

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Liquid Crystal Society

22nd March 2016

Edinburgh University

Officers Presenting: Andrew Masters (Chair; AM), Stephen Cowling (Secretary; SC), Carl Brown (Treasurer; CB).

Actions

- Committee to discuss the changes to the terms of reference for the award committee.
- Committee to investigate what changes would be required to the constitution to allow electronic voting and changes to the early career representation on the committee.
- Committee to define the role of membership secretary and communications officer as a single role – what is expected and how to track membership.
- CB to add a £1k budget to the student bursary pot specifically for the German-British Society Meeting next year.

Minutes

AM presented the changes to the awards committee and highlighted key items from the terms of reference governing the awards committee. Concerns were raised from the floor about the need to have multiple candidates for a prize to be awarded. Members highlighted that they would prefer the award panel to make a decision based on the quality of a candidate according to the requirements laid out in the award descriptors.

AM gave an overview to the activities that the society has supported over the last year. Most notably he highlighted the two one day meetings that have been run out of Oxford by Stephen Morris (Advanced Technology) and by Giampaolo D'Allesandro in Southampton (Twist Bend). The ECLC meeting held in Manchester was discussed and special thanks was expressed by the society to both AM and Helen Gleeson for all their efforts in making the conference a huge

success – it returned a £5700 profit to the BLCS treasurer. The society has funded a visiting lecturer (Maria Godinho) in 2016. AM also gave special note to Mike Hird for the renewal of the EPSRC grant that covers student participation in the successful BLCS Winter Workshop each year and for expanding the topics covered in the Workshop to reflect the society's requirements.

AM discussed the changes to the voting process that was implemented this year for the first time. Unfortunately participation was low (around 20% participated in voting). In addition, responses to calls for nominations and suggestions on visiting speakers were discussed. Helen Gleeson highlighted that electronic voting would need to be double checked with the rules on the constitution that is registered with the charity commission. In general the society was in agreement that participation needed to be better and it led to discussions on how the society can interact with the community with greater efficiency. On the issue of voting a suggestion from the society was for the nominees to provide a few lines to explain what they wanted to do for the society. Examples given for greater interaction were to use facebook, twitter, regular updates and group research information or links adding to the website. This also led to a discussion on what constitutes a membership to the society. Several suggestions were proposed such as free membership through a webpage link, 3 year membership through attendance at a BLCS event or separate subscription. The society expressed concern that the free web membership option would lead to a large membership and make it difficult to police who was eligible as a member but also that there would be a large proportion of inactive members.

The most supported suggestion was for the society to introduce a 3 year membership based on attendance at an event organized by the BLCS and the society voted for this action to proceed. Following discussions related to whether the committee required a membership secretary or if the communication officer would be expected to adopt this role. Tim Wilkinson explained that he was communications officer at a time when Maureen Neal was the membership secretary and carried out the dual role upon Maureen's departure from the committee. His view was that it was easier for both roles to be carried out by the

one person. The society agreed with this view and recommended that the role was assigned to the communications officer.

One of the discussion points raised concerns over the student participation in the society. It was proposed that the committee increase its student or early career representation and that those representatives should assume more responsibility to engage with the younger or early career membership. It was agreed that the society should co-opt Rachel Bean this year onto the committee and make an action to modify the constitution to reflect the increased student composition of the committee. Suggestions from AM were that the early career representatives should organize an event or coordinate an event to engage with the early career community. Sally Day suggested that there would be a student network within the society to increase student participation.

The society website was discussed and AM wanted to know how the society could have a more interactive or informative website. Several suggestions were made such as having a short informative section on each of the research groups within the society so that areas of expertise could be easily identified. Other suggestions included mini highlights of research grants, feature publications etc. The discussion also included how Liquid Crystals Today could be used to give more publicity to awards from the society. Ingo Dierking said that this was possible but to bear in mind that the journal is International and could not just reflect the British Liquid Crystal Society.

CB presented to the current accounts to the society and gave an explanation of the expenditure. He raised concern that the society spends a lot of money on the society prize medals that are solid silver and gave an update on the price for a cheaper alternative that was made of a base metal and then silver plated, saving the society approximately £200 per medal. The society voted that the current medals should be maintained.

SC highlighted that there would be an increased expense for participation at the German-British meeting next year and proposed that an increase in the number

of bursaries be made available. Helen Gleeson suggested that there should be more bursaries but that the value should be reduced to £150 per bursary. AM also proposed a general increase in the bursary budget from £1k per year to £2k per year. Sally Day highlighted that this would not be a sustainable proposal due to the lack of funds coming in to the society each year. CB put forward a final proposal to the society that an extra £1k bursary budget be made available for next year solely for the German-British meeting and that each bursary be valued at £200. The society voted in favour of this suggestion.

SC gave an overview of the voting and the number of positions available on the steering committee. He highlighted that Georg Mehl had been voted in as chair-elect, Rachel Tuffin and Mike Hird as industry representatives, Cliff Jones and Stephen Morris as ordinary members and Sarah Gray as the student representative.

AM closed the AGM.

Stephen Cowling
Secretary

Andrew Masters
Chair