

ROYAL SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society for 2017-18
held at 2:00pm on Friday 29th March 2019 at RSGS HQ, 15-19 North Port, Perth

Present: Professor Iain Stewart (President), Professor Roger Crofts (Chair), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer), Erica Caldwell, Alister Hendrie (Vice-Chair), Lorna Ogilvie, Margaret Wilkes, and 15 other Members of the Society

In attendance: Mike Robinson (Chief Executive), Susan Watt (Minutes), James Cave (staff), Linda Davidson (staff), Katrina Strachan (staff)

Apologies: Dr Vanessa Collingridge, Dr Susan Mains, Professor Ian Simpson, Lorna Stoddart, Val Vannet, Professor Charles Withers; we received apologies and proxy voting forms from 211 Members who appointed the Chair as their proxy, and from three Members who appointed someone other than the Chair as their proxy

Welcome

Iain Stewart thanked Members for attending, commenting that the Friday afternoon timing was because of his Monday to Thursday talks tour of southern Scotland.

Minutes & Matters Arising from Annual General Meeting 2016-17

Iain Stewart introduced the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in Perth on 6th March 2018. There were no matters arising. The Minutes were proposed by Erica Caldwell, seconded by Lorna Ogilvie, and unanimously approved by the Meeting.

Chairman's Report, and Intimation of Co-Opted Trustee

Roger Crofts thanked Members for attending. He noted that it was ten years since the RSGS had moved to Perth; he thanked Barrie Brown, Margaret Wilkes and others for making the move happen.

In the first year of the new Strategic Plan, it was good to see younger people joining, and people joining because of a general interest in geography. Attendance at talks had increased, and he thanked Tiso for their support. Taking stock and celebrating our achievements, there had been some excellent editions of *The Geographer*, with positive feedback from non-Members. We were developing research connections, including on the subject of health inequalities with the Scottish Government. We were making our views known on the placing of Geography in the school curriculum and the narrowing of subject choice. We were planning for new activities, including a Climate Literacy Qualification and a *Horrible Geography of Scotland*.

Financially, 2017-18 had not been as good as Trustees would like. We had been fortunate to receive funding from Dr Paulsen, but needed a more planned approach. Trustees were retaining a one-year operational fund, and receiving good investment advice from Brewin Dolphin. Trustees had reviewed savings possibilities and decided not to sell the collections or Lord John Murray House, and to retain the post of Chief Executive, so there was no real option to save a substantial sum of money. A greater focus on fundraising, with a clear action plan and case for support would take time, but Trustees were aiming to raise £2m over five years for a Future Sustainability Fund. Trustees had privately funded an expert consultancy to help to prepare the case for funding and to develop a fundraising action plan. This was nearing completion and would be the basis for our future direction, including seeking donor funds for employing a dedicated fundraising officer alongside the fundraising work of existing staff.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee had been revitalised with more active academic commitment; the Education Committee was being chaired by Erica Caldwell; Lorna Ogilvie had taken over from Alister Hendrie as Chair of the Local Groups Committee, and Roger Crofts thanked them all for their leadership. Vanessa Collingridge was standing down due to other commitments; he thanked her for her contribution to our communications. Val Vannet was standing down after two years as a Co-Opted Trustee; he thanked her for her contribution to our schools education work. He advised that Board agreed to co-opt Professor John Briggs with a view to his taking over as Chair from himself, subject to the Board's approval after next year's AGM. He would welcome suggestions of new Board Members, especially with financial and fundraising expertise and contacts.

Roger Crofts thanked all volunteers – on Board, on Committees, in Local Groups, in the office, in the Fair Maid's House, and in the Collection Team – for their invaluable contributions. He thanked staff for their dedication and effort, especially Mike Robinson for his exceptional dedication and leadership over his first ten years.

Iain Stewart expressed his admiration for the way in which Roger Crofts had taken on challenges, for his calm management, and for having opened political doors with Mike Robinson, particularly while working in a difficult funding environment.

Barrie Brown said it would be interesting to have regular reports of membership numbers. Roger Crofts said that the trend was in the right direction, and Mike Robinson confirmed that membership was rising but had plateaued a bit. Over the past five years, the figures were:

year-end	memberships	members
31Jul14	1,741	2,553
31Jul15	1,774	2,612
31Jul16	1,764	2,555
31Jul17	1,775	2,594
31Jul18	1,793	2,621

Annual Report & Accounts for 2017-18

Tim Ambrose said that there had been a c1% growth in net Members, and a c5-6% increase in membership subscriptions in 2017-18. The basic costs of running the Society were approximately twice the income from Members. A lot of effort had gone into producing the accounts. Income was not so good, particularly from donations legacies, but there was a firm control of spend, and a relatively benign investment performance. The accounts were proposed by Tim Ambrose, seconded by Alister Hendrie, and unanimously approved by the Members.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

The reappointment of Campbell Dallas was proposed by Tim Ambrose, seconded by Margaret Wilkes, and unanimously approved by the Members.

Appointment of President

Roger Crofts proposed that Iain Stewart be reappointed as President for a third term, saying that it had been great to have him in his professional capacity, as a speaker, as a well-known face, and as an advisor. The proposal was seconded by Mary Cairncross, and unanimously approved by the Members.

Intimation of Fellows

Iain Stewart reported that Honorary Fellowships had been awarded to Gordon Buchanan, Beth Christie, Dr Hermione Cockburn, Mark Evans, Selina Hales, Alister Hendrie, John Scally, Adrian Shaw, David Spaven, and Walter Stephen.

Intimation of Co-opted Trustee

Roger Crofts said that the Society's constitution allowed up to two Co-opted Trustees. He proposed and Erica Caldwell seconded Professor John Briggs, a retired senior academic from the University of Glasgow, with a view to him becoming Chair of the Board in 2020.

Chief Executive's Report

Mike Robinson gave a short presentation of some of the highlights of 2017-18 and the first part of 2018-19. Activities had included:

- continuing involvement in transport policy work, particularly around rail infrastructure;
- Shackleton Medal presentations to global climate leaders Christiana Figueres and Manuel Pulgar-Vidal;
- more exciting finds by the Collections Team, and public displays of interesting items from the collections;
- growing public reach through print and social media;
- publication of *The Great Horizon* by Jo Woolf, our Writer-in-Residence;
- presentation of the Mungo Park Medal to geologist, adventurer and para-athlete Karen Darke;
- development of formal links with the Royal Canadian Geographical Society;
- a new sponsorship agreement with Ordnance Survey;
- continuing publication of high-quality quarterly magazines on various geographical themes;
- presentation of several Honorary Fellowships, recognising significant contributions to geography/RSGS;
- exhibitions at the Fair Maid's House, including one on Oman as part of our association with Outward Bound Oman;
- public exhibition and associated booklet celebrating the past ten years of the RSGS;
- presentation of the Geddes Environment Medal to *Solar Impulse* pilots Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg;
- presentation of the Shackleton Medal to ecocide lawyer Polly Higgins;
- fighting for Geography in schools, and campaigning for a 'gold standard' number of subjects;
- working on a wide range of policy issues, and building partnerships across sectors;
- initial development of a climate literacy programme;
- appointment of a new Young Geographer editorial team;
- several sell-out talks as part of our *Inspiring People* talks programme, and for extra events.

Jane Clark reported three 'well done's from the RSGS Edinburgh Group: the last talks programme had been the best ever; *The Geographer* was well done; and social media had increased profile, especially on Facebook. Mike Robinson said that James Cave had done a lot to increase our social media presence, especially by cascading to others, and Anne Daniel was the one to thank for the talks. Iain Stewart said that this reiterated what he had heard from Local Groups from his recent tour – that the talks and social media had been of high quality.

Pat Brown asked why there was not more profile given to funders of the magazine. Mike Robinson explained that funders were often supporting the magazine for other reasons, for example because they were interested in publicising the topic, and not seeking publicity.

Ann Stewart said that, with a deterioration in her eyesight, she could not read some publications because of the colour or font size; others were in agreement. Mike Robinson noted this for further discussion, but commented that some modern design was more about the look than the legibility.

In response to a question about why some people did not renew their membership, Mike Robinson said that common reasons were death, getting older and not wanting to go out to talks in the evening, and a change in financial situation or moving. Whatever a charity did, they could expect to lose 5-10% per year; RSGS had one of the highest rates of long-term membership of any organisation.

In response to a suggestion about introducing Junior Membership as a way to encourage a 'pipeline' of Members in the long term, Mike Robinson said that we had dropped our Student membership rate for the Year of Young People, but did not recruit many; instead, we were attracting (through social media) 15-25-year-olds who were interested in adventure and exploration. He was keen to attract new Members who were aged 45+.

Any Other Business

There was no other business, and the Meeting was closed, with Iain Stewart thanking all those who had presented and attended.