

## Diversity and Equality Working Group Report to Council, July 2021



### **A. Introduction**

The Working Group's remit is to develop strategic recommendations designed to ensure that in delivering its goals as an educational charity the Society properly reflects and engages with modern audiences, values and society and that this engagement takes full account of the need for diversity and inclusion in relation to gender, age and ethnic origin. The strategic recommendations will cover the full range of the Society's actions and operations and include proposals for implementation, both immediate and longer term.

The Working Group will examine –

- What are the barriers in the Society to diversity and inclusion?
- How can these be addressed within the Society's current governance/statutes?
- What changes may require amendment to the governance/statutes?

The themes underpinning the Working Group's work are -

- **Being clear about our legacy** – honesty and transparency about the stories of our Society, our buildings and our collections, as in all fields of study and research.
- **How we deliver our activities** – ensuring that our campaigns, lectures, conferences and seminars, outreach, public events and grants programmes are accessible to the widest possible audiences and deliver the maximum public benefit.
- **Equal opportunities in the workplace** – ensuring that all staff, regardless of background and identity, are fully valued and supported in their employment and that the Society recruits from the widest possible pool.
- **Fellowship and membership** – ensuring a diverse and representative Fellowship constituting a community of scholars that genuinely knows no barriers of identity, nationality and ethnicity; and opening wider access to the Society through a membership scheme.

How we've approached this –

- The original schedule proposed four meetings annually, however additional meetings have been held during this first year of the group's existence (to familiarise members with SAL ways of working, and to move forward with events programming and information sharing).
- Information about the WG was provided to the Fellowship via SALON (Issue 456 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020: [Salon: Issue 456 \(campaign-archive.com\)](https://www.salonsociety.org/campaign-archive.com))
- *'Intertwined Histories'* inaugural event was held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021, organised by Danielle Wilson-Higgins and Linda Grant, with support from the D&E Working Group.
- Three further events (in Oct 2021, Feb 2022 and May 2022) are in planning.
- Research is underway into Fellows' history from information provided by SAL Head of Library and Collections.
- Research undertaken on the Lamp of Knowledge (presented at the Christmas Miscellany 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020)

## **B. Context**

The Society of Antiquaries of London is committed to cultural change and promoting equality and inclusivity across all its activities and desires to engage a diverse public and wider audiences (social purpose) – a process already underway at Burlington House and Kelmscott Manor (KMPPF project). This sits uneasily alongside the composition of our Fellowship (white, largely male, elderly) and the configuration of Burlington House, both of which give the impression of a gentleman's club. There is also the challenge of financial sustainability and the need to generate more income from Fellowship (or members).

## **C. Recommendations**

- 1.** The Society should adopt an Equality and Diversity Policy to cover all activities undertaken by the Society and set out in its annual Operational Plan. [note guidance in latest Code of Charity Governance, November 2020 – mandatory for public bodies, expected of charities].
- 2.** The Society should review recruitment policies and processes and our existing Equality and Diversity Policy for staff.
- 3.** The Society should form a **Fellowship Committee** to progress the issue of broadening and diversifying the Fellowship in all its aspects (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class etc) and interpret the scope of 'excellence' in the 21st century.
- 4.** The Society should proceed with implementing a **Membership Scheme** to sit alongside the Fellowship, aimed at encouraging increased public engagement and greater diversity.
- 5.** The Society should fund supporting work around Fellowship / membership (potentially linked to wider Society fundraising initiatives) in the form of much-needed staff resource.
- 6.** The Society should review its website and communications – to bring to the fore more about people, participation and what we do, rather than the building and our history.
- 7.** The Society should provide a forum, through its programme of events, seminars and lectures, for education, debate and dissemination on the themes of diversity, equality and inclusion in relation to heritage studies and services.
- 8.** The Society should review the conditions and reach of its grants schemes to ensure that they are as accessible and attractive as possible to all suitably qualified applicants across the widest possible range of eligible research.
- 9.** The Society should develop a programme to examine its own collections and institutional history in the light of its contested heritage policy statement ([SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON \(sal.org.uk\)](https://www.sal.org.uk)), in order to identify objects that might represent contested heritage.
- 10.** The Society should endeavour to ensure accessibility to our properties, (wherever that may be now or in future and subject to restrictions imposed by legislation e.g. Listed

Building status), reconfiguring buildings to become more open and welcoming to a diverse public, with greater access to our collections and the ability to provide improved facilities for events and room hire; including the provision of appropriate disabled access and toilet facilities.

**11.** The Society should undertake a survey of the Fellows as it is essential to obtain better information on the existing composition of the Fellowship. Wider market research should also be undertaken to seek data on public and sector perception of the Society, who might wish to join, who might not (and why), and so identify perceived barriers to entry.

#### ***D. Next Steps***

The recommendations detailed in Section C are listed in their suggested order of implementation, allowing for budgetary constraints and uncertainties around the future of the Society at Burlington House. The Diversity and Equality Working Group propose that Council draw up a timetable to implement the recommendations within this report. Future tasks for the Diversity and Equality Working Group could include monitoring progress around implementation, alongside supporting events programming and further research on collections and individual histories.