

EGS Strategy 2024 to 2029

1. Strategic Objectives and Policies

EGS's first Strategic Plan ran for the five years from 2015 to 2019 inclusive, the 2nd from 2019 to 2023. The Strategy can be reviewed annually, though Covid-19 disrupted the normal cycle of events in the 2nd of the 5 year periods. The Scottish Geology Trust, which was only a proposal in 2015, is now well established and EGS has strong links to this organisation.

The two main objectives of the Society, laid down in the Society's Laws, are **“the stimulation and encouragement of public interest in geology”** and **“the advancement of geological knowledge”**. These two primary objectives remain appropriate. The second objective is interpreted to include not only support for geological research but also the advancement of geological understanding by members of the Society and indeed the public.

The previous strategies proposed a significant increase in Council's public interest work, the principal justification for the Society's charitable status along with the educational focus of the Society's other activities. This substantial increase in public outreach has been achieved and Council intends that this higher level of public interest activity be continued through the next five years. In addition there will be an emphasis on the advancement of geological knowledge, through the Society's publications, the Society's lecture and excursion programmes, and by continuing with modest grants for funding research.

Council will maintain its drive to promote the Society and geology more widely, and extend its programme of new events commenced during the last Strategy. It will also continue to mount special initiatives, some with a major profile and often in partnership with other bodies, for example the campaign to reopen the Radical Road in Holyrood Park. In pursuing its activities the Society regards its main geographical target area as Edinburgh, east central Scotland and the Borders, and decisions will be taken with this priority in mind. Where appropriate, however, this will extend to the rest of Scotland.

Finally the Society has a wide audience, in three main categories – professional geologists, amateur geologists and the general public. It needs to ensure that all three client groups are catered for in planning its individual events, making clear at which group or groups the events are targeted, and striking an appropriate balance between them. Council will seek to increase the number of the Society's younger members and to engage more with younger age groups in its activities, from primary schools through to university level and beyond, for example by organising informal social events before evening lectures.

2. EGS Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2029

With these objectives and policies in mind, Council will take forward the following activities. The funding of these activities, and the human resources required to deliver them, are addressed in sections 3 and 4 of the Strategy.

2.1 Lectures

The annual series of lectures, aimed at members both professional and amateur but also open to the public, are a key component of EGS activity. These lectures are well-attended (both in-person and online) and will continue. Annual Public Lectures for a wider audience and on popular themes have been a major plank of the Society's public interest programme and will also continue.

2.2 Excursions

The Society's day and evening excursions are popular. They are designed primarily for our members but are

also open to the public. Excursions at a range of knowledge levels, and requiring different levels of physical activity, will continue. We will also continue to offer beginner events, including for families, in partnership with the Edinburgh Science Festival and the Scottish Geology Festival. The long excursion has been discontinued mostly due to the lack of an organiser, but could be rejuvenated if this was felt to be viable.

2.3 Publications

The Excursion Guides are a cornerstone of EGS's output and this activity will be continued, subject to the availability of authors prepared to invest the time required. The Lothian Geology guide is being actively updated currently, with lesser focus on Fife and Ardnamurchan. Council will also explore new models for the production and publication of the excursion guides, especially online and possibly following the model of the Skye guide by Brian Bell of the GSG. This might include 'print on demand' for future books.

The Edinburgh Geologist is highly-regarded by the Society's membership, containing articles of interest to both professional and amateur geologists. It will be a priority to ensure this successful biannual publication continues in this vein, often including articles by EGS members themselves, for example on their own geological activities.

The Geoconservation leaflets are very successful in reaching the public audience. In recent years the Society's funding of these has increased and this will continue where needed.

The Council's newsletters are a great success and will be continued, distributed twice per year with The Edinburgh Geologist and using a mail fulfilment company to reduce costs and volunteer time.

The Society aims, in conjunction with its partners the Geological Society of Glasgow and the Geological Society Publishing House, to secure the Scottish Journal of Geology as the "journal of choice" for those publishing research on Scottish geology. It is an important means of meeting the Society's objective of advancing geological knowledge. The Geol Soc will no longer print paper copies of the SJG, and Council has arranged for trial printing on an 'opt-in' basis, with a cost to members. This will need to be reviewed in light of the popularity of the print run. The future for the SJG seems secure but relies on active promotion by the editorial board, including dedicated issues and themes. Council and the editorial team will consider changes in content, e.g. non-technical summaries of articles, to increase readership.

2.4 Grants

Geological fieldwork grants are available each year from the Society's Clough and Mykura Funds. These Funds have remained at the same value in recent years and Council has augmented grant funding by drawing on general resources. The Council will review the criteria for making these grants to ensure they are compatible with modern trends in Earth Science research.

Council also has a general grant scheme to assist individuals and organisations with other geology-related activities which will further the aims of the Society, especially the stimulation of public interest in geology. Several grants for public outreach projects have been made and this will continue to receive priority. Further efforts will be made to promote the scheme, and consideration will be given to increasing the size of awards in deserving cases. Council will also review whether specific types of geological research might be funded from this scheme. Awards will continue to encourage recipients to providing lectures, articles for The Edinburgh Geologist or the SJG.

2.5 Special Initiatives

Council will continue to take forward selected one-off initiatives, often in collaboration with other partners, such as the production of interpretation boards, geology education material for schools, and perhaps a multi-partite conference. Work will continue with other partners in preparing for the tercentenary of

Hutton's birth in 2026.

2.6 Promotion

The EGS now has a high quality website and biannual newsletters. Membership has continued to increase to historic high levels, even through the Covid pandemic. A number of events for the general public have been run successfully, including annual public lectures; events for the general public and beach pebble events during the Edinburgh Science Festival. These activities will continue and be built upon.

2.7 EGS as an organisation

During the course of this Plan, Council will review whether its Laws and structures are still fit for purpose. Consideration has been given as to whether to convert from an unincorporated voluntary association to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated organisation (SCIO), as have many other charities. This is not being pursued at present. A previous aim, to move increasingly to use of digital means of communication and publication, has been largely achieved, partly due to changes forced by Covid-19. Particular attention will be given to attracting new younger members to the Society, especially undergraduate students, and to reaching out to school-age audiences, including primary schools.

3. Financing the Plan

3.1 Income and Expenditure

In the previous Strategy, Council reaffirmed its policy of aiming to break even on ordinary income and expenditure, and to finance the employment of a Promotion Coordinator from its financial resources, i.e. to run a deficit on its income and expenditure account. In fact, with increased income from membership and expenditure holding steady or decreasing slightly, promotional activities have been funded from operating surplus, and there has been an additional surplus of ordinary income over expenditure totalling over £10,000 over the last five years (2019-2023). Therefore the current finance balance is very positive, so that decreasing this surplus (i.e. by spending above income) is viable. A large donation received at the end of 2023 has further swelled the financial resources, and specific uses of these monies can be identified and acknowledged, e.g. the production of excursion guides.

Council reaffirms its policy of funding time-limited posts (such as promotion and other short-term contracts) and special initiatives, from its operating surplus and financial resources. The shortage of volunteers for some posts as resulted in the society promotional contractor increasing the range of their paid work. Ideally, new volunteers would be recruited to reduce this.

As above, on occasion Council receives donations by way of bequests. Where such bequests have no formal restriction on their use (in which case they would be retained in Restricted Funds) Council will nevertheless endeavour to attach the use of such bequests to particular initiatives where this seems appropriate.

3.2 Capital Resources

Despite the funding of the Society's Promotion Coordinator, Unrestricted Funds have continued to grow over the last four years, from £93,084 at the end of 2017-18 to £100,202 at the end of 2023-24. Nonetheless Council continues to feel that Unrestricted Funds as high as £100,000 are unnecessary and that it can afford to reduce that level if suitable spending proposals are presented, in pursuit of its high-level objectives. This includes special initiatives and the use of contracted assistance if that is necessary to deliver the Society's objectives.

Council also considers, however, that to guard against financial risk, for example from the stock market, the

Society needs to maintain minimum unrestricted funds of £50,000. As before this will be kept under annual review.

Restricted Funds (the Clough and Mykura Funds) remain steady at £40,000. Financial policy on these funds is to restrict spending to the annual investment income, augmented from general funds.

4 Delivering the Plan

A key challenge in implementing this Strategy is the availability of human resources. The time which individual Council members can devote to the EGS is limited and Council will therefore:

- continue with a Promotion Coordinator to drive forward the promotion of EGS.
- continue with the successful policy of delegating the lead on certain initiatives to individual members or subgroups of Council
- contract out support services on an ad hoc basis where additional help is required with particular initiatives or activities
- seek to find out, and draw on, the interest, expertise and enthusiasm of members of the Society for assistance with specific events.
- where appropriate, seek partner organisations with whom to take forward specific initiatives.

Edinburgh Geological Society
20 February 2024