

The Geological Society of London

COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting on 22 June 2022.

PRESENT: Ruth Allington (*President*), Jo Alexander, Mark Allen, Anna Bird, Natasha Dowey, Holly Fisher, Neil Frewin, Joel Gill (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), Martin Griffin, Jim Griffiths (*Secretary, Professional & Chartership*), Michael Kehinde, Dan Le Heron, Ben Lepley, Pete Loader, Keith Myers (*Treasurer*), John Perry, Gemma Sherwood, (*Vice President, Regional Groups*), Lucy Thomas and Lucy Williams

APOLOGIES: Mark Anderson, Jennie Gilbert (*Secretary, Science*), Amanda Owen and Rob Strachan (*Secretary, Publications*)

In attendance: Richard Hughes (*Executive Secretary*), Michael Clayton (*incoming Director of Finance & Operations, observing*), Alex McPherson (*outgoing Director of Finance & Operations*), Alicia Newton (*Director of Science & Communications*), Maggie Simmons (*Director of Publishing*) and Christina Marron (*Executive Assistant*).
Item 7: David Shilston (BH)
Item 13: Farhana Begum (*HR Manager*).

1. APOLOGIES

Ruth Allington (RA) NOTED apologies from Mark Anderson, Jennie Gilbert, Amanda Owen and Rob Strachan. She welcomed the new Council members Mark Anderson, Anna Bird, Natasha Dowey, Holly Fisher, Dan Le Heron, Ben Lepley and Michael Clayton, the incoming Director of Finance and Operations.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None noted.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2022

Minutes were APPROVED.

4. MATTERS ARISING

All action items NOTED as actioned or discussed within today's agenda items. Convening Fermor and Futures Fund Oversight committee. Richard Hughes (RH) noted this is in progress.

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

Standing Committees List (*CM/32/22*): RA noted the Standing Committee lists were still to be finalised. Once finalised a Standing Committees, Boards and Panels paper will be shared by email and added to the SharePoint.

Standing List re R/G/5 ad R/G/6 (CM/33/22): RH noted this is a list of Fellows (chartered geologists) that can be called upon to assist should a formal complaint be raised. Council APPROVED the list.

Report of Officers Meeting (verbal)

RA highlighted some key matters discussed:

Staff changes: recruitment and internal progression.

An update on the three IS projects: CRM migration, Lyell Collection platform migration and website.

RH noted a number of staff changes over the past few months but the outcome has been several high calibre appointments.

Health and Safety: there were no accidents or near misses to report.

CM

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Executive Secretary's report (CM/34/22)

RH picked out key points from his report:

- His thanks to Alex McPherson (AMc) as outgoing DFO for his unfailing commitment to the Society through many changes.
- Burlington House to be discussed as a separate agenda item
- Progress against the Business Plan 2022: He spoke to the summary of objectives for the full year and said there had been positive progress in H1, highlights included:
 - Migration of the Lyell Collection to Atypon – on track, on time and on budget and will offer an improved user experience
 - Transformative Publish Agreements: now 40+ agreements
 - Intranet launched
 - First energy transition meeting and critical minerals held with further work in H2.
 - GSL portal issues now resolved.
 - Website build: Held back due to staff capacity but solutions are being looked at. Aim is to approve the build proposal, go to tender and complete website build as soon as feasible.
 - Membership decline: an issue since 2017, the decline seems to have arrested and may have increased.
 - Staffing issues: staff turnover has been quite high in recent months and therefore BP progress has some slowed in some areas due to recruiting staff to these roles. RH said the hope is to expand staff in 2023 to help progress the BP further.

Pete Loader (PL) asked for an update on the Education Officer recruitment. RH confirmed the new appointment to start in August meaning the Education Team would have two full-time posts.

Michael Kehinde queried what the issues to recruit for some roles were. RH said salaries are benchmarked and the Society's staff package is good but said it was an employee's market at the moment.

Director of Finance and Operations (CM/35/22)

Including April management accounts and 2022 outturn.

Alex McPherson (AMc) spoke to key points:

- Fellowship renewals are ahead of budget (expected final figure is c. 11600). Renewals data will be collated to look at where we can grow and improve. A marketing campaign resulted in earlier renewals and will be repeated next year.
- CRM migration: The project's discovery stage is complete but the costed design and build proposal is in excess of budget. Meetings are in place with the provider to review and reduce costs and the final proposal will go to FPC for approval.

April Management Accounts:

AMc noted overall the forecast for the operational budget at end of year is expected to be ahead of budget. Overall, however, there is a negative year-end balance sheet forecast due to the significant drop in value of the investment portfolio (predicted to be - £675k).

AMc explained the current free reserves total has been updated in response to the diminished investment portfolio. The minimum free reserve is £2.6m, and the expected draw of £300,000 would leave a cash balance of £3m at end of year.

Council NOTED the update.

Ben Lepley (BL) queried the composition of the investment portfolio. AMc said the investment portfolio (commercially confidential) had investments in equities, bonds, real estate investment and alternatives. He said it was broad portfolio by sector and geographical coverage (100-120 holdings within portfolio).

Keith Myers (KM) said (commercially confidential) the Investment Committee had agreed to re-tender for the investment manager. KM said Council would be informed of the new appointment.

Director of Publishing (CM/20/22):

Maggie Simmons (MS) spoke to key points from her report:

- Renewals for 2022 Lyell Collection Complete (high value academic and book content), Lyell Collection plus Special Publications and Transformative Read and Publish Agreement orders are currently at 4 behind 2021.
- 46 organisations have now signed up to Transformative Read and Publish. BGS have confirmed that they are signing up for this year and next: this is very significant for the Society as its highest volume institution in terms of publications.
- ES³ authors can submit up to July with full waiver of the article processing charge.
- Geoenergy, a new shared journal between GSL-EAGE, will fully launch in January and its editorial team is steadily growing.
- The migration from Highwire to Atypon is on track to launch 27 July. MS thanked Maxine Smith for her work as project manager to date.

Lucy Thomas (LT) and Gemma Sherwood (GS) joined meeting.

Director of Science and Communications (CM/19/22)

Alicia Newton (AN) spoke to key points from her report:

- Professional and Chartership Committee (PCC) approved the revitalised university champions scheme members to engage with early career students and improve retention.
- Website project: the discovery stage is completed and included a content analysis. Aim is to streamline content work to get a new website launched as early as possible.
- Specialist Groups AGM: The Specialist Groups met at the AGM and are happy with their more clearly-outlined benefits package.

Neil Frewin (NF) noted if Centre of Doctoral Training and Centre of Masters training could be used to engage with university champion scheme and early career groups in general. AN to follow up with NF.

AN

Gemma Sherwood (GS) said the university champions' scheme was welcomed to encourage more engagement with regional groups.

AN gave a brief outline of a Sustainable Geology Careers workshop in partnership with CMA. AN to ensure more information goes out via social media.

AN

Lucy Williams (LW) left meeting temporarily

7. RISK REGISTER

AMc said the paper was to NOTE. He gave a brief outline of the 4Risk software, a risk management tool introduced to replace previous Excel-based register. He said this

gave better tool for risk management including regular prompts to review risk levels and mitigations.

KM noted a risk register session was due with the FPC (Finance and Planning Committee) as the meeting had had to be scheduled.

Natasha Dowey (ND) noted that in the mitigations insights columns it would be good to know if mitigations are in progress, complete or to take forward. RA supported this suggestion. SLT to try to separate out mitigations by status in the future.

SLT

RH said the report was a distillation and the fuller version shows detail around risk owners, mitigations and actions and dates for completion.

PL asked if succession planning might help mitigate where loss of key staff has caused a stagnation with some business plan objectives. RH said succession planning was in place for SLT, and individual directors should have in place succession plans for their managers.

RA added her thanks to AMc for his work and the care and thought put into papers past and present.

8. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/22/22)

Jim Griffiths (JGr) said that PCC were happy to support the university champions' proposal. He noted the positive direction of membership renewals and welcomed the new Chartership Officer.

RH suggested an overview tour of new Lyell platform for Council members. RA suggested a video tutorial could also be provided to Fellows.

MS

Council NOTED reports.

9. ELECTIONS (CM/40/22 – CM/44/22)

Fellowship (CM/40/22)

Council AGREED to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed should be elected as Fellows at the Ordinary General Meeting on 22 June 2022.

Chartered Geologists (CM/41/22)

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

Candidate and Junior Candidate Fellowship (CM/42/22)

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

European Geologists (CM/43/22)

Council AGREED the applicant listed as European Geologist.

Chartered Scientist (CM/44/22)

Council AGREED the applicant listed as Chartered Scientist.

JGr recorded his thanks to the Membership team and Alex Carbray and John Talbot for their support during the period between the previous Chartership Officer and new Chartership Officer starting in role.

Jo Alexander left the meeting temporarily

10. Removal of Fellows for non-payment of subscriptions. (CM/45/22)

BL asked if the list was usual in terms of number of non-renewals. RH said it was not unusual but added that no names had been struck off in 2020-2021 due to Covid. RH said a telesales marketing team now followed up on non-renewals to ensure every opportunity was given to renew.

Lucy Thomas (LT) said it would be good to gather data to be used at ways to improve retention. It was agreed it would be also be good to maintain communications with those that leave.

Council AGREED to remove from Fellowship those Fellows who had not paid their 2022 subscription by 30 June 2022.

Council members were asked to encourage, as soon as possible, those Fellows known to them to pay their subscription and remain in Fellowship. The Fellowship office will continue to make efforts to secure late payments.

Council

11. BH webinar

(David Shilston joined the meeting) RA welcomed David Shilston (DS).

RH gave update on Burlington House and the recent webinar on May 19th. RH said following the webinar, the Society had received some emails in support of remaining at BH but many recommending relocation including outside London. RH noted DS's report to council in April 2022 and the working group's recommendation to relocate to a location with a smaller footprint in London.

RA said although the financial sustainability in the face of ever-increasing rent was a catalyst for looking at solutions, other factors such as meeting charitable aims, accessibility etc. were key considerations. She said that unless government were to remodel their offer including peppercorn rent then these other aims could not be met. MK supported this conclusion.

Discussion confidential to Council.

RA asked Council members to re-consider, following the webinar, if its views had changed on the preferred option of relocating to alternative premises elsewhere in London, should the Society need to relocate. Council expressed the view that its decision regarding the preferred option had not changed.

RA thanked David Shilston for attending the meeting. *(DS left the meeting.)*

12. BYE LAWS (CM/42/22)

RH noted that Council had approved the review of bye-laws and in April had suggested increasing diversity amongst the working group. An advisory group has been convened in response.

RH said Neal Marriot, previous Director of Publishing, is leading the project and is driving the process forward including benchmarking against other societies.

13. CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT

Farhana Begum (FB) joined the meeting. RH left for this part of the meeting.

RA outlined the recruitment process. She said 29 applications were received, and following initial interviews by Saxton Bampfylde and follow up calls with RA, five final candidates were short-listed.

RA noted that in addition to the interviews there were two separate stakeholder sessions: one with Council members and one with staff. The interview panel included current and past Presidents, the Treasurer, an active Committee member and past Specialist Group chair and the HR manager.

She said the interview panel's recommendation for Chief Executive does not have a geoscience background but stood out in terms of his leadership skills and had experience of non-profit and private sectors.

SLT said that from the staff stakeholder session, the same candidate had also been the preferred choice.

Council members who attend the Council stakeholder session agreed the candidate showed himself to be a good option to lead the organisation forward.

Council discussed the candidate.

Council APPROVED the recommended candidate.

14. AOB

Item confidential to Council

DATES OF 2022 MEETINGS: 21 & 22 September and 23 November