

Minutes of the Steering Committee of the British Liquid Crystal Society
27th February 2018 (Telephone conference meeting)

Members Present: Georg Mehl (Chair; GM), Andrew Masters (Vice-Chair; AM), Stephen Cowling (Secretary; SC), Carl Brown (Treasurer; CB), Timothy Spencer (Communications, TS), Isabel Saez (IS), Mamatha Nagaraj (MN) and Rachel Bean (RB, Student).

Absent: Mike Hird (MH), Verena Gortz (VG), Stephen Morris (SM), Cliff Jones (CJ), Giampaolo D'Alessandro (GD) and Sarah Gray (SG, student)

Actions

- **TS** to release a doodle poll with all of the nominees and roles for the new committee. **GM** to provide a statement about each of the candidates for the Chair-elect role.
- **CB** to finalise the charitable returns and also to pay outstanding bursaries.
- **CB** to purchase the new society medals
- **All** to look at future of the Winter Workshop.
 - **SC** to discuss with MH about what is required and look at potential facilities in York
- **GM** to contact David Dunmur about award panel
- **MN** to look at Leeds as a venue for BLCS 2019
- **TS** look at moving the BLCS website to an independent domain.

Minutes

AM gave an account of the main actions from the AGM that took place in Wurzburg. The society had discussed whether it wanted to continue with the current expense of the award medals or whether to seek lower cost alternatives since this was the major expense to the society. The consensus of opinion indicated this was the way forward. In addition the society expressed a desire for the BLCS website to be more useful in promoting activities relevant to young or

early career researchers. The final item raised was the desire to see the engagement with more biologically relevant content within the BLCS.

The current position of the nominations for committee was discussed. Two candidates are standing for election as chair-elect, one each for treasurer, secretary and communications officer. There have been no nominations for student representatives to date but several for ordinary members and one for industrial representative. SC indicated that the voting should go live as soon as possible to allow the society to carefully consider its options for committee. Since previous electronic voting worked it was decided that TS should release a secure doodle poll as soon as possible (28/2/18) and the voting close 19/3/18. AM would be given administrative access to the poll to allow two officers to oversee the voting process – SC standing for election so has a conflict of interest and GM also declared a conflict of interest. TS to send out a link to the poll to membership and a reminder email will be sent after a couple of weeks to encourage engagement with the process. The committee minuted their thanks to all the committee members that were reaching the end of their terms for all their hard work.

CB circulated the financial reports of the society. He highlighted that with the BLCS meeting in Edinburgh this had put the society over the £25k limit for charities and an audit of the finances has been initiated with a finance officer/accountant from the University of Hull. This has led to a delay in making the charitable returns submission. A TAR statement was circulated for AM to sign from his time as Chair of the society. CB also highlighted that he would check with the charity commission to see if the accounts should have included the Edinburgh conference since the society did not deal with the finance beside initial costs. Edinburgh university dealt with all payments and transactions.

CB also highlighted that there are a couple of outstanding payments to be made for student bursaries and that the new medals had not been ordered as yet. For this purpose the medals may not arrive in time for the BLCS conference and the committee will need to provide a framed certificate for the GW Gray medal recipient and a medal be presented when they are delivered.

AM discussed the arrangements for the BLCS conference. Numbers of attendees looks to be very low with only 41 currently registered. This means that the conference is likely to make a loss which the society will need to cover. The committee was asked to formally acknowledge that the society would cover the losses.

The British Liquid Crystal Society Winter Workshop has been a mainstay in the society calendar for nearly 30 years. The current EPSRC grant supporting the workshop is due to expire 11/18 and MH has indicated that he will no longer be able to coordinate the event. A request has been made that a younger researcher take on this task if the committee felt that it was something they still wanted to support. Questions were raised about whether people felt the format needed a change or if new speakers were required. TS asked about the number of attendees and whether it was worthwhile running it still. SC indicated that the numbers fluctuate year on year but generally the meeting was still supported strongly.

- The committee felt the format was still good and well balanced although perhaps some biological content would be useful.
- It was agreed that timing for the meeting was critical – ie, whoever takes on the task needs to have facilities available for the meeting.
- The timeframe for submission of a new EPSRC submission was critical and this means a decision needs making within a month or two at most. The submission goes via responsive mode channels.
- Would be a good opportunity for someone dealing with outreach to promote the event.
- The committee agreed to talk to their colleagues to gauge interest in taking on the event. SC to look at possibility of using York as a potential venue and hence will talk to MH.
- The committee wanted to express its most sincere gratitude to MH for all of his hard work and commitment to running the Winter Workshop for its duration.

BLCS medals were discussed based on the outcomes of the previous AGM. All committee members agreed that the silver plated medals would be the preferred option for future medals and CB should order some as soon as possible.

John Goodby has reached the end of his term on the awards panel and nominations or suggestions were put forward for potential replacements. It was agreed that the committee felt David Dunmur represented a good candidate and GM would approach him about filling the role. This means that the balance between disciplines would be maintained.

The award committee gave a very thorough review of each of the 5 nominations for the GW Gray medal and two outstanding candidates were highlighted. The award committee also recommended holding a candidate that was equally as impressive to be held over for next year but the committee agreed this was against the rules but renomination of the candidate would be accepted. An additional suggestion was made by the award panel to limit nominations to a maximum of 3 consecutive years before an enforced break in nomination was required. GM agreed this would be a wise move and the committee were asked to vote on the issue. It was a unanimous decision that the nomination be limited in such a way.

The Anglo-German meeting was a success although fewer BLCS members engaged with the Wurzburg meeting than initially hoped. It was agreed that the BLCS meetings should remain home based for at least 3 years after which time the issue of merging society meetings could be discussed again. AM and GM also discussed the possibility of using the 1 day meetings on specific topics as a better vehicle for collaboration between different countries and societies. The committee agreed this was a sensible option.

The next meeting was discussed and MN indicated that she would like to organize it in Leeds. She will look at the details and discuss with the next committee.

TS has scanned all the abstract books from previous BLCS meetings which was no small task. He has converted them into searchable pdf files and they will be mounted on the BLCS website in due course.

TS to look into moving the BLCS website to an independent site rather than its current home within the Cambridge University web pages.

Stephen Cowling
Secretary

Georg Mehl
Chair