

# Biochemical Society - Annual General Meeting Minutes

Meeting held 1600, Thursday 10 July 2025, online via Zoom

<b>Members present:</b>	Julia Goodfellow (Chair)	President, Chair of Council of Trustees
	Susan Campbell (SC)	Local Ambassador Representative Trustee
	Lisa Chakrabarti	Interim Honorary Meetings Secretary
	Nigel Hooper (NH)	Chair, Portland Press Ltd.
	Derry Mercer	Honorary Policy Officer
	Richard Reece (RR)	Chair, Biochemical Society
	Sonia Rocha (SR)	Honorary Treasurer Elect
	Frank Sargent (FS)	Honorary Treasurer
	David Smith	Chair, Education Committee
	Katrin Ackerman	Member
	Christoph Baumann	Member
	James Brown	Member
	Ines Castro	Member
	Sheila Graham	Member
	John Griffiths	Member
	Fiona Love	Member
	Trent McLean-Ash	Member
	Robert Moore	Member
	Kehinde Ross	Member
	Elizabeth Veal	Member
	Helen Watson	Member
<b>In attendance:</b>	Paul Green	Independent Member, Audit Committee
	Martin Hindle	Interim Chair, Audit Committee
	Philip Morgan	Chief Executive Officer
	Doug Armin	Director, Finance and Governance
	Kofo Balogun	Director, HR, EDI and Technology
	Clare Curtis	Director, Content and Engagement
	Ellen Dougan	Governance and EDI Assistant
	Lorraine Reese	Director, Events and Marketing
	Sarah Jenner (CoS)	Company Secretary and EDI Manager
	Sarah Taylor	Governance Officer

## 25/01 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the Biochemical Society's 114<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, noting apologies from Trustees Hannah Britt and Lu Mello and Awards Committee Chair Steve Busby.

The CoS outlined the ground rules for the meeting:

- The meeting was being held entirely online and anyone who dropped out from the meeting would be readmitted as soon as possible;
- Throughout the meeting the Chair would be asking for proposers and seconders for certain motions. Members could indicate their willingness to act as either by using the raise hand function;
- When asked to vote members would see a poll appear on the screen in front of them which could be completed by selecting one of the two available answers;
- No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting and there would be limited time to answer questions within the time available. Members were directed to submit questions to the host via the meeting chat function; all questions and answers would be circulated to attendees following the meeting;

- All attendees were asked to act with courtesy and to show respect to each other during the meeting.

### **25/02 Deceased members**

The Chair noted the names of those members who had died since the previous General Meeting provided in paper One. The Chair led a one minute silence to remember these individuals.

### **25/03 Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting**

The Chair noted the minutes of the Society's last Annual General Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024 provided as Paper Two. The Chair tabled a motion to approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of that meeting. This was proposed by RR and seconded by FS.

Members were asked to vote by completing the poll on their screen. It was confirmed a majority vote had been received and the minutes were accepted into the Society record.

### **25/04 Update on Society activities and achievements and overview of future strategy**

The CEO presented to members on Society activities and achievements since the last General Meeting and provided an overview of future strategy. He noted that he took on the role of Society CEO in December 2024, following five years as the Chief Executive of the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine.

#### Society activities and achievements: promoting and sharing knowledge

- In 2024 we published 570 articles;
- 385 of these were open access and 225 were published open access through Read & Publish;
- In 2024 there were 5.3m downloads (9% increase on 2023) and institutional usage rose by 12%;
- Our presence on ScienceDirect, launched in August 2024, added 139k full text views
- As a strategic partner of the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) we contributed to the UL Government Spending Review; our representation focussed on unlocking sustainable economic growth and removing the barriers to resilient job growth, especially through education and skills development;
- Between 2024 and 2025 we hosted 10 scientific meetings, two Harden conferences and four in-person training events. These attracted a total of 1,288 delegates, 967 of which were members;
- Since 2020 our webinar series has delivered 106 webinars with attendees from 119 countries;
- In our 2026 awards we recognised 17 outstanding bioscientists, educators and early career researchers (ECRs). The 2027 awards nominations open next month;
- We have awarded over £36k in grants and bursaries since July 2024, supporting international collaboration, summer studentships and innovative outreach;
- In the last year we highlighted our achievements through a dedicated webpage, refined our email strategy to better suit audience preferences and launched a BlueSky account.

#### Supporting career development and lifelong engagement

- Our summer vacation studentship scheme continues to grow with dozens of successful applications in both 2024 and 2025;
- We sponsored the STEM for Britain bronze award in March 2025, recognising impactful research on health priorities and giving ECRs a platform to question government on biotechnology and research sustainability;
- Since 2024 a total of 33 Undergraduate Recognition Awards have been awarded, offering complimentary memberships and training discounts to winners.

### Bringing together molecular bioscientists and encouraging wider dialogue

- Our Science Communication Prize celebrated creativity in both written and multimedia formats, and our ECR symposium provided valuable insights to research careers, entrepreneurship and mentorship. The next ECR symposium will be held in October 2025;
- Industry engagement was strengthened through events such as the GSK residential intensive training experience which provided practical experience of work in the pharma industry;
- The career of former Society Chair Professor Colin Kleanthous was celebrated at a symposium.

### Developing and transforming our working practices and business model

- A major milestone in 2025 was the successful implementation of our subscribe to open model;
- All our journals are now open access for 2025, and researchers can publish in five of our journals with no author-facing fees through institutional support via the subscribe to open model;
- New agreements were signed with Vanderbilt University and TIB in Germany;
- The new online learning platform was launched this month offering enhanced functionality and support for learners;
- The governance review concluded in May, with a focus on ensuring we remain agile and responsive to the evolving needs of our community;
- We also successfully transitioned our closed pension scheme to the Citrus Master Trust on time and on budget;
- A cloud based Azure database was built and key staff have been upskilled on data protection;
- We have continued our successful adoption of the four day working week and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) remain central to our mission;
- We hosted a joint webinar with the Afro-Caribbean Commercial Science Network, funded 16 diversity in science grants projects and jointly sponsored the inaugural Minoritised Life Scientists Future Forum, which was the first of its kind in Europe.

### Proposed Biochemical Strategy

- Our purpose is to promote biochemistry in the cellular and molecular life sciences as expressed in the articles of association as our guiding principle. This strategy will build around three core missions:
  - Knowledge
  - Careers
  - Networks
- **Knowledge:**
  - Share and communicate knowledge and facilitate the exchange of ideas and insights by continuing to produce world-class journals and meetings;
  - Empower our community to communicate the significance and impact of their work to the widest audience possible, embracing open science and expanding our international reach, using technology to enhance how we share our knowledge;
- **Careers:**
  - Create meaningful opportunities for professional growth and development;
  - Promote inclusivity so that diverse voices shape the future of bioscience;
  - Our goal is to be the trusted voice and advocate for molecular bioscience careers, and we remain committed to supporting molecular bioscientists at every stage, from students onwards;
  - We want to use technology to increasingly personalise that support and ensure that our offerings reflect the evolving needs of the community;

- **Networks:**
  - Collaboration drives innovation, so we will grow our membership, deepen industry engagement and strengthen partnerships;
  - We want to be a hub for interdisciplinary dialogue and a platform to amplify the voice of the molecular biosciences;
  - We will look to bring together individuals with diverse experience and expertise to foster meaningful engagement and cross-disciplinary dialogue;
  - Collaboration will help us to address the challenges and explore the opportunities that shape our field.
- The Society remains dependent on Portland Press (PPL) as its main source of income at a time of significant change within the scholarly publishing world;
- The Society is at risk of being caught between declining income and rising costs, underlining the need for financial sustainability to ensure we can sustain our purpose and serve the community for many years to come;
- These factors are among the key drivers of our strategy; we must diversify and that means strengthening our events, training, partnership and membership offerings;
- We are aiming for a breakeven budget in 2026 as a path to long term resilience;
- Priority actions have been identified as:
  - Stabilise PPL income
  - Reduce event losses
  - Research opportunities in training, membership, events and partnerships;
  - Work towards a break-even 2026 budget on business as usual, while defining the investments that will power long term growth;
- These actions would set us on the way to meeting our vision of a Society that is influential and impactful, at the heart of a diverse international bioscience community, and one that is financially stable and secure;
- We are a purpose driven charity and a learned society where success means impact;
- We want a high performance culture focussed on delivering our mission and securing long term sustainability;
- Consolidation and growth are our current strategic priorities;
- Strong foundations matter – good governance, smart technology, sector relevance and space for ideas to grow;
- High performance requires empowered people, a values-driven culture and commitment to personal development and continuous improvement.

## **25/05 Member vote on special resolution to amend the Society Articles of Association**

The CoS briefed members on the work undertaken to deliver the governance review, detailed within the papers provided:

- The last review of the Society's governance took place around ten years ago and since then the committee and panel structure had continued to grow and the Society's organisational focus had shifted in line with the changing external landscape;
- The Council of Trustees approved a review of the current governance framework in 2023 and this has been carried out over the last 18 months with two stakeholder groups involved in the initial stages of the review, and a four week consultation period with all committee, board and panel members;
- Feedback from that consultation has informed the proposals being put forward. In total eight proposals were detailed, five of which required changes to the Society's Articles of Association. Those five proposals were confirmed as:
  - The proposal to merge the current Executive Management Committee and Nominations Panel to create a People, Remuneration and Nominations Committee;

- The proposal to merge the current Audit Committee and Finance Committee to create a joint Audit and Finance Committee;
- The proposal to merge the current Conferences Committee, Training Theme Panel, Basic Bioscience Theme Panel and the public engagement aspects of the remit of the Education, Public Engagement and Training Committee to create a new Conferences and Training Panel;
- The proposal to change the role of Society Chair to that of Vice President and to shorten the term of office for both the President and Vice President roles;
- The proposal to reduce the number of Society Trustee roles from 13 to 11, including the option to recruit up to three independent Trustees, all with standardised terms of office.

The Chair thanked the CoS and opened to questions; as none were asked, she tabled a motion to approve the proposed changes to the Society's Articles of Association. This was proposed by NH and seconded by RR.

Members were asked to vote by completing the poll on their screen. It was confirmed that a vote in excess of the required 75% in favour required for a special resolution had been received.

#### **25/06 Trustees Annual Report and Statutory Accounts for the period ended 31 December 2024**

- The Chair handed over to FS for a short presentation to members:
- The Group statutory accounts take into account the Society and its wholly owned trading subsidiary PPL;
- By the end of 2024, the Society had £1.266m worth of income or revenue;
- PPL generated £3.536m of revenue, with a surplus of £2.03m gift aided back to the Society to fund charitable activities;
- At the end of the year the Group as a whole was worth £12.47m;
- We ended the year with a Group surplus of £1.3m, mainly due to a USS valuation that put the pension scheme in credit;
- Almost all group income comes from our publishing activities; 2024 income was ~1% down on 2023 income
- A small amount of money is generated through membership fees, and other small amounts of income come in through conference registrations and sponsorships;
- A lot of the money generated goes back into publishing research and reviews, and maintaining our membership base, with ~13% of income in 2024 being spent on grants and awards;
- The Society and PPL remain Going Concerns and that is recognised both by the Trustees and the external auditors. This means we have sufficient business and cash at bank to support us for the foreseeable future;
- As a charity we also have to have a reserves policy which enables the management of funds to ensure the appropriate level of reserves is held against identified risks while ensuring timely strategic use of said funds;
- We hold sufficient reserves to provide a source of funds for situations that we may not be aware of like a sudden increase in expenses, an unanticipated loss in funding or uninsured events;
- Reserves may also be used for one-time non-recurring opportunities such as investment in infrastructure and/or collaboration opportunities.
- At the end of 2024, the Society had general funds of £11.3m.

The Chair tabled a motion to approve the Trustees Annual Report and Statutory Accounts, and to accept them into the Society record. This was proposed by RR and seconded by SC.

Members were asked to vote by completing the poll on their screen. It was confirmed a majority vote had been received and the Trustees Annual Report and Statutory Accounts were accepted into the Society record.

The Chair thanked FS on behalf of all Trustees and Society members, for his contributions during his term of office, which would finish on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

#### **25/07 Appointment of Auditors**

The Chair tabled a motion to reappoint Sayer Vincent as the Society's auditors. This was proposed by SR and seconded by FS.

Members were asked to vote using the poll on their screen; it was confirmed a majority vote had been received and Sayer Vincent were therefore re-appointed as the Society's auditors for the financial period ending 31 December 2025.

#### **25/08 Current Trustees**

The Chair noted the list of current Trustees provided.

#### **25/09 Elections and vacancies**

The Chair noted the appointment of Professor Sonia Rocha to the position of Honorary Treasurer Elect, and encouraged members to apply for and/or share the upcoming vacancies as appropriate.

#### **25/10 Editorial board appointments and retirements**

The Chair noted the editorial board appointments and retirements as provided.

#### **25/11 Committee appointments and retirements**

The Chair noted the committee appointments and retirements as provided.

#### **25/12 President's Remarks**

The Chair congratulated all involved in the Society's activities and achievements at a very challenging time in the sector and for science more generally, noting the changes affecting universities in the United States and higher education in the UK. The Society's ongoing commitment to supporting its community, maintaining a focus on those at the start of their careers, was evident in the strategy overview presented by the CEO.

The Chair noted the additional awards agreed this year to recognise exceptional early-career scientists, and the successful transition to open access which was a significant achievement.

Thanks were given to all Trustees, committee and panel members, ambassadors and staff, for their contributions over the preceding 12-months.

#### **25/13 Any other business**

The CoS confirmed that no questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting. The Chair opened to items of any other business; none were raised and so the meeting was closed.

Sarah Jenner  
Company Secretary and EDI Manager