

Meeting Note: Policy Forum 16th March 2021

Attendees:

Jane Banks SC (Chair)
Sarah Beacock NI
Liz Bentley RMetS
Gavin Blackett ORS
Flo Bullough GOL
Georgina Collins RSB (Guest)
Elizabeth Chamberlain IOP
Sean Edmunds IPEM
Frances Evans ASE

Joseph Lewis IES
Laura Marshall RSB
Lauren McLeod RSB
Ryan Mercer SC (Staff)
Arthur Nicholas IST
Megan O'Donnell GOL
Tanya Sheridan RSC
Rachel Stonehouse IOM3
Frances Wragg MITalent (Guest)

Apologies:

Sarah Garry BSSS
Rob Massey RAS
Sam McCormack ASPIH

Alan Palmer IAT
Jane Pritchard ACB
Claire Pollard IOW

1) Welcome and introduction

2) Welcome to new Science Council Policy Officer – Ryan Mercer

- **Jane Banks** reported that the Science Council has now appointed Ryan Mercer, to fill the vacancy for Policy Officer.
- For the past five years Ryan has worked as a Policy Adviser for Education at the Royal Society and prior to that worked for a member of parliament.

3) Organisational Updates

Operational Research Society (ORS)

- **Gavin Blackett** updated that the ORS has fed into the National Data Strategy.

Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM)

- **Sean Edmunds** updated that the IPEM have engaged with a range of consultations and a current priority focus is on statutory registration for clinical technologists.

Association for Science Education (ASE)

- **Frances Evans** highlighted that their focus has been responding to consultations, in particular on the Government's proposals for grading in upcoming exams in light of disruption to schools from COVID-19.
- Also have been working with Wellcome on primary resources.

Midlands Innovation Talent Commission (MITalent)

- **Frances Wragg** explained that he is part of the [Midlands Industrial talent commission](#), led by Sir John Holman, which is producing a document on technical talent for the future.

Institute of Science and Technology (IST)

- **Arthur Nicholas** noted that the IST largely works with the Science Council on policy development.
- The institute is focused on planning its virtual AGM for the Summer and potentially an in person conference in the September.
- Arthur is also working on developing a higher national diploma in digital technology in his role as chair of the Education Board.
- Arthur noted there is also active and promising collaboration around links with the arts.

Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES)

- **Joseph Lewis** explained that the focus for the IES has been preparing for COP 26 conference in November.
 - They are holding six themed discussions in the year running up to COP, of which they are currently in the second.
 - They are putting out a range of briefing papers.
 - This work is intended to be primarily external facing, rather than just aimed at members of the IES, including a public focused event at each stage.
- Following last year's policy programme on Soil and land management, the IES is kicking off a new programme on Climate and Local Government.

Nuclear Institute (NI)

- **Sarah Beacock** highlighted that the focus for the NI has been on COP26, and on the role nuclear can play, noting that this is a particularly sensitive subject in other parts of Europe. Young members of the NI are playing a major role in championing this work.

Geological Society (GOL)

- **Flo Bullough** noted that COP is also the focus for GOL.
 - Submitted to the Cabinet Office a major international proposal for exhibition in the Green Zone at the conference.
 - Have put in a proposal to the University of Glasgow to hold an event there, most likely on hydrogen.
- The GOL has recently responded to the Science and Technology Committee on hydrogen, and are planning to respond to the House of Lords inquiry on batteries and fuel cells.
- They are part of the campaign to save Burlington House, which relates to rises in rent at Burlington house which hosts a number of learned societies.
- 2021 is the GOL's 'Year of Space' which involves a public lecture series and are planning two planetary geology conferences for November.

- **Arthur Nicholas** asked whether the GOL engaged with the planning commission Cumbrian coal mine and Flo Bullough answered that they chose not to, but have engaged with similar exercises in the past.

Royal Society of Biology (RSB)

- **Laura Marshall** reported that the RSB has been producing a monthly COVID-19 Bulletin throughout the pandemic, with about 20,000 subscribers.
- Recently run online plant health summit for future leaders, targeted at early career professionals.
- Ongoing Policy lates event series, providing a platform for bio-scientists to share their ideas alongside policymakers on their research. The next one for April will be on supporting students on their transitions through higher education up to becoming researchers. In May will be one looking at vaccine resistance and lessons from the pandemic for the biosciences sector.
- The RSB is currently finalising its response to DEFRA's consultation on the regulation of genetic technologies.
- Over the past year, the RSB has been collating a library of policy resources, which includes things like consultation responses from the RSBs various members.
- Biosecurity and environmental policy will be key focuses for the RSB over the coming year, specifically:
 - Biodiversity across government;
 - Biosecurity changes due to climate change; and
 - Integrating climate change messaging across Society's activity.
- **Arthur Nicholas** fed back that he thought the RSBs engaging with parliament events have been really strong, and particularly the inclusion of northern MPs.
- **Lauren McLeod** also updated on the RSB's education work including:
 - The focus has been on school policy across the four nations on how they are responding on the pandemic, though Ofqual/DfE have been running the bulk of the formal consultations.
 - The aim is for a longer term (3-5 year) strategy for the coming years, rather than just getting through the next set of exams, also concerned on the impact on NQTs and trainee teachers.
 - Longer term work by the RSB has been centred on their curriculum framework, which has been using in their engagement with the Welsh Government on their curriculum reforms.
 - Currently feeding into the RSB's next three year plan, with long term priorities including curriculum development, practical work and CPD for teachers.
 - Also highlighted the collaboration of the RSB, RSC, IOP, ASE and the Royal Society on education.
- **Georgina Collins**, UKRI intern at the RSB, attended the policy forum as a guest.

Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC)

- **Tanya Sheridan** highlighted that COVID-19 has been a focus with the RSC and will soon be publishing the findings of their COVID impact survey. Concerns raised included:
 - Disruption to research.
 - Graduate job prospects.
 - Need to get chemistry students back on campus due to practical elements of courses.
 - Interruptions to funding for post-graduate researchers.
 - Impact on female researchers due to need for childcare.
- The RSC has also been looking at research funding, particularly around the UK's involvement in Horizon Europe and ensuring it is properly funded.
- Preparing for DEFRA consultation on new chemicals framework.
- Working with chemical societies around the world calling for a United Nations inter-governmental panel on chemicals and waste.
- Putting a bid for an event in the green zone at COP26.
- Have recently published a briefing on plastics.
- RSC also shares the same concerns as other organisations relating to science education and the pandemic.
- Tanya also highlighted that the RSC has decided not to be part of the public campaign to save Burlington House.

Royal Meteorological Society (RMetS)

- **Liz Bently** reported that COP26 is currently the main focus for the RMetS.
 - The RMetS will be issuing a joint statement with over 40 other met societies around the world, which will be launched on World Meteorological Day on 23rd March.
 - Producing a series of six briefing papers in the run up to COP, including on extreme weather, impacts on the arctic and the 1.5C target.
 - Putting in a joint bid with the Met Office and UKRI for a presence in the green zone at UKRI.
 - Universities around the world are putting together a virtual conference in May aimed at students.
 - Supporting with the Government of Jersey with their citizens assemblies on climate change.

Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining (IOM3)

- **Rachel Stonehouse** noted that recent focuses have been climate, packaging materials and critical raw materials.
- Have been engaging with BEIS on the NSI bill and the consultation on mandatory notification.
- Anticipating consultations from DEFRA on packaging and environmental principles.
- In the year running up to COP26 the IOM3 is running a sustainable future campaign and a week of activities in September and hope to collaborate with other organisations on these.

Institute of Physics (IOP)

- **Elizabeth Chamberlain** noted that the IOP reactive work has focused on on education policy, responding to the range of consultations around the impacts of the pandemic on education.
- The IOP are planning to undertake a piece of work to map skills gaps and future needs in physics to meet a range of challenges including net-zero and the industrial strategy.
- Also looking to build an evidence base across a range of physics focused industries to inform arguments around R&D investment and on whether the 2.4% target will be achieved.

4) Horizon Scanning Document Update

- **Jane Banks** provided an update on the horizon scanning document produced by **Frances Wragg**, which involved desk-based research and interviews with five members of the policy forum.
- The Science Council has decided to keep this as an internal document, which will be feeding into the development of a broader strategy which Ryan Mercer will be working on.

5) AOB

- Immediately following the Policy Forum, a meeting was held bringing together the policy forum and the marketing and communications forum on COP26.

Ryan Mercer, Policy Officer
16 March 2021