

President's Report for the Annual General Meeting 2018-19 due to be held March 2020

The coronavirus measures mean we had to postpone our AGM for 2018-19 and our last lecture of the 2019-20 season. At this stage it is not clear for how long we need to self-isolate, but EGS will cancel the April-June excursions now and review the summer programme on a monthly basis as advice changes. It is likely more excursions will be cancelled and we will be unlikely to use coaches this season. We will also explore web lectures and individual field trip guide opportunities during the summer and for next season. In the meantime we hope you manage to get out alone (or with the dog) to keep "geologising".

The AGM is an important part of the year, and indeed there is an obligation for EGS to hold one. You have all seen our Annual Report, but I thought it might be useful to write a short commentary and add a few things about the last few months and a look forward to the future. Please do contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Christian Ranken has produced an excellent summary for the accounts. There has been a slight decline in membership subscriptions received during this year and a similar Gift Aid figure compared to our previous year. This was primarily due to several members joining late 2017-18, which means their subscriptions for 2018-19 were paid in the previous year. Overall membership is up slightly. For the last three years we have back claimed Gift Aid for 2 years each year. We are now up-to-date, so henceforth annual Gift Aid income will be halved compared with the last three years. The largest significant change in figures is a reduction in the Receipts and Payments sections compared with the previous year is because participants travel and accommodation costs for the Long Week excursion were paid directly to the travel agent rather than through our Long Excursion account.

The Grants and Awards is lower than the previous year due in part to 2 recipients delaying their requests for their funds until after 30th September 2019 so these Grants will be reflected in our current year's Annual Report. There is also an outstanding outgoing of £1,792 that was our EGS share of the 1,000-copy reprint of the North West Highlands geological excursion guide, which has been paid in the current year. Lecture costs were lower than average (local speakers, or speakers not claiming expenses) and we chartered fewer coaches for the field excursions. This means that the overall surplus of £4,990 is exceptional and we expect a deficit in 2019-20, in line with our strategy to gradually reduce reserves by increasing our geological activities for the public, schools and researchers, particularly at the start of their careers.

I would like to thank all members for their support of our activities in 2018-19, and indeed over this winter's lectures. Attendance has been excellent both for the lectures and excursions. We will continue to focus on these strengths of the Society but also look to build on the success of our public lecture series (2018-19 about the ice age in Scotland; 2019-20 the Secret Life of Carbon). Our Council members have all been very active and support our revised strategy (which you can read on the website), and I extend my thanks to all Council members. In the Annual Report, you will see several proposed changes to Council. I'd particularly like to thank Alison Tymon, Beverly Bergman and David Stephenson who leave Council after contributing for many years. I'm delighted to welcome David Graham, who has taken on the Assistant Excursion role, and Euan Mitchell, an Edinburgh geologist recently returned from academic research in the United States.

Our new President will be Tom Challands. Many of you will know Tom as a palaeontologist at Edinburgh University who regularly attends the evening lectures and I am delighted that he has agreed to take on the role. He is one of the editors of the Scottish Journal of Geology (with Romesh Palamakumbra and Heather Stewart). Tom is currently on a 3-month fellowship in Australia and we will take over before or at the next Council meeting – which will almost certainly be a virtual meeting!

The biggest change you will see will be in September when for the first time for, I think, 22 editions, the Edinburgh Geologist will not be edited by Phil Stone. Phil has done an exceptional job and I know the EG is enjoyed by many members. Thank you Phil!

Looking forward there are four events we are hoping to put on or support in the Autumn. On Friday 25 September 2020 we are co-hosting, with the Friends of Hugh Miller, the Trewin public lecture. This will be our annual public lecture and EGS will support this with funding from the £1,000-legacy from Professor Trewin. On the 1st October, Patrick Corbett is convening a one-day workshop for poetry in geoscience. There is still time to submit a poem and register for this event (see the EGS or Geol. Soc. London websites). Across the weekend 16-18th October we are jointly running the Geologists' Association annual meeting. This is the first time it has been held in Scotland for many years. We hope to see delegates from across the UK but look forward too many members of EGS, GSG and the Geological Society of London local group participating. Registration will be through the GA website. On the Friday afternoon there will be a guided tour of the Earth Science exhibits at the NMS followed by a reception in the Playfair Library, where delegates will be able to see some of the Lyell notebooks. A full day of talks and discussions is planned for Saturday 17th October at the Surgeon's Hall, and a choice of field trips on the Sunday morning.

The fourth event is the proposed Scottish Geology Festival in September-October. We hope that the Scottish Geology Trust will be launched at the GA Playfair Library event during the two-month Festival of Geology. With a bit of luck all these events will go ahead in the autumn, but we will have to wait and see as things develop.

Members of Council have met with members from the Geological Society of Glasgow. Discussions are continuing but we hope to be able to open up our programme of events to members of either society such that we will no longer need an associate membership category. One of the feedback items from members was to increase the variety of field trips and this arrangement would help give members of both societies easier access to more trips in the future. Council believes that it would be sensible to raise our membership rates to match those of GSG (£25 pa, senior and family rate £12.50). Some of our senior members continue to pay the full rate and I would encourage all of you to consider doing the same. With the senior rate members do not get the Scottish Journal. Previously sending out the printed Journal cost the society money, but our arrangement with the Geological Society Publishing House means this is no longer the case.

This year we have awarded more small grants to students and other researchers to help with analyses and field work. I would like to increase this expenditure as the feedback from students, in presentations and publications is bringing the Society to the younger generation and keeps us in touch with the latest research. The modest rise in membership will let us do this, let us reduce our

reserves gradually as outlined in our strategy, and indeed build up a fund to contribute to something special to celebrate James Hutton's 300th anniversary of his birth.

You may have noticed we have been struggling to keep our membership secretaries! It is a thankless task and Council has decided to move with the times and invest in an online membership scheme. This will also include online booking for field trips and other events. Angus Miller is testing our favoured software and we hope to have the new system in place for renewal in October this year.

This year Council has approved two donations each of £5,000. The first was to the University of Edinburgh-led appeal for funding to keep the Lyell notebooks together and available for research here in Edinburgh. It was great news that the appeal was successful. The University has since received a further collection of letters and other documents, including a remarkable correspondence between Lyell and Darwin. The second donation will shortly be made to the new Scottish Geology Trust (SGT). I am now a Trustee of the SGT and will report on its activities to Council. The SGT's key goals are to raise funds for projects to improve access to key sites (e.g. Siccar Point), support the Geoparks, support our universities and enhance geological education and awareness in schools, and raise the profile of geosciences in Scotland, particularly with the Scottish Government.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the very generous £10,000 legacy from our former President, Ian Hogarth. I am sure Ian would be supportive of our current activities, including our support for preserving the Lyell notebook collection, the Scottish Geology Trust and our wish to support geosciences across Scotland.

Do please take care, and we look forward to getting back to our programme of activities as soon as possible

Bob Gatliff