

Minutes of the 106th Annual General Meeting of the Biochemical Society

Wednesday, 5 July 2017 at 16:30
Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London, WC1N 2JU

Present:

David Baulcombe	President (Chair of AGM)
Rob Beynon	Chair, Education, Training and Public Engagement Committee
Colin Bingle	Editor-in-Chief, Biochemical Society Transactions
Steve Busby	Member
Anne Dell	Chair, Biochemical Society
Joanne Edwards	Chair, Clinical and Translational Research Theme Panel
Robert Freedman	Member
Terri Grassby	Member
Niki Gray	Honorary Membership Secretary
Dominika Gruszka	Council of Trustees Early Career Researcher Representative
Frank Michelangeli	Member
Martin Pool	Council of Trustees Local Ambassador Representative
David Pye	Honorary Policy Officer
Richard Reece	Chair, Portland Press Ltd Board
Stefan Roberts	Honorary Meetings Secretary
Freddie Theodoulou	Science Editor, <i>The Biochemist</i>
Nick Watmough	Honorary Treasurer
Helen Watson	Chair, Training Theme Panel
Malcolm Weir	Council of Trustees Industry Representative
Michelle West	Chair, Basic Biosciences Theme Panel

In attendance:

Kate Baillie	CEO, Biochemical Society and Managing Director, Portland Press Ltd
Richard Cryer	Independent Chair, Audit Committee
Adam Hughes	Director of Operations
Anna Labuz	Head of Finance
Niamh O'Connor	Director of Publishing
Lorraine Reese	Head of Conferences and Events
Hannah Russell	Director of Society Programmes
Anastasia Stefanidou	Communications Officer
Laura Woodland	Head of Membership Engagement

The meeting started with one minute of silence to commemorate those members who had died since the last General Meeting (6 July 2016).

17/01 Minutes of the 105th Annual General Meeting (Wednesday, 6 July 2016)

The Chair opened the floor to comments on the *Minutes of the 105th Annual General Meeting of the Biochemical Society*.

No comments or errors were noted. Therefore, the membership approved the proposal to accept the minutes as a true and accurate account of the meeting.

17/02 Update of Society activities and achievements

The CEO, Director of Society Programmes, Director of Publishing, and Director of Operations provided an update on the Society's activities since the last General Meeting (6 July 2016).

- *Organizational structure.* The CEO noted that in 2012 the organization had 70 staff split across two sites in London and Colchester. Since then, following significant restructuring, this had been consolidated to 38 staff based at Charles Darwin House, including a number of positions and an HR function shared with other organizations.
- *Collaborations.* The Society had collaborated with a number of external organizations in 2016-17, supporting its aim to ensure a strong future for the molecular biosciences through strategic collaborative projects with sister societies.
- *Charles Darwin House.* Following the move to offering a commercial conference hosting service, Charles Darwin House (CDH) Ltd had become liable to pay full business rates, having previously benefited from the 80% rate relief afforded to Charities. This presented a significant increase billed by Camden Council for the year 2016/17. Since this would have impacted upon the conference centre's profitability moving forwards, the Directors of CDH agreed to cease taking external bookings and only host owner organization¹ events, which would allow a return to charity relief on the business rates. The Society had sold 6.2% of its equity share in CDH Ltd to the Society for Applied Microbiology, liquidating £1.38m. Therefore, the Society's total share was now 29.4%. As a result of the Finance Review, the Society no longer provided Treasury services to CDH Ltd; therefore, this had been transitioned to an external provider, Accountability. The Society was collaborating with other co-owner societies to deliver an event in celebration of International Coffee Day, in the form of a scientific programme and public engagement activity. An Operations Group had been established, with representatives from each co-owner, to take responsibility for operational management of CDH properties and business on behalf of the Directors.
- *Strategy.* In 2013 the Society's Trustees had set a five-year strategy, and convened again in November 2015 to evaluate its progress and review it in light of substantial changes both internally and externally. A strategy retreat would be held in November 2017 to review and develop the next iteration of the Society's strategy.
- *Society Programmes.* The Director of Society Programmes introduced her Directorate, which spanned scientific meetings; training; education; careers; public engagement; and policy:

¹ Biochemical Society; Royal Society of Biology; Microbiology Society; Society for Experimental Biology; British Ecological Society, and Society for Applied Microbiology.

- *Scientific meetings.* Since July 2016, the Society's meetings programme had included 25 meetings, reaching over 1,500 delegates from 42 different countries. 40% of delegates were non-members, which represented an important stream of income. Additionally, 31% of delegates were student members.
- *Training.* Since July 2016, the Society had held a total of six training events (four technical and two for HE educators). An online training portal was being developed for launch in Autumn 2017, which would help to widen the reach of the training programme and support the Society's face-to-face events.
- *Education.* Since July 2016, 43 summer vacation studentships had been awarded and 25 scientific outreach grants. The science communication competition continued to be popular, and had received 82 entries. The Society had run a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) through FutureLearn, in collaboration with the University of East Anglia, entitled "Biochemistry: the molecules of life" which had received over 10,000 registrants to date from all over the world. Twenty teachers had completed STEM Insight placements in either academia or industry, and had provided very positive feedback.
- *Careers.* The Society had attended career events including the NatureJobs Career Expo, Royal Society of Biology (RSB) Bioscience Careers Festival, and two National Careers Guidance shows. A new Jobs Board had been launched on the Society's website; to date 42 jobs had been advertised, including PhD studentships. Over 1,000 trainee teachers across the UK had been reached by the Society's careers support for trainee teachers, provided in collaboration with the RSB. A regular 'day in the life of' feature was being developed in *The Biochemist*, to showcase different careers options.
- *Public Engagement.* A new activity exploring genome editing, 'Scientific Scissors', had been developed in collaboration with the British Society for Gene and Cell Therapy. In addition, the 'Medicine Makers' activity had been developed in collaboration with the British Pharmacological Society into an online kit available for download from the Society's website. In collaboration with the RSB, a programme of ten public engagement training events had been delivered across the UK, reaching 120 early career scientists.
- *Policy.* The Society had contributed to nine consultation responses through the RSB, including REF, Britain's relationship with the European Union, and the Industrial Strategy. A new Policy Network had been established, which had been joined by over 100 members, to enable the Society to represent the views of the membership and channel these into national consultations. The Society had published a statement in response to the Wakeham Review. In collaboration with eleven organizations, the Society was co-funding a new Brexit Policy Officer at the Campaign for Science and Engineering. Eight Diversity in Science grants had been awarded in 2016. Four Policy Lunchbox sessions had been held at CDH, focusing on specific policy issues, and to broaden the reach the sessions were now being live-streamed. The Society continued to participate in the Learned Society Partnership on Antimicrobial Resistance (LeSPAR), and had worked on several joint activities and events including Policy Lates, Science in Stormont, and had published a joint statement on the agreed UN action on AMR. An interdisciplinary workshop on AMR diagnostics was planned for December 2017.
- The Director of Publishing provided an update on the Society's publishing, communications, sales and marketing activities:

- *Publications.* The Society's portfolio included four journals publishing primary research articles and reviews, and three journals publishing invited reviews only. Two of these were new in 2017: *Neuronal Signaling*, a fully Open Access journal publishing research and reviews on signalling both within and between neurons; and *Emerging Topics in Life Sciences*, publishing reviews for an interdisciplinary audience focusing on key topics in the life sciences, in collaboration with the RSB. As a result of multiple system improvements to offer a better service for authors, editors, referees and readers, submissions had increased by 15%, and publications by 18%, in 2016 compared to the prior year, including a 66% increase in open access publications. Additionally, usage had improved significantly, with a 115% increase in full-text HTML downloads over 2015. This was positive for sales, given that usage was a key metric influencing libraries' decision whether to renew. The authorship, readership, and subscriber base of the journals was largely international.
- *Communications.* A mixer had been held at the Experimental Biology conference in Chicago in collaboration with The Physiological Society, British Pharmacological Society, and the Nutrition Society. The Society's Members' News emails had a consistent open rates of between 40-45%, and a tailored Student Members' News had also been launched in February 2017. Non-members were now also able to sign up for a newsletter, to raise the profile of the Society's work within the community and additionally target potential members. The strategy of *The Biochemist* was being developed, with updated content and a refreshed article design. The gender balance of feature article authors had improved, with 42% female in 2016 compared to 36% in 2015. It was now possible for non-members to sign up for content alerts, with approximately 100 recipients. Additionally, the Society's blog had been transitioned to *The Biochemist* Blog. Engagement with the community via social media had improved, with increase in followers of the Biochemical Society, Portland Press, and *The Biochemist* twitter feeds of 37%, 52% and 61% respectively. To mark European Antibiotic Awareness Day, an 'Antibiotic future' tweetchat had been hosted in collaboration with the Society for Applied Microbiology and RSB, attracting 173 participants. Additionally, the #plantday quiz, marking Fascination of Plants Day, had been viewed 776 times and completed by 442 people. Press releases were prepared for selected research articles, and guidelines had been issued to Associate Editors to help them identify press-worthy articles.
- *Marketing and Sales.* In 2016, the number of visitors to the website had increased by 54%, including 30% more users arriving at the site having clicked-through from email campaigns. At the time of the meeting, subscription revenue for 2017 totalling £3.35m had been received, 15% of the equivalent period in 2016, including £184k new business (from both upselling the package to existing customers, and sales to new customers). The new publishing fulfilment system had facilitated better identification of sales opportunities, and improved customer service.
- The Director of Operations gave an update on activities of the departments under his remit, including membership and governance:
 - *Membership.* As at 28 June, the Society's total membership was 6,943. The Society was growing its paid membership, which had reached over 6,400 members each month since March 2017. This represented the highest level since current membership records had started in 1999. At the time of the meeting, a membership engagement survey was open to all members, and would close at the end of the month. The Society's multi-year membership, which retained members for three

years, had been running for a year as of January 2017. In order to improve membership engagement, a new Membership and Nominations Committee had been formed as part of the Governance Review, and had held its first meeting in June 2017. The annual Emeritus lunch had been held on 7 April, and was attended by 39 Emeritus members. The Industry Strategy was in its third year: a new Industry Advisory Panel (IAP) had been formed comprised of 14 representatives; an Industry Local Ambassador scheme had been launched, and additionally a new Industry and Academic Collaboration Award had been newly introduced and would be awarded in 2018. A new Student Ambassador scheme had been launched, with nine students signed up, and the 2017 LA day would take place on 16 November in York.

- *Grants.* A total of £278k had been awarded to members in grants. The Director of Operations noted the positive feedback provided from the recipients of various grants.
- *Awards.* Eleven awards would be presented in 2018, including three new Awards: Teaching Excellence; International Award; and the Industry and Academic Collaboration Award. For the 2019 Awards, the Society hoped to improve the gender balance of nominees: 22% of nominees for the 2018 Awards were female. Thirteen Awards would be presented in 2019; nominations would open on 1 August 2017.
- *Governance.* The implementation of the recommendations of the Governance Review had now been completed. This included a newly formed Council of Trustees, with new Trustee level positions created for Local Ambassador, Early Career, and Industry representatives. A new Executive Management Committee had been established, to which the Council of Trustees could delegate operational responsibilities. Other new committees included the Publications Committee; Membership and Nominations Committee; Scientific Activities Committee. The Policy Committee had been replaced by a Policy Advisory Panel. New independent members had been recruited to the Audit and Finance Committees to ensure they were equipped with the relevant expertise to perform their remit. A new Governance Handbook would be delivered in the second half of 2017. The Director of Operations noted that members would be notified of vacancies for the 2018 Elections by email from the new MiVoice nominations and balloting system.

The Chair thanked the CEO and Directors for their updates.

17/03 Chair's comments

The Chair noted the Society's new external nominations policy, which had been agreed by the Council of Trustees following a request to support a non-member's application to a sub-committee for REF 2021. The Society was not able to provide corporate support of nominations to external organizations unless there is a pre-existing relationship with either the candidate or the organization.

The Chair thanked the CEO, members of staff, and members of committees for their ongoing hard work to ensure that, while the Society was facing a number of challenges, the view externally was of a vibrant organization with a great many activities supporting the community.

17/04 Update on Biochemical Society Finance

The Chair noted that, owing to a delay to the statutory audit, audited accounts were not available for presentation at the meeting. The receipt of the accounts and audit report would therefore be deferred to an Extraordinary General Meeting that would be convened on 7 September 2017, as noted in the communication distributed to all members on 14 June 2017.

17/05 Retiring Officers

The Chair proposed a vote of thanks to Dr Nick Watmough, who would be retiring from his position as Honorary Treasurer at the end of 2017. This was seconded by Professor Richard Reece and the motion was carried by a majority vote of those in attendance.

The Chair of the Biochemical Society proposed a vote of thanks to Professor Sir David Baulcombe, who would be retiring from his position as President at the end of 2017. The motion was seconded by Richard Reece, and carried nemine contradicente.

17/06 Incoming Officers

The Society had recruited new members to its committees through the 2017 Biochemical Society Call for Nominations, all of whom had been nominated unopposed.

The appointment of the following Officers and committee members was duly ratified nemine contradicente:

Council of Trustees

Professor Sir Pete Downes	President Elect (term begins 1 January 2018)
Professor Frank Sargent	Honorary Treasurer Elect (term begins 1 January 2018)
Dr Dominika Gruszka	Early Career Researcher representative
Dr Martin Pool	Local Ambassador Representative
Dr Malcolm Weir	Industry Representative
Dr Joanne Edwards	Chair, Clinical and Translational Research Theme Panel
Professor Michelle West	Chair, Basic Biosciences Theme Panel
Dr Helen Watson	Chair, Training Theme Panel
Professor Stefan Roberts	Honorary Meetings Secretary

Executive Management Committee

Professor Stephen Holgate	Independent Member
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Conferences Committee

Dr David Messenger Industry Representative

Membership and Nominations Committee

Dr Lilach Sheiner Full Member representative

Dr Diane Hatzioanou Early Career Member representative

Leanna Louise Smith Postgraduate Member representative

Dr Nigel Page Local Ambassador Representative

Publications Committee

Professor Sheila Graham Chair (taking over from Professor Richard Reece on 1 January 2018)

Dr Amanda Marie James Ordinary Member

Professor Colin Bingle Editorial Board representative

Professor Alison Woollard Ordinary Member

Professor Aideen Sullivan Editorial Board representative

Dr Simon Kerridge Ordinary Member

Honorary Archivist Professor David Hornby

Independent Appointments:

Audit Committee

- Independent Chair Richard Cryer

Finance Committee

- Independent Member Allan Jones

17/07 Retiring Members of Committees

The Chair proposed a vote of thanks to the following retiring members of Committees:

Education, Training and Public Engagement Committee

Ian Harvey Member (HE Training)

Dr Steve Minchin Member (HE Training)

Awards Committee

Professor Anne Dell Chair

The motion was seconded by Professor Rob Beynon and carried nemine contradicente.

17/08 Retiring Members of Editorial Boards

The Chair proposed a vote of thanks to the following retiring members of the Editorial Boards of the Society's journals:

Biochemical Journal

Motonari Uesugi Associate Editor

Stefan Roberts Associate Editor

Aimin Xu Associate Editor

Bioscience Reports

Mingjie Zhang Associate Editor

Ian Kerr Associate Editor

Kun-Liang Guan Associate Editor

Biochemical Society Transactions

Ann Harris Associate Editor

Clinical Science

Ian Godsland Editorial Board member

The motion was seconded by Professor Richard Reece and carried nemine contradicente.

17/09 Elections and Vacancies

The Chair reported that nominations would be open later in the year for the following positions:

Honorary Membership Secretary

Chair, Education, Training and Public Engagement Committee

Member of the Education, Training and Public Engagement Committee

Member of the Audit Committee

Member of the Training Theme Panel

Members of the Membership and Nominations Committee:

Undergraduate member representative
Associate member representative
Emeritus member representative
Industry member representative

The Director of Operations noted that further information would be circulated to members via the MiVoice nominations system.

17/10 Current Officers

The Members noted the current post-holders as detailed below:

Professor Sir David Baulcombe	President (Chair)
Professor Anne Dell	Chair, Biochemical Society
Dr Nick Watmough	Honorary Treasurer
Professor Richard Reece	Chair, Portland Press Ltd Board
Professor Nicola Gray	Honorary Membership Secretary
Dr David Pye	Honorary Policy Officer
Professor Rob Beynon	Chair, Education, Training and Public Engagement Committee

17/11 Membership Subscription Fees 2018

The Members noted the membership subscription fees for the year 2018 as detailed below:

Undergraduate	£15
Postgraduate	£25
Early Career	£45
Full	£80
Emeritus	£25
Associate	£20

17/12 Any other business

Professor Robert Freedman noted that the updates shared earlier in the meeting evidenced the Society's aspirations to be at the forefront of the sector.

No additional items of business were raised by any Members, or those in attendance at the meeting.

17/13 Date of the next meeting

The Chair noted that the following items of business would be transacted at an Extraordinary General Meeting which would be convened on 7 September, 2017:

- Annual Report and Statutory Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016;
- Report of Auditors
- Appointment of Auditors

- End -

Zoe Halbert | Executive Officer