mark Anderson updated the committee on actions that arose from the last meeting of the executive committee. A question was raised regarding the location of previous minutes of CHUGD meetings or if they were circulated at the time. Mark said he would look for the minutes.

The committee went over the actions from the last meeting clarifying what actions had been completed.

- Tim Minshull contacted Peter Burgess.
- Formal voting process undertaken for the appointments of the executive.
- Mark Anderson contacted Arlene Hunter. She does not intend to continue in her role within the executive committee.

Actions

- Mark emailed the executive outlining the new roles and responsibilities.
- The list of 'serial no show institutions' needs to be updated and finalised.

The committee discussed the AGI survey; they had hoped for a larger response but thought that the timing of its launch may have hindered its potential.

Mark updated the committee on matters concerning A-level reform. A meeting was held in April with the Dept. for Education and Ofqual. The idea to push A-level geology to focus more on rigorous and scientific aspects was taken on board.

Jon Gluyas reported on the "Earth Science in Society" programme. 16 students (divided into smaller groups of 3-4) in final year were given the choice between 8 projects. The "Entrepreneurship in Geoscience" project was not taken up by any of the groups. The "Earth Science in Society" runs every year and after a brief talk Jon Gluyas suggested to travel to Glasgow in order to discuss the programme with Gordon Curry.

JG/GC

5. MEMBERSHIP OF EXECUTIVE

Tim Minshull informed the committee that Arlene Hunter has stepped down meaning that the area focusing on employability has been vacated. A question was raised concerning whether or not voting on elections took place at the last meeting. The issue wasn't covered in the minutes leading the committee to suspect that it may not have occurred. Hugh Rollinson stated that he is happy to continue in his role as treasurer for another year.

Term lengths were defined for the new incarnation of the committee. Mark renewed in 2012. His term is at an end and he stated his intention to step down as Executive Secretary but is happy to remain on in an advisory capacity. The committee will now need to find a suitable replacement. A replacement will also be needed for the treasurer role.

A suggestion was made to approach Prof Zoe Shipton as a replacement for Arlene. Jon Gluyas stated that he will approach her for the role.

JG

The committee felt that it may be a good idea for the next Executive Secretary to have previous experience with University Geoscience UK. It may be more difficult for a new member coming in 'cold'. The networking opportunities of the role should be highlighted as a positive benefit in order to entice a new recruit. It was felt that a head of school may not be the best option as they may not have enough time to properly fill the requirements of the role.

Tim Minshull and Mark Anderson intend to draft an email, asking for suggestions, to be sent to the executive.

Dr Doug Angus was suggested as a possible candidate to be approached. The role will need to be filled by a person who is well connected and also interested in the business side of geoscience. Jon will share Doug's contact details with the executive.

Members of the Executive felt that it would be a good idea if a current member, who has experience of how the organisation works, could take up the role of Executive Secretary. Gordon was suggested as a possibility. He will consider the offer. The email will still be sent to the executive and it will also include the role of treasurer being vacated next year.

TM/MA

Before moving on to the next agenda item it was highlighted that Dorrik Stow's role is due for re-election. It was proposed that his term be extended subject to agreement from the wider membership. Also, as Executive Secretary, when Mark Anderson steps down a new signatory will be needed to be added to the bank account.

JG

6. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIR

Tim Minshull outlined various activities that have taken place since the last meeting. Tim had a meeting with GSL and BGS in September 2015. As a result of the meeting there are plans to potentially hold a town hall style meeting in order to formulate a national strategy for solid earth science. It was felt that this could serve as a cohesive exercise bringing together the earth science community, similar to other scientific communities.

BGS organised an event like this 5 years ago and a document of the proceedings was produced. Tim has a link to the document and will share with the committee.

Initial plans to hold the meeting in the summer may prove to be too soon. A discussion is needed to iron out the details and propose a time and date for the event.

The ideal target audience for the meeting was discussed. It was agreed that NERC are the main target. The meeting would be a perfect opportunity to formulate what proposals should be put forward to NERC and the geoscience community acting in unison would be extremely beneficial in the long run. Tim plans to explore times and dates etc. at the next meeting as well as who will need to be targeted. The Royal Astronomical Society was suggested as a possible partner.

A small group will need to be formed in order to oversee the setting up of the meeting. The GSL Conference Department could look after aspects of the event if it is held at Burlington House.

7. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

i. Update on consultations completed since July meeting

Mark Anderson updated the committee on the various consultations completed since the July meeting. These have included:

- Dept. for Business, Innovation & Skills Select Committee assessing the quality of Higher Education (October 2015)
- Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of tier 2 (September 2015).
- Dept. for Business, Innovation & Skills Disabled students in Higher Education (September 2015)
- Dept. for Business, Innovation & Skills Green Paper The future of quality assessment (January 2016).

Overall University Geoscience UK have been extremely active, an improvement on previous years. Given that the restructuring of the organisation has taken place relatively recently the organisation is still finding its way in how best to contribute to consultation processes.

The committee feel that sending draft proposals seem to stimulate responses more so when compared to sending out general messages too often which usually receive little feedback from the membership

ii. Update on networking event and thematic discussion meeting

Mark Anderson continued by stating that there are 20 people confirmed for the evening meeting. Tim drafted an email to all members urging them to send a representative to the event. The Higher Education Network was informed as well as local universities who were invited to send students who may be interested in attending the evening event.

Ruth Allington has pulled out as a plenary chair. Other notable figures set to attend include; Andy Howard, Adam Latimer, Gary Nichols, Keith Gerdes, Chris Bonson, Andy Saunders and Malcolm Brown. The Earth Science Teachers' Association will be represented and a rep from the Royal Geographical Society will be attending. The committee thanked Mark Anderson for the list of people he organised to attend the event.

5 themes were identified for the break out groups. These include

- Costs and funding
- Scheduling / timing / amount of fieldwork needed / role of independent mapping
- Training (needs of students) / Unique academic learning techniques

- Training of staff (health and safety)
- Inclusivity – what approaches do we have? What are the resource needs?

One intention to come out of the talks will be to produce a joint position paper, with the GSL, on the value and role of fieldwork and the employability of future UK geoscience graduates.

8. REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

i. Membership fees present and future

Hugh Rollinson presented the treasurers report to the committee. He has changed the reporting year to 1st August – 31st July bringing it in line with how most universities report their accounts.

Income within this period was £2,280 while expenditure was £2,180. As a result of the change in the reporting period there is a slight discrepancy. This is due mainly to the fact that in that time £660 came in and £500 went out.

At the start of this financial year (1st August) there was a balance of £5635. Since then only 1 university has paid their dues. On 15 February 2016 the balance stood at £4384.

The question of raising membership fees was tabled. Currently it is difficult to know how much money the organisation will be spending and as a result the potential increase in the fee is hard to calculate. Hugh requested guidance from the committee on whether or not they intend to increase expenditure this year. An estimate of the costs for holding the proposed meetings/projects later in the year will be in the region of £1500-£2000. Expenses and catering will be the greatest contributors. Spending to date this year stands at £1300. Most of the membership fees have not been collected this year as invoices have not yet been sent. This is mainly due to not finalising the membership fee price. Hugh would like to send invoices after the meeting.

Another issue raised, during the treasurer's report, concerned whether or not the committee intended on commencing a second themed project this year. Field work continues to be a theme and employability may be added. Some administrative aspects of the project could potentially be carried out by the Higher Education Network (HEN). This will be looked into in further detail at tomorrow's meeting.

Suggestions regarding the price of membership included raising this year's fee to £100 and increasing it further next year. Another possibility would be to calculate the fee by adding up potential costs, if an extra project is included, and dividing by the number of members.

HR

The proposal decided upon by the committee is to complete the fieldwork project and to begin the employability project. This will be put to the membership. If the fee is raised to £140, the committee believe that this would allow for the two projects as well as a possible extra meeting during the year. At the meeting on the following day Hugh will present a summary of the accounts and Tim will talk through the rationale for raising fees.

HR/TM

9. REPORTS FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

i. Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Jon Gluyas informed the committee on the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutes. Recently a UK wide review of university research funding was circulated to all HE institutes.

It was suggested that this call for evidence should be circulated to members with a view to collecting their responses and submitting their opinions before the deadline of 24 March 2016.

It was felt that guidance should be provided to members as to how the document should be read especially within an overall earth science context. The Committee agreed that this would be a useful idea.

Viable alternatives for a more productive assessment process will need to be formulated. Jon Gluyas offered to circulate an email to the membership outlining the matter.

JG

10. WEBSITE

Mark Anderson provided the committee with an update on the new website. It is now up and running and Mark has asked Liz Pedley (GSL Web team) to update certain parts concerning roles and responsibilities of committee members etc. Mark hopes that when they present the website at tomorrow's meeting it will provoke suggestions on how to improve it if possible.

University Geoscience UK provided input into the new careers portal that is being set up by the Geological Society. Its launch is expected in the coming weeks.

11. AGENDA FOR FULL MEETING OF COMMITTEE HEADS OF UNIVERSITY GEOSCIENCE DEPARTMENTS (25/02/2016)

It was agreed by the committee that May's minutes would be circulated beforehand. The minutes from the executive committee will be kept internally; however, this decision may change in the future.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was decided that there will not be a meeting in March 2016 that would mirror the meeting taking place tomorrow. The format will go back to its previous pattern with a planned town hall style meeting, with the full committee, taking place in November. The executive committee will next meet in July 2016. The July meeting will be set up with video conferencing facilities. The exact dates will be decided upon later.