

Positions on Council for election in June 2019

- Skills & expertise gaps most helpful to fill
- Guidance for Fellows

Background

In 2013 the Council of the Society considered how, as far as possible, the Society can ensure that it has an appropriate mix of skills, experience and expertise necessary to fulfil the requirements of the Committees of Council and of Council itself. This is important since Council is the body of Trustees that holds responsibility for the affairs of the Society as a whole.

As part of those considerations, the Council recognised the guidance on governance in the Grant Thornton Charity Governance Review, 2013. The Charity Commission notes too:

"An effective charity is run by a clearly identifiable board or trustee body that has the right balance of skills and experience, acts in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries, understands its responsibilities and has systems in place to exercise them properly."

The Hallmarks of an Effective Charity, Charity Commission.

The Society has a broad base and set of interests, and has in place safeguards to ensure that the Council has elected representation from three main constituencies – education; fieldwork and expeditions; and research and higher education. This is embodied in the Society's Byelaws and Committee structure, and is further reflected in the composition of the Society's membership, the nature of the Society's work and its strategy. Furthermore, while this is not set down in writing, for well over 40 years the Society's Council has, on average, had circa 50% academic members and 50% non-academic members, a balance that we consider healthy and seek to continue.

Consistent with the Charity Commission's requirements on the duties and responsibilities of trustees of charities, Council members are also expected to act as positive advocates for the Society, to act in the best interests of the Society as a whole and to recognise that no single interest group, of whatever origin or cause, should have the capacity to dominate, or exert undue influence on, the Society's governing body.

There are sound democratic grounds for electing the majority of Council members from the Fellowship, an approach that Council has no intention of moving away from. **However, with Council responsible for the Society's overall strategic direction and decision-making, and with the Society growing and becoming more complex in recent years, it is increasingly the case that the Council needs to embody an appropriate balance and range of skills, expertise and experience in addition to knowledge within key Society constituencies.** So how best to achieve that broad succession planning, whilst balancing the need for continuity with the need to draw in "new blood" and maintaining the existing election framework and processes?

In considering this question the Council agreed that it would start by identifying (and regularly reviewing) the range of skills, expertise and experience it felt was needed from the Council and Committee members as a whole. This information will be placed on the Society's website. **Council would then use this as a basis for providing transparent guidance on the skills and expertise gaps it considers to be most helpful to fill. Such guidance would be available to those considering standing for election in any particular year,** and would take note of the skills of existing Council members, the Society's strategic plan and current activities.

In any year, the nominees and their proposers will be kindly asked to address how they help fill any identified skills / expertise gaps as part of the short biographical statement required of nominees, and in proposer supporting statements. It is not a requirement that nominees fill identified gaps but it is highly desirable. The review of skills gaps will in addition be used by the Council to help identify candidates for the four co-opted positions on the Council, which are set out in the Bye-Laws. Council nominees are also asked to consider carefully their ability to meet the time and other commitments required, including attendance at Council and Committee meetings in London, and any conflicts of interest, before standing for election. Furthermore, In line with the Charity Commission guidance on governance and accountability, those standing for election will be required to submit a 'declaration of eligibility' form which confirms they are willing and eligible to act as a trustee and understand the responsibilities involved, and a Register of Interests form.

This approach, adopted from the June 2014 elections has been well received, and has been used in elections since that date, with the Council considering the skills gaps most needed in December each year before the elections.



The Council positions for election in 2019 and the skills/expertise gaps the Council feels it would be most helpful to fill

The following positions are to be elected in June 2019. Unless otherwise specified, the elections are for three year terms:

Education

- Honorary Secretary: Education
- Councillor: Education

Skills and expertise gaps most helpful to fill:

- Practical expertise, skills and knowledge as an established geography teacher and head of department at secondary level in either the maintained or private sector. Wider senior manager experience within a schools or initial teacher training setting necessary (Honorary Secretary)
- Practical expertise, skills and knowledge as an established geography teacher and head of department at secondary level in either the maintained or private sector (Councillor).

Expeditions and Fieldwork

- Councillor: Expeditions and Fieldwork

Skills and expertise gaps most helpful to fill:

- Academic field research expertise in physical geography or environmental science; and expertise in field teaching / techniques at university level (Councillor).

Research and Higher Education

- Chair of Annual Conference for 2020 (one year position on Council)
- Vice President: Research and Higher Education
- Councillor: Research and Higher Education

Skills and expertise gaps most helpful to fill:

- Senior, leading, internationally-renowned scholar (Chair of the Annual Conference position).
- Expertise in research leadership and impact in either quantitative geography or expertise in teaching and learning (Councillor).
- Internationally recognised scholar, with experience as Head of Department or more senior administrative role (Vice President).

Notes

The Postgraduate representative position on the Council is filled annually by co-option of the elected chair of the Postgraduate Forum.

President and Council, December 2018