

Burlington House Webinar - May 19th 2022

Please find below responses to any QA questions which due to timings were not possible to answer live during the webinar:

	Question	Answer
1	What might be the reasons for revenue decline?	A gradual decline in our Fellowship numbers in recent years, and structural changes to the publishing industry, have had the greatest adverse effects on revenue. Treasurer Keith Myers discussed some other influential factors in his presentation.
2	Please explain the decline in Energy Group revenue. Wasn't BH free issue for evening meetings ?	Over the last 2-3 years the nature of events for many of our specialist groups and networks has changed notably. There is a strong appetite for more online and hybrid events. This has resulted in less income for the Society from events across the board - but the decline noted in the Treasurer's presentation is largely driven by the cessation of the Energy Group's annual dinner and associated revenue. The Relocation Working Group did not envisage that there would be a change in the financial arrangements for evening meetings of specialist groups and networks if we move from Burlington House; i.e. such meetings would remain 'free issue', and ambiguities and inconsistencies brought to our attention in other questions during and after the meeting are being addressed. It will be important that new premises incorporate high quality, welcoming and accessible facilities for the meetings arranged by our Specialist Groups and networks.
3	On a crude comparison, the cost of staying at BH over the next ten years would equal our current reserves (both c. £7M). What's the best estimate of income over the same period - and hence our reserves at the end of that period ?	The draw on reserves would depend on both our income and expenditure. If we maintain a balanced budget then there would be no draw on reserves. The level of reserves would also depend on the performance of the investment portfolio. It is not therefore possible to give a precise answer as to the level of reserves at the end of the period if we remain at Burlington House. It is worth noting here that, given the high and increasing costs of occupancy, a balanced budget increasingly limits expenditure on staff and systems to deliver our charitable objectives effectively.
5	With current profits being made by oil companies as sustaining supporters of the Society can they not be requested to give a one off gift to purchase a suitable new premises for the long term future of the Society? Geoscience is primarily responsible for their existence! A charitable gift to the Society is tax efficient and even a million pounds for a major is hardly relevant when compared to the cost of deep water wells.	Informal soundings have been made and there are no indications whatsoever that oil companies would be prepared to offer the substantial financial support that would be needed to enable the Society to remain at Burlington House.

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6	Why are other government departments not being addressed? I would have thought Dept for Business, Energy & Industrial, Dept for Education, Dept for Environment would be more appropriate than digital and media?	The campaign focused on working with the department responsible for our lease. Representatives of the Department for Media, Culture and Sport have attended recent meetings with the landlord (the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), and letters written to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. There has been wide engagement with parliamentarians generally which has raised the profile of the Geological Society and the importance of geoscience in addressing urgent and pressing issues (notably climate change and the need for energy transition)
7	The Council has called this meeting in main to discuss moving out of Burlington House, so why now spend any more time on a Publicity Campaign to try and change the landlord's mind?	Collectively the four societies involved invested a huge amount of time and money in the campaign. The campaign reached a point where it is believed further investment is unlikely to result in a change of heart from government. It is essential that we now prepare seriously for a possible relocation, but our 'door' to the landlord will always remain open. Should an offer worth considering be made then Council will need to reconsider, and thus the campaign and its legacy remain important context for the discussion. The Geological Society is no longer funding the campaign, but it continues to engage with Parliamentarians as well as directly with the landlord.
9	Has there been any discussion of co-location with any of the other affected societies?	Some discussion, yes, but the other Courtyard Societies are in different positions to ourselves and don't see much opportunity to relocate - in fact they believe they need more space. We have received offers to co-locate with other similar organisations - see the Relocation Options project report downloadable from www.geolsoc.org.uk/burlingtonhouse .
17	If the Library is going to have to move to an External Storage and Retrieval service, why not just change to an electronic Library, digitize the books and journals, then sell any that are valuable to help fund the move and dispose of the rest? That does away with the need to fund this storage longer term!	A very thorough review of the library was undertaken in 2020 and its report can be found at www.geolsoc.org.uk/Library-and-Information-Services/review . The report answers the question in depth.
20	Windsor might be more accesible and better value for money than central London?	A number of fellows have expressed support for specific locations outside London, including Birmingham, Manchester, Darlington, etc. The Relocation Options project report report explains the rationale behind the recommendation to move to alternative premises in Central London, should it be necessary. The report can be downloaded from www.geolsoc.org.uk/burlingtonhouse .

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22	Under Option B has there been any consultation with the Geologists' Association? Any room for them? Any consideration for adding non-professional membership as was successfully done by the Geographers?	Yes, this was considered during the Relocation Options project and the GA is closely informed of developments. There already exists a non-professional membership category (the 'Friends' category) and consideration is being given to promoting this more widely. If Council decides that we should relocate to new premises, that will be the beginning of a lengthy period of planning and consultation with Fellows and partner organisations (including the GA) to specify in detail what will best serve the Geological Society.
	How much has been budgeted for the present campaign and investigations, including the use of external consultants?	Since early 2019 the Society has spent around £200K on various work related to the campaign to remain at Burlington House, and this figure excludes staff time. Work includes a jointly commissioned quantification of the economic benefit of the Burlington House courtyard societies by PwC, legal advice, the PR and political engagement campaign, commercial property advice, and the feasibility study carried out by David Kohn Associates to look into options for occupying a reduced footprint within our part of Burlington House.
29	The big question is if there is no special historic library, no significant lecture theatre... no heritage... why would anyone want to visit the new premises?	We recognise the loss of some facilities available at Burlington House will be seen by some as a backward step. Should we be forced to relocate then it is essential the alternative premises allow for a sense of community to develop and flourish and that includes ensuring that flexible, accessible, and comfortable spaces for Fellows to meet formally (e.g. specialist group meetings) and informally are included in future plans. We must also learn from the positive experiences of the many similar organisations we have already spoken to who have either chosen, or been required to, relocate from 'period' properties in recent years and have configured them to suit the needs of their members and their objectives.
30	It's an excellent lecture theatre, apart from the projector which lacks clarity and could be upgraded at negligible cost. To many the lecture room and the lower library is the heart of the society. Replace it with a flexible meeting facility at the society's peril, I think. London is awash with flexible anonymous spaces, hence the unique 'aura' of the current space.	Yes, it is fully recognised that the lecture theatre has an atmosphere of its own. It is also true that over the years the Society's lecture and meeting programme (whether organised by Specialist Groups or by the Society centrally) has, on occasions, been constrained by the limited capacity and flexibility of the lecture theatre and/or the fixed seating arrangements. It should also be recognised that the seating, flooring and lighting in the lecture theatre are in urgent need of substantial investment. The Society is not prepared to invest in this infrastructure (and other essential maintenance and improvements elsewhere in the building) while the uncertainty over our future at Burlington House remains. It does not follow that 'flexible' means 'anonymous' - rather the contrary. If we relocate we have the opportunity to decide what these spaces should be and what they should be like.

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35	<p>Although it's true that there are many good lecture theatres around the country, the institutions they belong to will usually charge substantial fees for their use. The fact that the GS made the BH lecture theatre available free of charge to specialist groups has been an important benefit to these groups. Is there an intention to create a fund to enable specialist groups to continue to operate in a similar way. Many specialist groups have no regular source of income, so a switch to having to pay for meeting facilities will significantly impact the way they operate.</p>	<p>This is a valid point that will need to be considered further if and when the Society relocates. The Specialist Groups are an integral part of the Geological Society, and there is no intention that they should be made to pay (now or in future) for the use of its facilities on a commercial or any other basis at Burlington House or in any new premises. We are aware from this comment, and others, that some Specialist Groups have understood that they will now be charged for use of the lecture theatre or other spaces for their meetings - this is being urgently addressed so that the position on funding of the groups' activities can be made transparently clear to all.</p>
36	<p>When the Minister visits, can he be made aware of the costs (man-hours, consultants' fees, etc.,) the Society has been forced to incur by the Government's rental policy ?</p>	<p>The landlord has been made aware of the substantial costs already incurred by all the Burlington House Courtyard Societies in the past few years.</p>