

# The Geological Society of London

## COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting on 24 November 2021 held virtually due to continuing precautions re the coronavirus pandemic.

PRESENT: Mike Daly (*Chair*), Jo Alexander, Neil Frewin, Joel Gill (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Kathryn Goodenough, Martin Griffin, Jim Griffiths (*Secretary, Professional & Chartership Matters*), Michael Kehinde, Pete Loader, Andrew Moore, Keith Myers (*Treasurer*), Amanda Owen, John Perry, Sarah Scott, Jessica Smith (Vice President, Regional Groups), Gemma Sherwood, Rob Strachan (*Secretary, Publications*), Lucy Thomas, Alex Whittaker (*Secretary, Science*) and Lucy Williams

APOLOGIES: Mark Allen, Ruth Allington (*President Designate*) and Jennie Gilbert

In attendance: Richard Hughes (*Executive Secretary*), Alex McPherson (*Director of Finance & Operations*), Alicia Newton (*Director of Science & Communications*), Maggie Simmons (*Director of Publishing*) and Christina Marron (*Executive Assistant*).  
Item 11: David Kohn, Jennifer Dyne and Callum Symmons (Kohn Architects) and David Shilston (*Chair, Relocation Project Group*)  
Item 12: Mark Anderson and Andy Saunders  
Item 14: Florence Bullough

### 1. APOLOGIES

Mike Daly (MD) NOTED apologies from Ruth Allington, Mark Allen and Jennie Gilbert who were unable to attend. Neil Frewin to join intermittently due to other work matters.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Joel Gill (JGi) NOTED re agenda item 13. IUGS membership that the charity he leads receives a grant from the IUGS.

### 3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2021

Minutes were APPROVED.

### 4. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising: All other actions NOTED as in progress, discharged or on today's agenda.

### 5. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS (*confidential to Council*)

Report of Officers Meeting (verbal)

Richard Hughes (RH) highlighted some key matters discussed:

- (Staff matters confidential to Council).
- Three major digital projects are underway.
- Plans are in place to further open up Burlington House (BH) to Fellows in January.

Staff engagement survey: MD noted an improvement in the outcomes compared to the 2019 survey, particularly in light of a difficult year due to the pandemic's challenges as well as redundancies. He praised SLT and HR for the improvement made. Key issues highlighted were:

- General sense that staff feel overworked.
- Lateral communications continues to be an area for improvement.

*Gemma Sherwood joined meeting.*

Council-Staff meeting: Jessica Smith gave a brief overview of key points discussed:

- Staff feel overwhelmed: there is a lot to do so better defined priorities would help.
- Early career membership: staff are keen to explore how to appeal more to early career groups e.g. “green” career options and benefits for younger members.
- Council’s expertise and experiences: could be better harnessed by the staff and the Society to support the direction of travel.

MD noted the positive sense of the organisation’s direction, he said it had been a great year noting highlights such as the “new” Geoscientist magazine, the Spacescapes exhibition, the virtual meetings and events: all great achievements and more so in light of it the pandemic.

Council AGREED it would be good for a message to go out to staff from Mike on behalf of Council to thank the staff and the praising the progress made.

MD

#### Report of Elections Committee

MD said seven Council members would retire in June 2022 including four Officers:

- Ruth Allington to take on the role of President.
- Gemma Sherwood to be put forward as Vice President for Regional Groups and Jennie Gilbert as Secretary, Science.
- The request for nominations went out in October and there will be promotion to stand for Council via social media in December.
- The deadline is 5 January and Council are asked to follow up on possible candidates.
- MD noted greater diversity of age was an area for development.

Council

#### Awards 2022 (CM/72/21)

The outcomes from the Council ballot was presented.

Council AGREED the Awards for 2022 apart for one award with a tied vote. Following discussion it was agreed a recommendation from the Awards Committee should be sought.\*

MD

Council APPROVED the recommended allocation of the early career funds.

Council were reminded that this information is confidential until the award winners have been notified and have accepted.

\*Note: Subsequently Council approved the Awards Committee’s recommended candidate.

## 6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

### Executive Secretary’s report (CM/73/21)

RH spoke to the key items of note:

- Ongoing complaint re an article in Geoscientist: Efforts were made to seek a resolution, however the complainant decided to resign from the Fellowship. (Discussion confidential to Council). This issue will be taken forward in a review of existing complaints investigation processes to be chaired by Ruth Allington (RA).
- Geologists Association: an invited speaker at the Virtual Festival of Geology resulting in fierce criticism and reputational damage to the GA, with consequent reputational risks to the Geological Society. (Discussion confidential to Council).

RA

### Director of Publishing (CM/74/21)

Maggie Simmons (MS) spoke to report’s highlights:

- Lyell collection subscriptions were 166: 7 less than 2020 but in line with previous years.
- Renewal of transformative read and publish agreements 2022: Terms are agreed with CAUL (Australia and New Zealand) and ZBmed (a German consortia).
- Commercially confidential item.
- Commercially confidential item.

- JISC: PH has had four months of negotiations with JISC who negotiate on behalf of higher education institutions and will need a decision before agreements can be sent to UK institutions.

Director of Science and Communications (CM/75/21)

Alicia Newton (AN) spoke to the key highlights:

- Dan Lunt, Bristol University, will be the Climate and Ecology Theme Leader. The theme will launch soon and look at how climate change and biodiversity/ecosystems have interacted in the past and how they may be impacted in the future.
- Digital Theme Leader should be confirmed soon.
- The Education team's recent initiative with Trussell Trust and Felix project to distribute geologic activity packs through food banks received very positive feedback.
- CPD series: There is another autumn series on remote sensing and another two series have been added to 2022 programme.
- GEON: confirmed as operational but the formal launch has been delayed.

Director of Finance and Operations CM/76/21

Including September management accounts and 2021 outturn to date.

Alex McPherson (AMc) spoke to highlights:

- 2022 Fellowship renewal numbers to date are 7666: two-thirds of current members have renewed and there are 444 joiners. Work will be ongoing to ensure renewals are ongoing.

September Management Accts

- Profit/loss reports will be produced directly from Sage in future.
- Income is resilient in 2021 compared to budget. Positive income in Fellowship and CPD income has helped compensate for under performance in other areas.
- There is some lower expenditure, but some additional IT and legal costs. AMc said contractors were taken on to help get the CRM project across the line, which has come out of the operational funds. He added future CRM costs will be accounted for as capital expenditure.
- Currently the surplus forecast is £566k due to unrealised gains from investment portfolio but this may vary towards end of year.
- KM noted it would be timely with the expected surplus to make some impairments to tidy up balance sheet.

## 7. 2022 BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET (CM/77/21 and CM/78/21)

2022 BUSINESS PLAN (CM/78/21)

- RH explained the budget presented for approval was to deliver the proposed business plan. A priority for 2022 is digital with three major projects underway, which if successfully completed, will transform Society and offer increased capability. Another priority initiative is the BH relocation options project.
- RH noted there is a placeholder in the business plan to potentially draw down a sum of money for Futures-focused projects as welcomed by Council in September. The November FPC did not fully support drawing down at this time due to BH uncertainties but there is placeholder to potentially kick this off mid-2022.

RH invited comments from Council.

Pete Loader (PL) noted accredited training of geology teachers is in the pipeline and if it should be in the Business Plan's theme 2. AN to include in deliverables.

AN

Jo Alexander (JA) queried if the “just transition” concept would fit into theme 2 re supporting professionals and support on energy transition.  
Joel Gill (JGi) suggested including measures to assess impact.

#### Futures Funds initiative

MD said the Future projects should ideally be started as soon as possible, enabling the use of a modest sum (at this stage) from the reserves to support the development of the Society. He queried if a nominal amount, e.g. £250k could be released as a starting point.

KM said there are currently £4.5m in reserves and £1.6 BH fund which does not include other restricted funds.

KM/AMc

(Discussion confidential to Council).

AMc said to date reserves held were 75 percent of yearly spend .He said a new methodology to calculate reserves based on risked income and expenditure had reduced the required amount of reserves to be held and could potentially release at least £2m funds to be invested in growing the Society. He said FPC were in favour of the concept but advised to hold off until the reserves methodology was formally adopted and in addition the BH costs were clearer.

RH noted the positive support for releasing immediately a small tranche of funds for ‘Futures’ investment of c. £250k.

Council APPROVED the 2022 Business Plan.

Council SUPPORTED beginning the process for how we disperse this fund and to consider a nominal fund of £250k after a discussion on the 2022 budget.

#### 2022 BUDGET (CM/77/21)

2022 Budget: RH noted the 2022 draft budget had been approved by the FPC. He said the budget and expenditure was £400k higher than the 2021 year-end forecast as in 2022 the Society would gear up towards full operations. In addition, there would be greater investment in revenue generation, including sales and marketing to grow Lyell subscriptions, membership and the online CPD programme. RH added that the other area major investment was the digital transformation.

AMc noted the proposed 2022 budget’s cash drawdown was negative ~£630k: The operational outturn, including one-off items, resulted in a deficit of £9k. Considering a capital budget of £621k, the cash reserves would reduce by in excess of £600k. Currently cash reserves are £2.7m so these would reduce to under £2.1m by the end of 2022.

AMc noted £400k of net liabilities also exists, which includes trade creditors as well as rent provisions that could potentially impact cash reserves. He added that a schedule of reserves headroom was included in the papers to show impact if the 2022 budget is approved.

AMc said the increased budgeted expenditure cf. 2021 was due to increased activity and noted revenue consequently increased.

AMc presented the COLA increase proposal in Annex A. He noted the FPC Committee had approved a 2% increase in September, which was reviewed at the November Committee due to clear indications that the cost of living would increase by ~4%. KM confirmed the FPC discussed and agreed an increase of the COLA from 2% to 4% and this was accounted for in the proposed 2022 budget.

LW asked if some HR increases would address to pinch points highlighted by the staff survey. RH said it would address a couple of teams but not all areas.

Council formally APPROVED the 4% COLA

Council formally APPROVED the 2022 Budget  
Council APPROVED taking forward the future funds immediately with an initial sum of £250k.

8. MODERN SLAVERY POLICY (CM/79/21)  
RH said a draft had been considered supported in principle by the FPC. He explained that the policy adopts a 'best endeavours' approach which places the burden of a self-declaration of compliance on suppliers, with periodic checks.  
JGi asked if there was a process to report concerns. RH said internal processes would be discussed and agreed by WMT and implemented across the organisation.  
Council APPROVED the Modern Slavery Policy
9. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/80/21)  
Council NOTED reports. JGr said the P&CC had recommended a review of the complaint procedures not just against individuals but also against the Society.  
Council ENDORSED the proposal to review complaints procedure. As noted in the executive report, RA will take forward in 2022.
10. ELECTIONS (CM/81/21-CM/85/21)  
Fellowship (CM/81/21)  
Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 24 November 2021.

Chartered Geologists (CM/82/21)\*

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

\*NOTE: Due to an admin error the list incorrectly listed two candidates pending interview and did not include an interviewed and approved applicant, name omitted  
Following the meeting the President approved the removal of the two names and addition of the omitted candidate.

Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/83/21)

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

European Geologist (CM/84/21)

Council AGREED those applicants listed as European Geologists.

Chartered Scientist (CM/85/21)

Council AGREED the applicant listed as Chartered Scientist.

11. BURLINGTON HOUSE (CM/86/21)  
*David Shilston, Relocations Project Group's Chair and David Kohn, Jennifer Dyne and Callum Symmons from Kohn Architects joined the meeting.*

RH said the courtyard societies met on November 11<sup>th</sup> with representatives from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). The societies proposed designating New BH as a heritage asset which may release the landlord from their perceived obligation to recover full market rents. If this is agreed, the Societies will consider applying for the heritage lottery funding.

He said in parallel to this the David Kohn Architects had prepared a feasibility study to look at a reconfiguration of the Burlington House offices to repurpose some of the space potential to sublet to other organisations.

*David Kohn (DK) presented an overview of the feasibility study.*

(Discussion confidential to Council).

*David Shilston and Kohn Architects left the meeting.*

12. DEGREE ACCREDITATION PROPOSAL (CM/87/21)

*Mark Anderson and Andy Saunders joined the meeting.*

Mark said the revised proposal reflected previous points raised by Council and aims to have a rigorous but not overly onerous accreditation process for departments and to strike a balance that allows departments flexibility but also safeguards access to resources.

He said the new scheme takes a learning outcomes based approach and requires departments to demonstrate through their modules how they are achieving the skills and knowledge as outlined in appendix 1 and 2. He added a wide-ranging group had been consulted on the process: employers, academics and students.

(Discussion confidential to Council).

MG asked re fieldwork adaptations for disabled students. MA said a requirement for fieldwork in a project would only be required where developing a geological map was the main outcome. MA added the design of the learning outcomes should take into a range of disabilities from the outset and inclusive assessment should be fed into.

MA asked for approval from Council to consult with UGUK, to gain additional feedback and to roll out in new year.

Council APPROVED the draft proposal and the suggested next steps prior to roll out. MD thanked Mark Anderson and Andy Saunders.

13. IUGS (CM/88/21)

JGi said due to financial challenges and a potential cut in funding support for the IUGS membership, ERC recommended to drop membership from 8 to 6. The decision was approved by Council in November 2020 and communicated to the President of IUGS who had asked subsequently for reconsideration. The matter was discussed again by the ERC but it was agreed there had not been sufficient evidence of IUGS addressing concerns raised.

(Discussion confidential to Council).

Council agreed to adhere to its original decision of reducing membership level from 8 to 6, and APPROVED the decision to budget for level 7 membership in 2023. Moving to level 7 would be dependent on evidence of strong progress regarding transparency and accountability.

JGi to write to JL and IUGS communicating this decision.

JGi

14. REPORT ON COP26

*Flo Bullough joined the meeting to present.*

Flo gave a presentation on the Geological Society's attendance at COP26. Key points:

- The Society attended in 'observer' status.
- The main objective of attendance was to communicate the opportunities for Earth sciences input to solutions, and to keep Fellows informed of emerging themes.
- The Society joined and attended the Research and Independent NGO (RINGO) group which may be our best way of effectively contributing to future COPs.
- A hydrogen event staged with the University of Glasgow was successful with 200 attendees from across world.

(Discussion confidential to Council).

Council AGREED on the need for a simple climate change statement and due to a shortage of time requested a follow up session on COP26.  
A follow up session for Council to be diarised for further discussion.

AW/AN

CM

15. AOB

Alicia asked for Council to provide quotes on what it means to be a Council member to share as part of our media campaign to attract new trustees.

Council

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 2 FEBURARY 2022 (Other dates: 6 April and 22 June)