

# CARDIFF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

## Minutes of the AGM held in the John Percival Lecture Theatre

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 at 6:30 pm

### 1. Committee reports:

#### a. Chairman's Update

Professor Malcolm Wheeler (MW) welcomed members and reported that the Society had enjoyed a very successful year during 2022/23 with an excellent and diverse lecture programme. Relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions had meant that ten of the twelve lectures had taken place face-to-face in a new lecture venue in Cardiff University's John Percival Building. The innovation of making lectures available online one week after each formal presentation had not seemed to detract from the scientific programme and MW invited comments on this from the membership. MW called on members to continue their excellent support of the Society in the coming year and to actively engage in recruiting new members.

MW went on to thank Corey Smith (CS), our Secretary, for her superb professional organisation during some challenging times. He also thanked the other members of the Executive Committee for their contributions, including David Clarke (DC, Treasurer), Tony Williams (TW, Membership Secretary), Geraint Williams (GW, Minutes Secretary), David Webb (DW, Sponsorship Officer), John Ivins (JI, Schools Representative) and Judith Foy (JF, Events Secretary).

Finally, it was a particular pleasure to thank our President, Sir Richard Catlow (RC), for his enormous contribution, guidance and wise counsel. While his Presidential term will now be ending, he will continue as Vice President for a further year. Sir Richard responded by saying how much he had enjoyed his term of office despite part of it occurring in the pandemic: he was proud of the way that collectively we had ensured that the Society continued to function virtually during this period. RC also highlighted the quality of the scientific programme and his pleasure that the Society was now meeting in person once more with good sized audiences that included university and school students and excellent audience participation. He believed that the Society was in good shape. RC concluded by thanking CS for all her fantastic work and support, MW for his excellent chairmanship of the Executive Committee, and all the committee members for their commitment. He was confident that his successor would do a great job.

MW then welcomed the incoming President, Professor Robert Pickard (RP), Emeritus Professor of Neurobiology at Cardiff University. RP briefly summarised his career at Cardiff that centred on his leadership of the internationally recognised Honeybee Research Unit. He looked forward to his Presidential tenure at a time when the world has never needed science, with its basis as the continuous search for truth, so greatly. He used astronomical discoveries and climate change as examples and cited lines from Shakespeare. He commended the Society to its membership with a request that we continue to 'do our bit' to spread the word about scientific method and objective research.

## **b. Secretary's Report**

CS thanked members for attending the AGM and for their support for the year's programme of lectures. It was almost three years to the day since the pandemic was first declared and it was greatly pleasing that 90 members had attended the first lecture of the 2022/23 session in person. There were more than 100 attendees at Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell's Lord Phillips Memorial lecture on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The whole programme had generally ran smoothly despite a need to rearrange a couple of lectures and included some of the most eminent and prestigious speakers from across the UK.

CS referred to the decision to move this year's lectures to the John Percival Building because of car parking issues at Cardiff University's Main College Building. The Information Technology facilities at the new venue had been somewhat suboptimal and the University will now be imposing car parking charges for visitors across the whole of its Cathays Park campus. The venue for future meetings requires further review (see below).

CS thanked the Royal Society of Biology, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Institute of Physics for generously sponsoring four of our lectures this year. We look forward to their continued collaboration during the 2023/24 session and hopefully to developing further links through the work of our new Sponsorship Officer (DW).

CS also reminded members that the previously postponed Society visit to the Bristol Aerospace Museum was now being reinstated under JF's direction.

CS concluded by reporting that that the 2023/24 programme of 12 lectures was almost complete and will begin on the Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 with a presentation from Professor Sir Michael Owen, Emeritus Director of the Neuroscience and Mental Health Institute at Cardiff University. An 'international' lecture is also being introduced into this session and will be delivered by Prof Jacques Marescaux from the University Hospital Strasbourg.

## **c. Treasurer's report**

Before reporting on the accounts for the year 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023, DC thanked:

- Tony Williams (TW) Membership Secretary, for collecting subscriptions and maintaining our membership database, and
- Cedric Mumford, Auditor, for checking our accounts in double quick time.

DC reported that the recent trend of falling membership numbers has thankfully been reversed with an increase from 142 to 173 paying members (in addition to non-paying student members and life members). This has resulted in subscription income growing by 21% in 2022/23. Along with visitor's fees, bank interest and sponsorship this has boosted our total income this year by 43% or £3,057. However, expenditure at £3572 has also increased following the return to face-to-face meetings and a higher number of visiting speakers – a decision made by the Committee to use some of the Society's reserves accumulated during the pandemic. Accordingly, we are recording a deficit of £514 for the year. Despite this, our reserves remain strong at £6,144.

A proposal to adopt the accounts for the year ending 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 was endorsed without dissent, as was the Committee's proposal to retain the subscription fee at £15 per annum.

#### **d. Membership Secretary's report**

TW reported that the Society's total membership had increased from 158 in 2021/22 to 244 in 2022/23, comprising 171 paying adult members, 71 junior members and 2 Honorary members. These numbers differ slightly from those in the Treasurer's report because the 'accounting years' covered by each of the two reports are not identical.

### **2. Election of Officers**

MW reported that the Executive Committee was always keen to recruit new members. There was currently one short-term (1-year) vacancy during the coming year to cover Eugene Murphy (EM)'s leave of absence as Vice Chairman. A recent invitation to the general membership had not resulted in any nominations and the existing members have indicated their agreement to serve for another year. Accordingly, a proposal to re-elect the Committee for a further year was carried without dissent.

### **3. Alternative venues**

MW referred to CS's report (above) of continuing issues surrounding the venue for the Society's meetings. The current venue in the John Percival Building had been suboptimal in relation both to its somewhat isolated physical location and limited IT facilities and significant car parking charges were now going to be introduced for all future meetings. Committee members had researched alternative venues for the 2023/24 session and there appeared to be two possibilities.

The first was to use one of three lecture theatres at the University Hospital of Wales (UHW) at Heath Park where car parking would be free and there would be no security or hire charges. However, the bespoke 'Panopto' IT system installed across the UHW campus was incompatible with the 'Zoom' communications platform that the Society used for lecture recording and there were likely to be issues with 'roving' microphones and no technical support.

The second was to return to the Large Chemistry Lecture Theatre in Cardiff University's Main Building in Cathays Park, which was centrally located within the city, easily accessible by public transport and where the IT facilities were excellent. However, the Society would incur security charges of approximately £50 per meeting (that was currently affordable in relation to our cash reserves) and members attending by car would incur parking charges of approximately £2.40 per lecture. This might be compensated in part by the decision not to increase the Society's membership subscription.

The incoming President (RP) expressed his preference for the Society to return to the Main Building in order for it to be seen at the heart of the University's academic life. It would also be more accessible to the Society's younger members and more likely to encourage a diverse audience.

A show of hands among those present resulted in a preference for the second option, namely, to return to the Large Chemistry Lecture Theatre, by 17 votes to 10. MW indicated that this would certainly be taken into consideration by the Executive Committee before reaching a final decision.

#### **4. Bristol Visit**

In JF's absence, MW briefly summarised the upcoming Society visit to the Bristol Aeronautical Museum and the 'M Shed' Museum on 25<sup>th</sup> April and urged members to indicate their participation as soon as possible.

#### **5. A.O.B.**

MW strongly encouraged all members to let the Committee know their thoughts on the Society and its future, on potential subjects and speakers for talks and proposals for visits and other activities. The Society will be celebrating its centenary in 2026 and we are very keen to receive suggestions for appropriate activities and events.

#### **6. Date of Next AGM**

To be confirmed (March 2024).