

Council Meeting

14 June 2012
12:30-15:30

Conference Room 5, Manchester Conference Centre,
Weston Building, Sackville Street, Manchester, M1 3BB

Web Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The President welcomed Prof Chris Kirk as Honorary Secretary and Dr Jeremy Pritchard as the Chair of ETP.

Present: Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, President
Professor Chris Kirk, Honorary Secretary
Dr William Marshall, Honorary Treasurer
Dr Pat Goodwin
Dr Liz Lakin
Professor Pete Downes
Dr Kim Hardie
Professor Julia Buckingham
Dr Aileen Allsop
Dr Jeremy Pritchard
Ms Sue Thorn
Professor Rosie Hails
Professor John Coggins
Mr Tim Brigstocke

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Professor Keith Gull
Dr Simon Festing, Society for General Microbiology
Dr Hazel Norman, British Ecological Society
Prof Chris Kirk
Ms Jen Crosk (Minutes)

Section A:

Dr Laura Bellingan
Ms Rachel Lambert-Forsyth
Mr Jon Kudlick
Dr Stephen Benn

Apologies: Prof Martin Humphries
Professor Chris Garland
Dr Paul Brooker

1.1 Declaration of interests

No conflict of interests were reported.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2012**

2.1 Review of action points

All actions have been taken forward.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

None reported.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and redacted Minutes

The Minutes and redacted Minutes were approved.

Section A: Policy & Strategy

3. **Report from ETP**

Jeremy Pritchard (JP) reported on the outcomes of the last ETP meeting, mentioning in particular that there was an important educational role for the Society to play, starting at primary school, through to employment skills and wider education of the public. He felt that funding should be considered to support people who teach in universities not just those those that carry out research. Rachel Lambert-Forsyth (RLF) reported that the new CPD registering process was now live.

3.1 Accreditation

Liz Lakin (LL) reported that there had been a successful Awards Ceremony held in Parliament, in which the Rt Hon David Willetts MP and Andrew Miller MP had spoken in support of the Society's work. The Development criteria of working groups was being looked at, with Richard Reece overseeing the molecular area, David Coates involved with organismal and LL/JP for environment. LL stressed the need to keep the momentum going. The second cycle would commence seeking new applicants in the autumn.

Funding continued to be an issue but the Society had submitted a bid for over £900k to the GIF Fund. This would add to the £18,500 received in grants from GIF to develop the proposal. If successful, the application would be taken to the second phase in mid-July and the third phase on 14 August.

LL reported that the Society had been involved in the recent discussions with Cogent, whereby a helpful distinction was made between kite-marking and accreditation.

The President congratulated LL on the good progress.

3.2 Open Education Resources

Rachel Lambert-Forsyth (RLF) reported that a £25k bid had been submitted for open education resources. This had proved successful and would provide a six month project to develop these for higher education teaching in practical biological science. Dr Eva Sharpe will lead the project and the grant will be used to backfill her careers work. HUBS will be the steering group.

4. MMC Report

Sue Thorn reported that the team had worked well on balancing the fee structure but felt that it would take some time before we could see how the new pricing structure pans out.

Jon Kudlick (JK) reported a high number of new members and expected the Society to have around 11,700 members by the end of June. In the membership survey, 82% reported membership to be good value. The June edition of *The Biologist* was now out. Jenna Stevens-Smith would be covering the BBC Blue Peter Olympic tours as well as working on a new BBC event in July for 2-6 year olds. Work was progressing for Biology Week including a project ending in July/August which involved getting people to record flying ant sightings online. This would act as a public engagement project and Adam Hart had agreed to assist with the collection of data which would be used as a lead-in for Biology Week. Another area under consideration for Biology Week was getting a large number of school children to carry out an experiment at the same time.

JK reported that branches were aware of events around Biology Week and had been encouraged to organise events around this but Pat Goodwin (PG) felt that branches required more support from Head Office. Council felt the communication of Biology Week could have been better and needed more effort. **Action: JK to offer support to branches for events around Biology Week**

The Honorary Treasurer gave congratulations on the membership figures and asked that, for future Council meetings, a running membership total for the last four quarters, split between members and Fellows, be provided as a standing item. Council were keen to monitor changes over time as proposed by Sue Thorn. **Action: JK to provide a running membership total, broken down by members and Fellows (and numbers leaving), at each Council meeting**

4.1 Honorary Fellows

Council followed on discussions from the previous meeting on the role, criteria and numbers of Honorary Fellows.

Stephen Benn (SB) added that it would be good if there could be scope in the future for people who contribute to science within Parliament, the President agreed but felt that they should only be elected once they had left office, particularly in the Commons, Assembly or Scottish Parliament. There might be more flexibility for the Lords.

5. Science Policy Report

5.1 GM Issues

Laura Bellingan (LB) reported on the Society's current approach and actions around GM issues.

5.2 UK Plant Science Federation

LB reported that the UKPSF had been launched as a Special Interest Group in November. This consisted of Professor Jim Beynon as Chair and a selection from MOs. The group had been successful in recruiting new members. John Beddington had opened an event for UKPSF which was attended by over 200. There had been a lively, unified and well received meeting, with the next meeting to be in Dundee. Dr Mimi Tanimoto had been recruited as Executive Officer following funding received from the Society for Experimental Biology and Gatsby. Mimi was starting to look at the future work plan for the UKPSF.

5.3 Parliamentary Links Day

SB reported that three people had pulled out of the event this week but felt optimistic that it would be successful. Sponsorship had been received from eight organisations and the event would be introduced by The Speaker, followed by Andrew Miller MP and the President.

6. Science Council Strategy

MD asked Council for feedback for him to take back to the Science Council. He added that FutureMorph had now been linked to the Society's Education pages, for children interested in a career in science. **Action: Council to feedback any comments to MD**

7. The Future of A-Levels

There was currently confusion across the sector around the Government's meaning of A-Level Reform. The timeline was tight but SCORE had been in discussion on this and RLF had spoken to HUBS.

RLF asked what the Society needed to do next and who should we engage with? Council felt that the ideal solution would be a single examining body and agreed that the Society should be very public in its views. It was felt that the Society needed to encourage more teachers to join as members, as well as ensuring that we point to our MO resources. Benefits for teacher members would include a Teacher of the Year Award in September.

Section B: Operational Issues

8. Chief Executive's Report

The President noted the hard work done on the grants.

Mark Downs (MD) gave an overview of his paper and reported that many Society newsletters were now available, there had been an increase in parliamentary activity and a HUBS launch on 13 June. The number of consultation responses had almost doubled that of the previous year. The Special Interest Groups were growing, with a proposal to have one for Agricultural and possibly Mycology. A significant number of member events had been held, with a Fellows Lunch scheduled for 15 June in Manchester. CPD had now gone live and there had been many IS changes within the Society. There has been much media work and blogs on various subjects. The Registers activity had increased and gone live.

Significant work had been done on Drug Discovery pathway and skills in collaboration with the BPS, RSC and Academy of Medical Sciences, with three articles in Research Fortnight. MD was now involved in the British Science Association and John Beddington's taskforce on modernising scientific careers in the civil service.

The President noted the excellent development and WM congratulated MD but stressed to Council that direct support was required for MD and that Council needed to support a strategy to achieve this. MD was currently covering the role of CEO, Head of HR and Director of Finance. Council discussed how MD could be supported. Key areas where help could be given needed to be identified. Council **agreed** to discuss support for the CEO at the Strategy Meeting and supported the proposal.

9. Finance & Governance Update including Q2

WM reported a predicted year end general fund small surplus. WM reported that this was a good outcome but felt it was important to maintain the efforts to increase membership at MSB grade.

MD reported that the budgets for next year would be discussed in the Strategy Meeting. There was potential to recruit four new members to the Accreditation team if the Society was successful in the Accreditation bid.

WM gave credit to Society staff for their hard work.

10. AOB

Tim Brigstocke (TB) reported that a well-attended branches meeting had been held in February. He added that there was potential for using branches more effectively, as many were not aware of activities where the Society had involvement. The Welsh branch had put in a policy submission to the Welsh Assembly which was very positive. PG felt that the notes from the meeting had not reflected how positive it had been. **Council agreed to have branches as a regular Council Agenda item.**

Aileen Allsop requested clarity on the Society's stance on using the Chartered Scientist status for pseudo scientists such as homeopaths. **Council agreed to take the line that The Society reserved the right to revoke Chartered Scientist status if it deemed that the title was being used inappropriately.** MD noted that the Regulations ensured this was possible.

The President reported that she had been invited to speak at the Jubilee event at the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee on '60 years of achievement'. She welcomed suggestions/pictures for any strong areas of science in the last 60 years that could be included. Rosie Hails agreed to send something on the environment. **Action: RH to send information to the President**

The President suggested that the Society should monitor university entrants over time and whether numbers had been affected by the new fee structure. **Action: MD to ask the team to monitor.**

The President reported that this was Prof Keith Gull's last Council meeting (he was attending as an observer) and thanked him for his work.