

Minutes of the 46th Annual General Meeting of the Geological Curators' Group

Held in the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge, 10th December 2019, 4pm

www.geocurator.org

1. Apologies for absence

Ken James, Paul Ensom, Mick Stanley, Isla Gladstone, Nigel Larkin, Dale Johnson, Tom Sharpe

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the 45th AGM held at National Museum Wales, Cardiff

Minutes had been previously circulated in electronic form. It was proposed that they be accepted without modification. Proposed: **Cindy Howells**. Seconded: **Zoë Hughes**.
Agreed following a show of hands.

3. GCG Annual Report for 2019

The Annual Report had been circulated to attendees electronically. As chair, **Matthew Parkes** read some highlights from the report covering the activity since the last AGM:

Simon Harris was thanked for his continuing work on maintaining and developing the resource that is the GCG website.

Hilary Ketchum has completed a comprehensive overhaul of our "Advice Booklet" for research collections (previously SP Tunnicliff 1983), and this will be made formally available once a number of stakeholder endorsements have been cleared. In the meantime, the chair noted that a draft version is available via the website (<https://www.geocurator.org/advicebooklet>).

Sarah King has continued to support the committee as secretary and has been carrying out important work on our governance, relationship with the Geological Society, Charity Commission matters as well as organising our regular committee meetings.

Emma Bernard has been instrumental in keeping our social media channels alive during the past year. Social media now plays a critical role in our activities, and is an important way to communicate quickly and effectively with our membership and supporters.

Tony Morgan sadly had to stand down from committee as minutes secretary at the beginning of the year due to the withdrawal of employer support. **MP** thanked him for his lengthy service (19 years) and also **Alex Peaker** and **Lil Stevens** who stepped in to cover the task at short notice.

Lil Stevens has been working with **Cindy Howells** on the archive stored in Cardiff – this has been consolidated and de-duplicated, resulting in a significant reduction in size and consequent easier management

Pip Brewer has been working with **MP** for the last 12 months to transition into the role of Journal Editor – Geological Curator 10(3) will be her first full issue as editor.

Emma Nicholls has been doing a fantastic job with the blog (<https://www.geocurator.org/blog/>) and this is now plays an important role in augmenting and enhancing the information we supply in our *Coprolite* newsletter.

Mike Howe has continued to monitor threats to collections, and these are covered in detail in the report. **MP** commented that was "difficult to know what we can do, other than to advocate for them [collections]"

Zoë Hughes was thanked for organising the AGM programme, as well as a number of other events throughout the year, for example the Fakes Workshop in Edinburgh with **Rachel Walcott**.

MP noted that **Sally Thompson** had stepped down as our Geological Society Representative, and that we were still awaiting a replacement.

Isla Gladstone has also left the committee, but it was hoped that we would be able to maintain good links with the new NatSCA committee through Isla.

GCG is now a member of the **Subject Specialist Network Consortium**

(<https://www.subjectspecialistnetworks.org.uk/organisation/geological-curators-group>) – this is likely to be an important step for the future as further pressures on museums make having access to subject specialisms ever more valuable.

The Brighton Medal for Outstanding Service to Geology in Museums is this year awarded to Monica Price. **MP** had presented Monica with the Medal earlier in the day. A full citation will appear in The Geological Curator in due course.

MP finished by thanking **Nigel Monaghan**, Keeper of Natural History, National Museum of Ireland for the level of support that he had received during his 14 years on the GCG committee. **MP** noted that without employer support such as this it would be impossible for the committee to function.

There followed a discussion of individual sections within the report, inviting comments from the assembled membership.

Mark Evans requested a correction to the nomenclature of **Leicester City Council Museums Service** within the website report. This will be corrected in the final version.

Rachel Walcott noted that the audit of the accounts was complete and a slightly revised version was shown. This will be replaced in the final report.

RW reported a small surplus of £616 for the year. It was also noted that an account held in the Bank of Ireland covering six subscriptions generated £53 in fees. Given the year-on-year increase that we are seeing with PayPal electronic payments, it is likely that this account will be closed shortly.

MP thanked **RW** for her continued work in the role of treasurer.

4. Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) conversion

Sarah King explained that the committee had been working on updating the governance structure of GCG and it was their considered opinion that the most suitable route would be to restructure the existing charity as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The GCG constitution last received minor updates in 2012. **SK** pointed out that since then, the CIO structure has become widely accepted as the standard for modern charities. An extensive model constitution is provided by the Charity Commission and this provides a much better starting point than trying to “patch-up” the existing constitution.

The CIO structure creates GCG as a corporate body (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure>) giving it the capacity to do many things in its own name that a person can do, as well as limiting individual trustee liability, as at the moment they are directly liable for any of their actions which they take on behalf of the charity.

GCG has taken legal advice and a few modifications have been made to the model constitution. This will need to be passed by the Geological Society before being submitted to the Charity Commission, a process which can take several months. A draft version had been circulated to the assembled attendees and comments were invited:

John Nudds (University of Manchester) suggested that this was akin to using “a sledgehammer to crack a nut” and did not provide a simple set of rules by which to run the charity. It seemed to be more applicable to larger charities that might own assets or manage investments.

Liz Hide (Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge) replied that CIO status would put GCG in a much better position if applying for funding in the future. In fact, potential funders might become concerned if we had not adopted the CIO structure.

SK added that bye-laws would be written to govern the day-to-day running of GCG – this does not need to be included in the constitution, beyond basic rules governing (for example) the appointment of trustees.

MH pointed out that the current constitution constrains GCG to a small number of very limited activities. The presence of a any given capability within any new constitution does not force us to use it, but it does provide flexibility for the future.

SK added that we had been advised to only make the necessary edits to the model document – attempting to pare things down too much could create unforeseen loopholes.

RW highlighted that the creation of the corporate body offered better continuity for the group as trustees retire and are replaced, not to mention the decreased liability.

Jack Ashby (University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge) asked about the presence of a winding-up clause in the existing constitution. **SK** replied that the existing constitution does not contain such a clause, but that there is an established procedure within the Charity Commission to deal with this.

The discussion concluded, noting that further details would be released to the membership over the coming months, after which the committee will ask for the general approval of the membership before proceeding.

5. Election of Committee Members for 2020

Nominations received (new members in bold)

- **Chair:** Sarah King (York Museums Trust)
- **Secretary:** Emma Bernard (Natural History Museum)
- Treasurer: Rachel Walcott (incumbent) (National Museums Scotland)
- Membership Secretary: Cindy Howells (incumbent) (National Museum Wales)
- (Minutes Secretary)
- Programme Secretary: Zoë Hughes (incumbent) (Natural History Museum)
- **Journal Editor:** Pip Brewer (Natural History Museum)
- Newsletter Editor, Blog Editor: Emma Nicholls (incumbent) (Horniman Museum and Gardens)
- Collections Officer: Mike Howe (incumbent) (British Geological Survey)
- Web Officer: Simon Harris (incumbent)(British Geological Survey)
- **Ordinary Member:** Lu Allington-Jones (Natural History Museum)
- Ordinary Member: Alex Peaker (incumbent) (Dinosaur Isle)
- (Ordinary Member)
- Co-opted Member (Care of Collections): (incumbent) Nigel Larkin (Natural History Conservation)
- Co-opted Member (archive support): Lil Stevens (incumbent) (Natural History Museum)

Retiring Members:

Matthew Parkes
Tony Morgan
Hilary Ketchum
Isla Gladstone (co-opted NatSCA rep)

Election of financial auditors: Neil Clark, Andy Ross (both National Museums Scotland)

A vote was taken to re-elect all incumbents in their current posts *en bloc*. Proposed: **Rob Lowther (Imperial College)**. Seconded: **Luanne Meehitaya (UCL)**.

Agreed following a show of hands.

A second vote was taken to elect the four members listed into their new posts *en bloc*. Proposed: **Mike Howe**. Seconded: **Zoë Hughes**.

Agreed following a show of hands.

A third vote was taken to re-elect the current auditors for the next year. Proposed: **Cindy Howells**. Seconded: **Emma Bernard**.

Agreed following a show of hands.

6. Any other business

Zoë Hughes re-iterated that the GCG programme depended heavily on the support and involvement of the membership, as had been demonstrated clearly during the course of the event. Any help with events (ideas, assistance, venues) is greatly appreciated.

Mike Howe thanked **Matthew Parkes** for his service to GCG, noting that the group was now much more vibrant than it was during his tenure as chair. This was met by a general round of applause.

7. Date and venue for next Annual General Meeting

No venue has yet been set for the next AGM

Matthew Parkes closed the meeting by thanking **Liz Hide and her team** for their kind offer of the use of the Sedgwick Museum, and their hard work in making the event happen.

The meeting closed at 16:55

Simon Harris
12/12/2019