



COUNCIL
Thursday, 11 March 2021
13.30, via Zoom

Mr Paul Drury, President, in the Chair

Present: Mr Stephen Dunmore, Treasurer
Dr Heather Sebire, Hon. Secretary
Mr Duncan Brown
Dr John Cooper
Dr Sam Lucy
Prof. Martin Millett
Ms Nathalie Cohen
Prof. John Hines
Mr Barney Sloane (from 14.30)

In attendance: Mr John Lewis, General Secretary
Mr Jerry Gweme, Head of Finance and Operations
Ms Dunia Garcia-Ontiveros, Head of Library and Museum Collections
Dr Linda Grant, Governance Officer
Mr Dominic Wallis (from 13.50)

Apologies: Chris Scull, Emma Carver, Vince Gaffney

1/21 Health and Safety Matters

HoL&MC reported on plans to reopen BH: there will be limited opening of the Library from 13 April following Covid guidelines and the Government 'roadmap'; with an increase to 3-4 days per week later (dependent on Government guidance) to allow staff to deal with the backlog. Staff are considering limited opening in August to compensate for closures.

2/21 Minutes and Matters arising

- i) The minutes of the Council Meeting of 10 December 2020, having been circulated, were agreed and will be signed on return to BH.
- ii) There were no matter arising.

3/21 BH Campaign and Lease Update

- The President and Gen. Sec. reported on the progress of the BH campaign:
- i) The Geological and Linnean Societies have officially joined the campaign, with the RAS participating in political lobbying but not the public campaign.
 - ii) There appears to be a change in the political tone with previous mentions of maximising returns to the 'public purse' being superseded in communications to talk of achieving 'public value'. However, the 'options' that MHCLG have been claiming to be 'imminent' in December, still have not materialised, and it is not possible for the campaign to progress to the next stage until these have been seen. The emphasis is currently on putting pressure on the Minister to reveal these 'options' and, to that end, there is a meeting scheduled for 23 March with the Parliamentary support group.

- iii) The next stage of the joint campaign will involve correcting some of the misleading information contained in MHCLG/DCMS letters sent to MPs; and thinking about how to best utilise the support of e.g. Brian Cox and Sir David Attenborough. There will also be a letter published in *The Telegraph*.
- iv) In response to a question from JH, the Gen. Sec. stated that SAL must be ready with alternative options to present to MHCLG such as a negotiated long lease, or BH being placed in a Trust (like Somerset House or Greenwich Naval College).
- v) The Gen. Sec. presented a comparison of costs showing the financial impact of staying and refitting BH versus moving to a new HQ in various locations around the south east. It was agreed that the Gen. Sec. should refine the assumptions and present a detailed paper at July Council, and to look at other locations that are accessible from motorway and main line rail networks (inc HS2/Crossrail). The property requirement is 12,000 sq. feet, and exploratory talks have started with property search consultants to help Council's decision. DB noted that there seems to be better value in moving rather than staying at BH, and that there is more work to be done on location (proximity to KM?), type and suitability of accommodation. Account must also be taken of changing business practices under covid-19 where remote online meeting and lectures have become routine.
- vi) There was some discussion about examples where learned institutions have co-located with a university. The importance of independence to SAL was stressed, and the possibility of a model where the Library and collection was secured for scholarly and public access, and regional hubs were established for meetings and events, possibly in relation to regional Fellows Groups.

4/21 Strategic Business Plan: Quarter 4 Progress Report

The Gen. Sec. reported:

- i) The positive effect of the Publications Manager; the great effort of the Head of Development in terms of fundraising; the excellent work of the Communications and Events Manager who has been working with regional groups including the Australasian group, and who has overseen a huge increase of attendees at OMs and lectures, a 25% increase in visits to the SAL website, and development of the digital exhibition with JC, and digital outreach; the new SALON editor has settled in well and has generated comments from Fellows.
- ii) The Society's Research Committee awarded c.£230k in research grants in February, an excellent outcome despite covid and the lockdowns.
- iii) There has been broad support for the principles of the Society's archaeology manifesto; CiFA and HE are still to respond formally.

5/21 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported:

- i) There has been considerable volatility in the value of the portfolio since December (see Finance Committee Minutes, March 2021) with the valuation standing today at £15,390,000. The markets are unlikely to perform well over the next year.
- ii) Papers having been previously circulated and recommended by Finance Committee, Council approved the Q3 Management Accounts.
- iv) The 2021-22 budget, having been recommended by Finance Committee and previously circulated, was approved and formally adopted. The Treasurer noted that this is a 'holding' budget with the underlying operational deficit made worse by the consequences of covid-19 and the rent and pension increases, which will have to be covered by an additional capital drawdown of £236k for the general fund, and £100k for KM. The importance of generating more income from Fellowship subscriptions

and a membership scheme is imperative, and SAL must maximise income from KM and room hire as well as mitigating the pension increases. The HoF&O added that the draw-down provision made for rent runs out in 2022/23.

- v) The President congratulated the Treasurer, Gen. Sec. and staff on navigating the Society through the pandemic so well in comparison with some other charities.

6/21 Pensions update

The Gen. Sec. gave an update on the latest communications from USS:

- i) Employers' contributions will rise from 21% to 24% on 1 October 2021. According to the new valuation, further increases are envisaged in a range from 29%, 34% to 39%. Combined employer/employee contributions are similarly being projected to rise to 42%, 49% or 56%, which would increase SAL's salary costs by £77k, £127k or £172k. There is already a one-sixth drop out from USS employees and this is predicted to increase as contributions become less affordable.

7/21 Complaints Procedure

A paper having been previously circulated, the draft Complaints Procedure was approved.

8/21 Risk Register

A paper having been previously circulated, the full risk register, deferred from December 2020 Council, was noted. The Gen. Sec. requested that any detailed comments be emailed to him. He noted the resilience of the Society despite the combined impact of covid-19, a rapacious landlord, and the pension, any one of which alone might have caused another charity to collapse.

9/21 Contested Heritage Statement

Having been previously approved by email, this Statement was formally minuted as having been adopted, and is posted on the website.

10/21 EDWG

NC reported that the WG is working towards a report to be presented at July Council.

11/21 Ethical Conduct Board

The Treasurer reported that Simon Morris FSA has been appointed as Chair of the ECB. A list of panel members has been drawn up consisting of Fellows and non-Fellows, with some attention to ethnic diversity. This list will be circulated to Council for formal approval, then posted publicly on the website.

The President thanked the Treasurer for leading on this.

12/21 Director's Report

Minutes of the February 2021 Research Committee having been previously circulated, the President on behalf of the Director reported:

- i) Research grants of c.£230k had been awarded to 32 applicants. It was noted that there were fewer De Cardi applicants than we would wish, due to the continued covid impact on travel and field work. The Janet Arnold Major awards were a success with just over £90k being awarded for 3-year projects, with some pleasing diversity in research topics.
- ii) It was also noted that the ECR event which had been provisionally cancelled is now going ahead thanks to the input of John Cooper who has found a group of former students to organise it.

13/21 Secretary's Report

Minutes of the February 2021 Library and Collections Committee having been previously circulated, the Hon. Sec. reported:

- i) Meg Ford, Christies, has attended her first Lib/Coll Committee meeting and will be an asset to the group. The new Archivist is now in post and has been working with the HoD on the application to Archives Revealed.
- ii) The Library systems project continues to advance with a planned Easter launch of the public interface, though only a limited sample of archive and collection records will be immediately available.
- iii) The PG Open Day will be rebranded as 'Collections Discovery Day', will be online only in 2021, and will be filmed beforehand so that the videos can be repurposed, with live Q&A sessions.

14/21 KMPPF

- i) The Gen. Sec. reported that the project is proceeding to plan and shared photos of ongoing works. Capital works are scheduled to be completed by August 2021. Any underspend from the project may be spent on supporting staff posts – SAL is in discussion with HLF on this.
- ii) NC suggested that there might be some joint possibilities between KM and NT in relation to William Morris' birthday and 150th anniversary of coming to KM, especially as NC is covering that region. The Gen. Sec. will put NC in contact with GW at KM.

15/21 Anniversary Nominations

Five nominations having been received for five vacant places on Council (four ordinary members plus president), there will be no need for an election to be held, and the nominees will start their term of office on 24th June 2021 following the Anniversary Meeting that day.

ACTION: Gov.Off. to inform nominees and arrange Trustees Induction before next Council meeting on 1 July [Induction agreed post-meeting: 17 June].

16/21 Resolution on the publishing of Council Minutes

Council resolved that the Minutes of Council meetings will be published on the Society's public pages of the website within 12 months of the meeting. Council reserves the right to redact personal, confidential or highly sensitive material from the Minutes. It was agreed that there would be a confidential agenda alongside the open one.

17/21 Nominations, resignations and deaths of Fellows

The Gen. Sec. reported that since 10 December 2020, there have been 14 Fellows deceased, 12 resignations, and 20 Fellows newly elected: the current total is 3,050 Fellows. Amovals for non-payment of subscriptions have been held to allow for covid-related delays. There are 13 nominees in the 25 March ballot, and 32 nominees to go into June ballots.

18/21 AOB

The Gen. Sec. offered heartfelt thanks to Paul Drury as this was his last Council meeting as President: he was thanked warmly for his devotion to the Society, and his consistent dignity and decency through some difficult and dark times. The Gen. Sec. also noted his professional expertise on the lease, his work with the other courtyard societies, and the personal support he has offered the Gen. Sec.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15.40pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 1 July 2021 at 11.30 am

Paul Drury, President
Linda Grant, Governance Officer

March 2021