

Annual review 2019

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning





The Society



Vision

A world-leading learned and professional body for geography, widely respected for its independence, quality, innovation, and for the breadth of its activities promoting and supporting geography as the means for everyone to discover, understand and respect the world's people, places and environments.

Mission

A world centre for geography and geographical learning dedicated to the development and promotion of knowledge together with its application to the challenges facing society and the environment.

The Society is a charity that exists for public benefit and which also has a broad-based membership that supports its mission and aims. The Society was independently recognised in 2013 as the leading scholarly geographical society in the world.

Registered Charity 208791

Society objectives

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) exists for 'the advancement of geographical science'. For the current strategy, 2017-2021, this purpose has been expressed as six strategic objectives for the organisation. These focus the activities of the Society and ensure that the Society's operational development is planned, integrated and responsive to the needs of the discipline, its practitioners, the public at large and the membership. Three objectives concern first and foremost the discipline. These are to safeguard the discipline, to develop and share geographical knowledge and understanding, and to support practitioners and students. Three objectives concern the Society. These are to grow our reputation, enhance our membership and sustain the future.

The Society's work is organised into thematic departments, each of which contributes work to several objectives.

From the President



Rt Hon Baroness Lynda Chalker
President

Looking back over 2019, the mid-point of the Society's current strategic period, I am heartened to see the progress of the organisation and how together we are striving to achieve our charitable objective to advance geographical science.

As a former government minister and a member of the House of Lords, I am encouraged to see the reinvigoration of the Society's knowledge exchange activities. Ensuring that current geographical research informs policy by providing opportunities for geographers and policymakers to share ideas, sound evidence and understanding is a vital element of the Society's work.

A range of impacts that have resulted from geographical research can also be seen in the collection of case studies published on the Society's website. Individually they demonstrate the successes of particular research projects, but together they champion the vital role geography and geographers play in understanding and managing some of the most important challenges facing us today.

As well as demonstrating the impact of the discipline, it is also important that we highlight the value of studying geography to young people and their parents. And the new career profiles that showcase the diverse and rewarding paths that studying geography can open up for young geographers do just that.

However these are just a few examples of the Society's current work. I encourage you to explore the full details of the breadth of activities that are outlined over the following pages.

As President, part of my role is to ensure the Society's governance is in good order. I am therefore very pleased to report that after a review during 2019, the Society's governance processes have been improved. The main outcome of this has been aligning the terms of references of the committees of Council to ensure they are clear and complementary.

The governance review also reminded me of the commitment of so many of our Fellows and members and the enthusiasm you show in helping the organisation not just to function, but to achieve beyond everyone's expectations. Therefore I would like to end by thanking you sincerely for your continued support of the Society. Every Fellow, member, donor, advisor and volunteer makes a difference. This is greatly valued by the Trustees and all who work so hard for the Society.

2019 Frederick Soddy Schools Award recipients
on the Isle of Cumbrae

© Rowena Ranger

Climate change challenges event

© RGS-IBG



The 2019 Annual Conference was attended
by over 2,000 delegates

© Panel 8 Photography

2019 Ralph Brown Expedition Award recipient
Dr Maria Beger studying a subtropical reef ecosystem

© Carrie Sims



From the Director



Professor Joe Smith
Director

As a member of the Society, you will be well aware of the central role that geography plays in how we understand and make sense of the world around us. Geographical skills and knowledge play a prominent role in progressing insight and action on climate change and sustainability. They also bring distinctive insights into the interactions between social, technological and economic change.

A YouGov poll commissioned by the Society and carried out during the summer of 2019 demonstrated that the majority of the public recognise geography as the GCSE subject that teaches pupils about climate change. And we also know, from independent research we commissioned on the geography of geography students, that at GCSE the fastest rate of growth is among pupils from black and minority ethnic (BAME) and disadvantaged backgrounds.

In this period of geopolitical and economic upheaval, and of increasingly evident climate risks, it is heartening to see the levels of engagement, particularly by young people, with such issues. Geographical insights can inform and support anyone who is determined to change the world for the better.

The Society is a rarity in that we connect geographers at all levels and across all sectors, from enthusiasts, students and teachers, to academics, professionals and expeditioners. This is where we garner our strength and ability to make a difference.

In 2019, the Society demonstrably did make a difference. We supported teachers by providing them with up to date case studies, award-winning teaching resources based on real world situations and training to develop their subject knowledge and skills. We supported professional geographers by enhancing the mentoring offered to Chartered Geographers, celebrating their successes and highlighting the impact of geographical knowledge in the workplace. We supported academics by providing spaces to exchange and test ideas, and teaching and learning resources for early career researchers. Through our awards, publications and media work we also ensured that they received recognition for their achievements. We enabled the work of those undertaking fieldwork and expeditions by providing advice and training, and ensuring their stories reached a wider audience. We supported members of the public by providing accessible, informative and engaging events, publications and social media content.

As you will read in the following pages, this represents just a selection of the Society's work over the last year, but it also signals our ambitions for the future.

1 Geography

Promoting and sustaining a vibrant discipline

Objective Represent, promote and advocate for geography as a leading discipline, so that its contribution to understanding our changing world is appreciated by the public and it maintains a strong position in education, research, fieldwork and expeditions, in civic society and in informing policy and business.

Context Geography has an essential role in the 21st century in helping everyone to understand our world. 2012 to 2016 saw significant strengthening in the standing and study of geography. 2017 to 2021 has uncertainties in the face of UK political and economic change.

The Society is a highly influential and effective voice for geography in the UK, and is valued across the geographical community for its advocacy on behalf of the discipline. During 2019, we increased the visibility of our work with decision makers, reinvigorated our work to connect researchers with policy makers and showcased the breadth of careers open to those who choose geography.

1.1 Making the case for geography

During 2019, the development of a series of resources and the hosting of several events was made possible by the Society's convening power and strong networks with individuals and organisations across the government, business, education, and research sectors. In particular, valuable engagement with the Geographers in Government group was sustained throughout the year, alongside strong links with other geographical societies and relevant sister bodies worldwide.

Over 30 case studies that demonstrate the value of geographical research and its impacts were published on the Society's website. This bank of easy to access materials was produced in partnership with the research community and one strand of them focuses on geospatial applications while other strands include health and social care, environment and natural resources, and service delivery. This evidence base is now being shared widely with stakeholders and influencers to ensure they have the greatest reach.

In the autumn our series of knowledge exchange events, the Environment and Society Forum, was relaunched. Again the research community was involved from the beginning to ensure a close and effective connection could be built between them and the business, professional and policy communities. The first event, on the barriers and opportunities surrounding the financing progress towards net zero carbon emissions, generated constructive discussion across sectors and a report that will help to inform future action in this area.

Geographers from across the breadth of the discipline were invited to submit career profiles to demonstrate the range of paths that studying geography can open up. By the end of 2019, nearly 100 profiles, ranging from early career researchers and teachers, to senior figures in industry and government had been published on our website. These profiles have been shared across our social media platforms to raise awareness among parents, as well as young people themselves, of the value of a geographical education. More profiles continue to be added.

One of nearly 100 new career profiles on the
Society's website: Terri Freemantle in the field
© Terri Freemantle



Colouring London data skills project
 © Colouring London contributors (building attributes) and
 © Crown copyright (OS Maps baselayers and building outlines)

Earth Photo competition entry. Detail: Shark Bay, Study 5 (2017)
 © Yi Sun



1.2 Advising on geography

During 2019, the Society responded to nine consultations including ones on degree classification, open access publishing and the inspection framework for schools. These responses were generated in collaboration with the relevant sectors of the geographical community.

The Society continued to advocate for geography as a data rich school subject through our Data Skills project, the Data Skills Taskforce and the Royal Society Post 16 Maths Pathways Committee.

The Society also maintained its ongoing contact with Ministers and officials across a range of relevant governmental departments during what was a politically turbulent year. In particular, the Director, President and Head of

Education had a positive meeting with the Minister for School Standards, the Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP.

1.3 Promoting geography to wider audiences

The Society's Geography Ambassadors programme maintained its reach with approximately 30,000 pupils attending more than 900 Ambassador sessions across England, Northern Ireland and Wales during 2019.

The Society's Earth Photo competition and exhibition over the summer resulted in coverage in *Outdoor Photography*, *Photography News*, *MailOnline*, and *The Guardian*. The Society featured in an episode of *How to outperform*, a podcast series produced by Audible looking at UK organisations that have stood the test of time.

In November, the Society's response to media reports concerning the diversity of geography students was published in *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Evening Standard*. The response drew on initial results from our geography of geography research that showed there is an increase in BAME students at GCSE.

The Society sustained work across the geographical community to improve diversity and inclusion, including maintaining support for sector-led programmes, such as Athena Swan, that support underrepresented groups in higher education institutions.

2 Knowledge and understanding

Helping create a better informed world

Objective Advance, interpret and share geographical knowledge more fully, so that the world is better understood and more people benefit from using and enjoying geographical knowledge in their work, leisure and communities.

Context In a period of uncertainty and rapid change there is a greater need than ever to advance, and share, well-founded knowledge and understanding of the UK and the world. And to do so in ways that are meaningful to professional and public audiences today. We will bring our independence, convening power and inspiration to bear.

In a year of political uncertainty, the Society provided much needed spaces for both geographers and members of the public to explore and share new geographical knowledge. From grant recipients and delegates at the Annual International Conference to teachers and attendees at public discussion events, the Society supported and promoted expert knowledge and informed participation.

2.1 Advancing knowledge

Through our grants programme, the Society supported 67 field research projects and scientific expeditions, and awarded £197,000 during 2019. These projects involved nearly 100 individuals carrying out research in 45 countries across the world. The 2019 grants programme enabled, among many other projects, researchers to investigate subtropical corals, iceberg calving and sustainable Tanzanite mining; postgraduates to explore the meaning of 'zero-deforestation', the past climate of the South Pacific Islands, and microplastics in UK lakes; and teams of undergraduates to gain research experience in Siberia, Italy and Peru.

With the fieldwork for the Society's collaborative Field Research Programme, *Migrants on the margins*, completed, the multinational team – led by Professor Michael Collyer (University of Sussex) – focussed during 2019 on the analysis of the data collected. The project, which is a partnership between the Society and UK and international researchers, is investigating the vulnerabilities and opportunities of migrants in four of the world's

most pressured cities: Colombo (Sri Lanka), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Harare (Zimbabwe), and Hargeisa (Somaliland).

The team presented their initial findings at several conferences, including the Society's Annual International Conference, and developed a programme of outreach to share the implications of the research with a broad audience including local policymakers and UK parliamentarians. The educational resources produced by the Society based on the project were shortlisted for an award.

The Society is part of the Science Museum and Archives Consortium and, with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), has supported 12 PhD studentships working on our Collections. In 2019, the consortium was successful in receiving a further three years of funding, and projects on Circulating Arctic science and Expeditionary filmmaking were completed.

CDA students discussing Collections items

© Panel 8 Photography






2.2 Interpreting and sharing knowledge

During 2019, more than 32,000 people attended over 400 events as part of the Society's events programme for members, the public and specialist audiences.

Amended event formats in the public programme, such as a greater focus on discussion and audience participation, as well as selecting very topical issues, saw a shift in the demographics of those attending our events to include a greater proportion of under 30 year olds than in previous years.

Topical discussions during the year included fast fashion, the future of cities, and Brexit. While an event linked to the international climate meeting, COP25, that combined panel discussions, one-to-one conversations with experts and virtual reality, explored not only the science of climate change, but also what positive action individuals can meaningfully take.

The Society's Collections were showcased through a series of displays, talks and film screenings, including a talk on Thomas Atkinson's diaries, a display of artefacts and images from Eric Newby's archive, and a screening

of footage from Ralph Bagnold's innovative expeditions in the Sahara Desert, accompanied by a silent film pianist.

The Society's Monday night lecture series for Fellows, members and their guests continued to be well attended and garner positive feedback for their variety and insight. The lectures attracted an average of 600 people each Monday, while many more watched the high quality recordings of them on the Society's website. Speakers in 2019 included Alastair Fothergill talking about his innovative new nature documentary series, *Our Planet*; Sir Michael Palin discussing his book about the *Erebus: the story of a ship*; and Dr Kate Edwards exploring digital world-building.

The nine UK regional committees and the Regional Theatres Programme enabled Fellows, members and the public across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to access a wide variety of geographical talks, field visits and social events. In 2019, speakers in the Regional Theatres Programme included Gillian Burke, Professor Lewis Dartnell and Tim Marshall.

The programme of events organised by the volunteer regional committees

included field visits to Mousehold Heath, Hengistbury Head, and Burrington Ham; talks on the impacts of palm oil, climate change and migration; as well as social events.

The Society's public engagement project, Discovering Britain underwent a thorough review during the first three months of 2019. It concluded that the project was not financially sustainable in its current format. The project website remains live and continues to be promoted, and over time the content will be incorporated into the Society's main website and social media platforms.

The second year of the Society's Earth Photo competition, developed in partnership with Forestry England attracted 1,200 competition entries and the subsequent exhibition of shortlisted images and films was on show in the Society's Pavilion for six weeks before touring to three Forestry England venues. The competition succeeded in not only generating amazing images, but also in revealing the geographical stories behind them and engaging public audiences with the full breadth of geography's concerns.

In June, the Society launched a new essay competition for A Level students in partnership with the *Financial Times*. Students were asked to produce a convincing argument on whether it is better for the world to be wealthier or more equal. The annual Young Geographer of the Year competition attracted over 15,000 entries as pupils aged from nine to 18 answered the question 'where can geography take you?'.

The 2019 Annual International Conference was chaired by Professor Hestor Parr (University of Glasgow), who chose *Geographies of trouble/ geographies of hope* as the conference theme. Held at the Society in London, it was one of the largest ever conferences with over 460 sessions and more than 2,000 attendees. The conference programme included sessions for postgraduate students and early career researchers, as well as featuring high profile plenary lectures and journal sponsored talks. A greater effort than in previous years was put into communicating the different initiatives to reduce use of resources and improve inclusivity. These included the introduction of a new code of conduct for all delegates, no single use plastic

and a display of banners portraying contemporary geographers.

As usual, the conference programme was, in large part, produced by the Society's Research Groups. Alongside this, in 2019 the Research Groups also organised events and workshops for their members and gave awards to recognise excellence in their areas of the discipline.

The Society's scholarly journals (*Area*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *The Geographical Journal* and *Geo*) and book series continued to disseminate new geographical research findings during 2019. New co-editors were appointed to all of the journals and the editor of the book series came to the end of their tenure at the end of 2019.

During the year, the Society continued to be actively involved in discussions to evaluate possible future business models for open access publishing, and the timelines for implementation.

Our journals are available in over 13,500 institutions worldwide, including almost 8,000 in the Global South via philanthropic initiatives. Two new books – *Geographies of Anticolonialism* and *Geopolitics and*

the Event – were published in the Society's book series during the year.

Throughout 2019, progress was made in digitising a very large proportion of the items in the Society's Collections as part of the Wiley Blackwell Digitisation Project. Once complete, the project will enable institutional access to the Collections from across the globe, opening up new opportunities for research and engagement with this unique resource.

2.3 **Extending our engagement with new audiences**

Independent research commissioned by the Society into *The Geography of Geography Students* reported towards the end of 2019. The research looked in detail at the nature and distribution of the populations studying GCSE, A Level and undergraduate geography. The findings include the fact that one of the fastest growing groups of GCSE geography students is those with a minority ethnic background. This and other new insights will inform future Society activities and interventions, and will help to shape how we work with the wider geographical community to support underrepresented audiences.

2019 RGS-IBG Postgraduate Research Award recipient
Nathaniel Baurley conducting fieldwork in south east Iceland
© Nathaniel Baurley



3 Geography in practice

Enabling professional and student communities

Objective Help meet the needs of practising geographers and students, so that there are vibrant, well trained, accredited professional communities, and highly employable students.

Context Geographical knowledge and skills are increasingly recognised at work and sought out by employers. Professional development and accreditation is becoming more widely valued and rewarded by employers. It is timely to expand the Society's role as a professional body and its support for professional geographers.

As the UK's professional body for geography, the Society is committed to helping meet the needs of practising geographers and students so that there are vibrant, well-trained and accredited professional communities, and highly employable students. The Society's work sustains a strong training function in schools, higher education and field science, and we support the pipeline of geographers into a range of professional communities.

3.1 Promoting the professionalism of geography and geographers

In June the first ever Geographers in Government Award was presented at the Society's Medals and Awards Ceremony, showcasing the close working relationship between the Society and the Geographers in Government group, which recognises the work of geographers within the civil service and now has over 1,000 members. And in November, the Society hosted the second Geographers in Government conference.

The Society also continued the close working relationship with the AGI throughout the year, enabling more effective promotion of Chartered Geographer accreditation to the GI community than previously.

The Society also continued to engage with the Geospatial Commission and others working on geospatial skills development.

3.2 Developing substantially the programme of professional support and accreditation

During 2019, the Society's programme of support and accreditation for professional geographers was significantly enhanced due to the appointment of two new members of staff, and this was overseen by a newly established professional advisory group.

In Chartered Geographer (CGeog) – the internationally recognised professional accreditation for people using geographical knowledge and skills in the workplace – the framework of competencies that guide CGeog applicants towards accreditation was updated and aligned with the framework used by the Geographers in Government group. A new code of conduct for CGeogs was also introduced that outlines explicitly the expected behaviours of a professional geographer. The mentoring and support offered to current CGeogs and initial applicants was also enhanced.

One of nearly 100 career profiles on the website: Andy Rumfitt in a team meeting
© Andy Rumfitt

Delegates in discussion during the *Financing net zero* event
© Panel 8 Photography



3.3 Sustaining a strong training function in schools, higher education and field science

The Society's Geography Teacher Training Scholarship programme, funded by the Department for Education, successfully recruited 139 Scholars who started their training in September 2019, and continued to support previous cohorts of Scholars who are now in their first or second year of teaching.

Alongside the support for new and very early career geography teachers offered through the Scholarship programme, during 2019 the Society continued to run high quality continuing professional development (CPD) for almost 1,600 geography teachers. Topics covered during these sessions included fieldwork skills, data skills and changing places.

A new guide for postgraduate students who teach was developed using content and learning from two training workshops – held in Liverpool and Newcastle – on the topic. The higher education community were also asked to contribute teaching and learning materials to a new searchable resource bank on the Society's website.

In 2019, five more universities had their geography programmes accredited during 2019, bringing the total to 135.

More than 350 people attended Explore, the Society's expedition and fieldwork planning weekend in November. Explore brings together new and experienced field researchers to support each other, share ideas and make connections. Highlights included a report from a group of students who had retraced

an expedition to an area in Borneo that took place 64 years ago, and a presentation from a recipient of the Society's Fieldwork Apprentice grants on the installation of low cost environmental sensors in a cloud forest in the Colombian Andes.

Alongside Explore, over 525 individuals attended training courses organised by Geography Outdoors with the aim of upskilling and sharing best practice among the community of expeditioners.

2019 at a glance

Research and Higher Education



Fieldwork and Expeditions



2,000 DELEGATES

- **2,000 delegates** attended **460 sessions** at the Annual International Conference.

FOUR EDITORS

- **Four new journal editors** appointed.

£197k

- **67 field research projects** and expeditions across the world were awarded a total of **£197,000**.
- **Two new funds** contributing to the Geographical Fieldwork Grants.



400+
ATTENDEES

- Over **400 people** attended the Explore and Explore South West fieldwork and expedition planning events.



100
PROFILES

- **100 career profiles** produced, showing the breadth of careers open to geography students.
- **139** Geography Teacher Training Scholars were recruited.



15,000
ENTRIES

- **15,000 entries** to the Young Geographer of the Year competition.

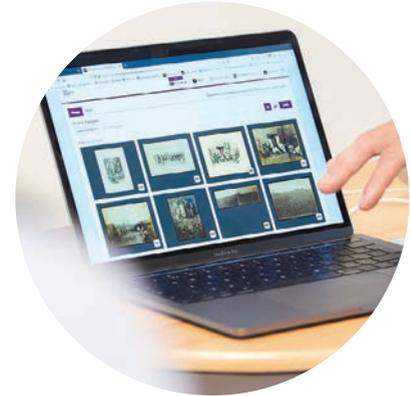
Policy and professional



62 **CGeog**
ACCREDITATIONS

- **62** newly accredited RGS-IBG Chartered Geographers.

Public Engagement and Collections



30
STUDIES

- **30 impact case studies** published on the RGS-IBG website.

1.5M

- Over **1.5 million images** of Collections items digitised.

Enterprises and fundraising



1,200
SUBMISSIONS

- The Earth Photo competition attracted **1,200 submissions**.



£143K
INVESTED

- **£143,000** invested during 2019 in upgrading projection equipment in the Ondaatje Theatre and Education Centre.
- *The Royal Geographical Society Quiz Book* was listed in the **top ten** travel-related puzzle books of 2019.



1,500+
ITEMS

- Over **1,500 items**, including photographs, archival material and film donated to the Society as part of the John Noel archive.

4 Growing our reputation

Building on tradition, independence and contemporary relevance

Objective Build further the Society's strong profile, reputation and presence, nationally and internationally, reinforcing and publicising its role as a leader among learned societies and a partner of choice.

Context The Society is well established and highly respected, UK-wide and internationally. It has a well-developed international reach in selected activities and an international membership in more than 100 countries. It is regularly consulted as a leading learned society. Geopolitical changes and technological developments offer incentives and opportunities to establish a stronger presence, and partnerships with sister societies, across the UK and internationally, for mutual benefit and that of geography.

The Society is the UK's learned society for geography, and the breadth and depth of activities in 2019 maintained its reputation for innovation. The Society also continued to be a trusted delivery partner, sought out by other organisations, with several existing partnerships enhanced and improved during the course of the year.

4.1 Developing and consolidating bilateral relationships

The Society has long standing, close working relationships with partner bodies and organisations across the geographical and broader social sciences communities. During 2019, the Society invested time in developing the relationships with the Geographical Association (GA), the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) and the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers (SAGT) in order to present a stronger, joint voice on shared issues.

The Society also sustained positive relationships with the four examining boards offering GCSE and A Level geography, with the Field Studies Council and the Council of British Geography.

Based on the success of the previous agreement, in 2019 the Society entered into a new, two year strategic partnership with the AGI.

4.2 Enhancing our presence, online and across the UK

Work progressed throughout 2019 on improvements to the Society's website, including the development of online joining. However, a series of delays due to staff changes and the complexity of the work resulted in the launch of online joining being postponed to 2020.

In the autumn, the Society launched an app for teachers using smartphones and tablets as an alternative way of accessing our teaching resources and to enable notifications about new resources and events to be sent directly to teachers.

A review of the Society's social media presence recommended that the Society should have a well curated and active Instagram account and share more content from across the geographical community, not just Society generated content. These changes will be implemented in early 2020.

The quality of the recordings of Monday night lectures and other events held in the Ondaatje Theatre was significantly improved with the upgrade of the theatre's cameras and projectors. Recordings of lectures are now being uploaded within four days, meaning that Fellows and members who are unable to attend in person can enjoy a broadcast quality experience.

To complement the events programme organised by the Society's regional committees, a new member plus guest lecture featuring speakers from the Monday night lecture series was piloted during 2019 in Manchester. The pilot successfully demonstrated demand among Fellows and members and will be continued in Manchester as well as being rolled out to Nottingham.

4.3 **Extending the international dimension of current activities**

The Society remains the UK representative body for the International Geographical Union (IGU) and the European Association for Geographical Societies (EUGEO), supporting their activities.

In August, the Society welcomed a delegation from the Geographical Society of China to the Annual International Conference. The delegation led four sessions on urban development, land use change and geospatial techniques. During the year, the Director also met with representatives from the Canadian, Russian and US geographical societies.

The Hong Kong branch of the Society continued its lively and well supported programme of events, with over 80 talks, field visits and dinners during 2019.

In Singapore, the regional committee registered successfully with the authorities, enabling the committee to continue its popular programme of monthly events.

The Society further developed its relationship with the Bowers Museum, California, with the signing of a commercial agreement for a major loan of iconic artefacts relating to the exploration of Africa from the Society's Collections, with the exhibition to open in autumn of 2021.

In addition, the Society entered into an agreement with the United Arab Emirates National Archive to supply map, archive and image content from the Society's Middle Eastern collection under licence.

The Society's scholarly journals have a particular focus on developing authors and audiences from overseas.

5 Enhancing our membership

An important source of expertise, funding and enthusiasm

Objective Reach and engage new supporters and retain the enthusiasm and expertise of existing Fellows and members, across the UK and beyond, ensuring a strong and growing membership of both professionals and enthusiasts who support our activities.

Context The Society benefits from its Fellows' and members' knowledge, enthusiasm, time, contacts, and their subscriptions which provide around a quarter of the Society's gross income. The Society especially values its many loyal Fellows who are long term supporters. To continue to develop sustainably, the continuing high retention and good recruitment of Fellows and members is essential.

Membership is fundamental to the Society and the breadth of the membership is a core strength of the organisation. Every Fellow and member contributes to the Society's influence and every subscription supports the Society's charitable work in championing geography, inspiring the next generation and disseminating geographical knowledge.

5.1 Continuing to improve engagement and communication with members

As part of a wider realignment of posts within the Communications team, the post of Membership Communications Officer was created. This post has responsibility for ensuring that the Society understands as much about our members and their needs as possible, as well as how best to communicate with them. In 2019, this included articulating better the benefits of Fellowship for professional geographers and working with partners to reach potential new Fellows.

During 2019 the Society was able to offer several unique opportunities to Fellows and members. In November, Fellows and members were invited to take part in an intergenerational debate on sustainability issues hosted in the House of Lords. And in the run up to the general election, the Society hosted a recording of BBC Radio 4's *The World Tonight* programme which featured a discussion about climate change with panellists from each of the major parties. Fellows and members were invited to attend the recording and submit questions to the panellists.

Improvements were made to the Society pages of *Geographical* magazine, which is published under contract by Syon Publishing. While Syon retains editorial control over the magazine's content, the Society has an excellent relationship with the editorial team and has worked closely with them to reduce the incidence of errors and increase the proportion of articles related to Society activities.

Fellows and members taking part in a sustainability debate in the House of Lords

© Roger Harris



5.2 **Enhancing recruitment and retention**

Retention rates remained high during 2019, at 85% overall and 92% for Fellowship.

The Geography Teacher Training Scholarship scheme provided Postgraduate Fellowship for 139 Scholars, as well as membership of the Geographical Association.

School Membership remained steady at 500.

Professional accreditation charges were reviewed during the year, leading to the first increase in the fees charged since the introduction of CGeog over 15 years ago. Despite this, the fastest growing section of our membership is geographers joining as Fellows to gain accreditation and professional recognition.

5.3 **Learning more about our members and their engagement with the Society**

Due to staff changes in the Communications team, the planned membership survey did not take place during 2019 and was rescheduled for early 2020.

6 Securing the future

As one of the world's largest and most active scholarly geographical societies

Objective Enable a robust future for the Society, by increasing income sustainably, using technology effectively, and enhancing staff capabilities.

Context The Society is an independent body and, like other learned and professional societies, receives no core government funding. Annual income has more than doubled in real terms since 1996, and substantial external donations have been attracted. The current UK setting places greater uncertainty on growing income over 2017-2021. We are thus aiming for modest, sustainable growth in core funding from subscriptions, enterprise, operations, and corporate support; plus fundraising success for new projects and the endowment.

2019 marked the mid-point in the Society's current strategic period, and a review of activity against the strategic plan showed the Society to be making good progress against its objectives. The focus on developing the Society's role as a professional body continued to be a priority without compromising the breadth of scope and broad balance of its charitable activities. During the year, the Society also continued to invest in staff training and development.

The Society ended 2019 with a small operating surplus on the General Fund. This was made possible by the continuance of key income streams including membership subscriptions, Enterprise Company net revenues and charitable operations. The financial review (pages 24/25) sets out how the Society generated its income and how its expenditure supported its charitable activities.

The Society became entitled to an endowment of £5.58m from the estate of Esmond Bradley Martin, to be used, from 2020 onwards for an award.

During 2019 there were several targeted fundraising efforts, including a successful bid to the Flotilla Foundation for £80,000 to develop and extend the educational resources linked to the Weddell Sea Expedition in 2020. And in December, the Department for Education confirmed an award of £52,000 for a geography and core maths project as part of the Advanced Maths Support Programme.

The Society renewed its Corporate Business Member agreement with Silversea for a further three year contract providing enrichment resources for passengers based on its historic Collections. And in early autumn, a Fundraising Executive was appointed to support the Society's fundraising efforts and to steward our Corporate Benefactors.

A promotional evening, with a focus on the updated audio visual equipment in the Ondaatje Theatre, was held in November to showcase Lowther Lodge to new and prospective hirers. Initial indications were that the event successfully generated new business.

In 2019, the Society's contract with the human resources consultancy, HRSP, paid dividends as work was progressed in several areas including an improved induction process for new staff, a new staff handbook, and the introduction of new contracts for new starters. HRSP also supported members of staff with their recruitment needs.

All statutory reporting requirements were met.

The Society thanks everyone who has generously donated in support of our work.

Corporate Benefactors in 2019

Environmental Resources Management (ERM) supported the Society's core work with professional audiences, specifically to enhance teachers' fieldwork leadership skills and to enable a regional programme of cross sector networking and professional development.

Esri UK supported the Society's Geography Ambassador programme and brought GIS expertise to it and to the training of teachers in the classroom use of GIS. Ambassadors inspired more than 30,000 young people in 2019 with geography and GIS.

Jaguar Land Rover supported our core expedition and fieldwork training activities, including the loan of a Land Rover Discovery to facilitate UK-wide visits, and the Land Rover Bursary to support one major field expedition during the year.

Ordnance Survey supported the Society's work to advance geospatial understanding by raising awareness of career opportunities, engaging with professional communities and promoting understanding in policy and government.

Rolex supported our core work with and through the Society's large, unique and iconic collections of maps, photographs, books, documents and objects, helping to underpin public access, conservation and new uses for, and users of, the Collections.

Trailfinders supported the Society's core work with the public, to inspire and promote the wider relevance and enjoyment of geography and to foster a greater understanding of our world. This builds on a shared common interest in informed travel.

Corporate Business Member

Silversea engaged the Society to provide informative materials on their expedition cruise ships.



The Society's Grants Programme is generously supported by

20th IGC Fund
30th IGC Fund
Alasdair Macdonald
Albert Reckitt Award
John and Anne Alexander
Dudley Stamp Memorial Award Fund
Edinburgh Trust
Frederick Soddy Award Fund
Geographical Club
Henrietta Hutton Memorial Fund
Hong Kong branch
HR Mill Trust Fund
The Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust
John Pilkington
Monica Cole Bequest
Paul and Mary Slawson
Neil Thomas Prothro
Neville Shulman, CBE
Ralph Brown Memorial Fund
Ray Y Gildea Jr Award
Rio Tinto
SUN Institute Environment & Economics
The Late Sultan of Oman
Violet Cressy-Marcks Fisher Trust Fund
Walters Kundert Charitable Trust

Other donors during 2019

Anonymous donors
Department for Education
Estate of Eric Brown
Sir Ranulph Fiennes OBE
Estate of Jennifer Fry
Flotilla Foundation / Weddell Sea Expedition
Dr and Mrs David Giles
Department for International Development
The Nuffield Foundation
SUN Institute Environment & Economics

Financial review

The summarised financial statements for 2019 on the following page provide an overview of the Society's balance sheet assets, liabilities and funds, together with its income and expenditure by activity.

In 2019, the Society's annual operating result on the General Fund, after transfers between funds, but before investment and pension valuations gains/losses was a surplus of £0.07m (2018: £0.31m). This was on the total General Fund income of £4.86m (2018: £5.03m) and was below the budget for the year. The total Society income was up 79.2% at £11.06m (2018: up 10% to £6.17m) largely owing to donations and legacy income being higher in 2019 (£5.84m) than in 2018 (£0.84m) as a result of endowments from the estate of Esmond Bradley Martin totalling £5.58m. The expenditure on charitable activities hardly changed at £4.34m (2018: £4.39m), which equates to 81% of total expenditure.

The broad patterns of other income and expenditure in the General Fund remained similar in 2019 to 2018. Gross income, expenditure and profit in RGS Enterprises in the year were all down approximately 10% on 2018 at £1.72m (2018: £1.92m), £0.75m (2018: £0.82m) and £0.98m (2018: £1.10m), respectively. Membership income in 2019 fell by £0.04m to £1.68m and generated £0.98m net after costs of membership services. Income from charitable activities increased by £0.01m to £1.11m. Proportional income is summarised in the first pie chart.

General Fund expenditure as a whole increased in 2019 by 2%. 2019 total costs, at £5.37m, were slightly below 2018 (£5.47m). The Society's expenditure on charitable activities reduced in 2019 by £0.05m, down 1% on 2018, to £4.34m. Of the total, 6% was from restricted (donated project and grants) funds, with almost all the remainder from the General Fund. Expenditure across the main areas of charitable activity showed some year on year variations, resulting largely from differing levels of conference and project activity, with spend on Research and Higher Education up and on Policy and Public Engagement down, the latter due to reduced project expenditure on the Discovering Britain project. Expenditure on Education and Outdoor Learning, Information Services and Resources, and Membership Services remained similar to 2018. The second pie chart shows expenditure by activity (with the effects of depreciation removed).

There was no concerted fundraising work in 2019. Significant progress was made in developing fundraising objectives and strategy and a new Development and Fundraising Executive was appointed in the latter part of the year. During the year the Society became entitled to two endowments from the estate of Esmond Bradley Martin, being the Esmond B Martin Royal Geographical Society Prize Fund (\$7.00m) and the Pachyderm Journal Fund (\$0.40m).

The summary consolidated balance sheet shows net assets increasing by £6.70m (2018: £0.01m), excluding the change in the liability of the defined benefit pension

scheme as calculated annually for FRS102. This liability remained at £Nil (2018: £Nil). The Society's actual, legal, obligation to funding the scheme is determined by the triennial actuarial valuation, the last one being at June 2017. The Society's calculated Free Reserves at 31 December 2019 were £2.94m (2018: £2.97m).

Independent auditor's statement to the Trustees of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)

We have examined the summarised financial statements of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for the year ended 31 December 2019 set out on page 25.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the auditor

The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full annual financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Report.

We also read the other information contained in the summarised Annual Report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements. The other information comprises only the Annual Report.

We conducted our work in accordance with our engagement letter dated 19 December 2018.

Opinion In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full annual financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Report of Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for the year ended 31 December 2019.

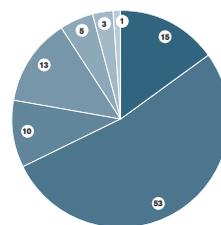
RSM UK Audit LLP Statutory Auditor, April 2020.
The Pinnacle, 170 Midsummer Boulevard,
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK9 1BP

Consolidated Balance Sheet

	ENDOWMENT	RESTRICTED	DESIGNATED Research & New Initiatives	DESIGNATED Other	GENERAL	TOTALS 31.12.2019
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets	•	4,155	•	139	1,388	5,682
Investments	•	4,635	2,386	1,912	3,412	12,345
Current assets	5,581	40	•	•	3,432	9,053
Current liabilities	•	•	•	•	-1,301	-1,301
Inter-fund accounts	•	542	433	2,259	-3,234	•
Net assets	5,581	9,372	2,819	4,310	3,697	25,779
Funds balances 31.12.19	5,581	9,372	2,819	4,310	3,697	25,779
Funds balances 31.12.18	•	8,938	2,546	4,129	3,465	19,078
2019 net Funds movement	5,581	434	273	181	232	6,701

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities

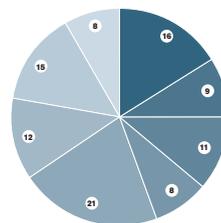
Incoming resources (see right for analysis by sources)	5,581	364	85	168	4,860	11,058
Resources expended (see right for analysis by activity)	•	-299	-30	-27	-5,011	-5,367
Net investment gain	•	434	236	174	264	1,108
Surplus before transfers	5,581	499	291	315	113	6,799
Transfers between funds	•	-65	-18	-134	217	•
Surplus after transfers	5,581	434	273	181	330	6,799
FRS102 actuarial gain on pension scheme	•	•	•	•	-98	-98
	5,581	434	273	181	232	6,701



£11.06m income by source

2018: £6.17m

- 15% Membership subscriptions
- 53% Donations, grants, appeals and endowments
- 10% Income generated by charitable activities
- 13% RGS Enterprises turnover
- 5% Investment income
- 3% Corporate supporters
- 1% Tenants
- 0% Services provided



£5.18m expenditure by activity

Excluding depreciation of £0.19m

2018: £5.13m (£0.34m)

- 16% Education, expeditions, fieldwork, grants
- 9% Engaging wider audiences
- 11% Information services & resources
- 8% Policy, communications, media
- 21% Research, higher education, grants
- 12% Membership services
- 15% RGS Enterprises costs
- 8% Other, including governance

Governance

The Society is governed by its Council which largely comprises Fellows elected from and by the Fellowship. They are drawn from the main areas of activity of the Society. There are 21 elected Council members and up to four further Council members may be co-opted, including a postgraduate representative, to bring further breadth, expertise and contact networks.

In line with recommendations of good practice by the Charity Commission, the Council identifies the skills and expertise gaps that would be most helpful to fill in the elections to the Council each June. Fellows standing for election are encouraged to state how they met those identified gaps. However, this approach does not preclude any Fellow standing for election to positions relevant to their background. The Council is also cognisant of the value of diversity, while seeking to attract the most appropriately qualified people to guide the Society's governance.

Council positions are elected for a single term of three years at the Annual General Meeting, which includes a postal vote of the Fellowship. Elected Council members also serve on the appropriate Committee of Council to provide liaison between the two levels.

The Council met, as usual, three times in 2019 and attendance averaged 76% across all three meetings. The Executive Committee, which comprises the senior Trustees, met in the intervening periods as the need arose.

The following Council members were in office at the end of 2019

President

Rt Hon Baroness Lynda Chalker of Wallasey

Immediate Past President

Nicholas Crane

Vice Presidents

David Atkinson
(Education)

Professor Alison Blunt
(Research and Higher Education)

Professor Katie Willis
(Expeditions and Fieldwork)

Honorary Treasurer

Mark Humphreys

Chair of Annual Conference 2019

Professor Hester Parr

Honorary Secretaries

Grace Healy
(Education)

Robert Lucas
(Expeditions and Fieldwork)

Dr Nicola Thomas
(Research and Higher Education)

Ordinary Members of Council

Claire Allen
Robin Ashcroft
Professor Michael Bradshaw
Professor Joanna Bullard

Joanna Coles
Professor Klaus Dodds
Caitlin Hafferty
Dr Vanessa Lawrence CB
Dr Melanie Norman
Chris Speight
Hugh Thomson
Professor Jamie Woodward

The following also served as Council Members until June 2019:

Felicity Aston MBE
Professor Paul Milbourne
Professor Chris Philo
David Pyle
Professor Adrian Smith
Laura Stone
Nina Willment

The Council is advised by specialist committees for Education; Expeditions and Fieldwork; Finance; and Research and Higher Education. Attendance at these committee meetings averaged 70% across the year. The Finance Committee met four times, as usual, and comprises a core membership of accounting, financial, legal and investment professionals. The other committees met twice, as usual, to give advice on their areas of expertise. In addition, advice was provided by the Regions Committee, a small number of specialist sub-committees, including one for investments and, where appropriate, individual professional advisors. RGS Enterprises Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Society, is governed by its Enterprise Board.

Staff

The Director reports to the Council and has responsibility for coordinating the Society's strategy and running the Society and its activities, assisted by a senior team of five departmental heads and a staff that numbered 52 in December 2019. All staff members are based at the Society's headquarters in Kensington, London.

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Looking ahead

Professor Joe Smith

Living in a period of considerable political and economic uncertainty poses very real challenges to the Society. We are an international organisation with members in over 100 countries and millions of people engage with our work each year. However all of our income sources are discretionary, meaning we must continue to make our case convincingly, whether to Fellows and members, individual and insitutional, or commercial partners.

It is already clear there will be significant disruption to the work of the Society during 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak that occurred as this *Annual Review* was being written. The Society was quick to move to a working from home approach with all staff operating remotely the day following the Government's advice to work from home where possible. Many, if not all, of the Society's income streams will be affected by the outbreak and we are reworking our plans for the coming year to ensure we mitigate the financial impact at the same time as we deliver against the 2017-2021 strategy in the most appropriate way, given the current COVID-19 control measures. Further information can be found in the full financial statements.

On a more positive note, in the second half of 2020, I will be starting to work with the Society's trustees and a wide body of stakeholders to develop our strategic plan for a new context. How can we ensure that we make the most of the opportunities in front of us, and meet our responsibilities to the full? And how will we keep making a real difference? There will be opportunities for all our Fellows and members to contribute to the strategic planning process, but a couple of things are clear to me already.

In order to make Lowther Lodge a sustainable home for geography and geographers, we need to undertake significant remedial works. Much of this, including renewal of the south façade of the building and improvements to staff working conditions, is already scheduled. However, we have the opportunity to do much more than simply fix the problems.

I want to improve accessibility, both physically and metaphorically, to the building. We have a chance to dramatically reduce running costs and to make it a model building of its kind in terms of environmental sustainability. I want to enable greater engagement with contemporary geography and

enhance our venue hire offer. All of this will give us a building that will serve our needs better, tell a stronger story for geography, and make us more financially secure for the long term. However it will take investment, hence during 2020 we will be laying the foundations of a substantial fundraising initiative that will enable us to fulfil our ambitions.

As a membership organisation, we need to continue to value our Fellows and members, ensuring that everyone feels welcome. To this end, in 2020 we will be revisiting how we present our many activities outside of London and how we articulate the benefits of Fellowship to professional geographers.

One very important way to serve Fellows and members better, and to demonstrate the value of the Society and of geography more widely, is through the media. We will be expanding our work with media partners in the year ahead, but you will also start to see the benefits of investment and redesign in terms of our own communications equipment and team since the world needs to hear geographical ideas and debates now more than ever.

Recognising excellence in 2019

The Society's Medals and Awards have recognised excellence in the breadth of geographical research, practice and public promotion since the foundation of the Society in 1830.

The two Royal Medals (The Founder's and Patron's Medals) are among the highest international accolades. They are awarded for 'the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery'.

In 2019 Her Majesty the Queen approved the award of the Royal Medals as follows

Founder's Medal

Professor Trevor Barnes

'for sustained excellence and pioneering developments in the field of economic geography'

Patron's Medal

Dame Fiona Reynolds

'for her contribution to environmental protection, conservation and the preservation of the British landscape'

The following awards were presented at the Society's medals and awards ceremony

Victoria Medal

Professor David Thomas

'for world leading research into dryland environments and societies'

Busk Medal

Dr Ayona Datta

'for contribution to the understanding of smart cities through fieldwork'

Cherry Kearton Medal & Award

Tacita Dean

'for artwork that encourages reflection on changing landscapes'

Murchison Award

Professor Mark Birkin

'for pioneering work on the development and application of urban analytics'

Back Award

Professor Frank Tanser

'for research that has shaped national health policies in developing countries'

Cuthbert Peek Award

Paul Knight – Missing Maps

'for advancing geographical knowledge through mapping in remote areas, with the application of contemporary methods'

Gill Memorial Award

Dr Gemma Catney

'for outstanding early career research in human geography'

Ordnance Survey Awards (two awards)

Jennifer Monk

Rob Chambers

'for excellence in geography education at secondary level'

Taylor & Francis Award

Dr Jennifer Hill

'for sustained contributions to teaching and learning in higher education'

Ness Award

Dervla Murphy

'for the popularisation of geography through travel literature'

Alfred Steers Dissertation Prize

Fumika Azuma

'for the undergraduate geography dissertation judged to be the best in 2018'

Area Prize

Dr Simon Dixon

'for the best article in the journal by a new researcher'

Fordham Award

Rebecca Solnit

'for distinguished contributions to the field of cartobibliography'

Geographical Award

Mark Evans – Outward Bound Oman

'for encouraging young people from all walks of life to explore the Middle East'

Ron Cooke Award

Gregory Pearson

'for his A Level Independent Investigation'

Geography in Government Award

The Geography Spatial Analysts Team at the Office for National Statistics

'for work undertaken for the United Nations World Data Forum on Sustainable Development Goals'

Honorary Fellowship

Alexander Maitland

Sir David Hempleman-Adams

Carol Beckwith

Angela Fisher

'in recognition of outstanding support for the Society and Geography'

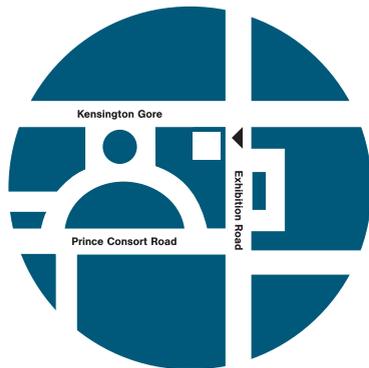
The Society further recognised excellence through the Young Geographer of the Year Awards, the Rex Walford Award to recognise newly qualified teachers, and the Excellence Awards made to pupils who achieved the highest marks in GCSE, A Level and International Baccalaureate examinations in Geography.

This report summarises the Society's charitable activities and finances in 2019 in pursuit of its objective to 'advance geographical science'. The Society's work is guided by its current strategy and benefits a wide range of professional and public audiences. The Society is a vibrant organisation that seeks to balance its stakeholders and activities for the benefit of all our users and of geography. The full annual accounts and report can be found on our website and that of the Charity Commission.

If you would like to receive a copy of this report in PDF so that it can be read in larger print or using Adobe Reader software, please visit

 www.rgs.org/annualreview

Registered Charity 208791



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Acknowledgements

Front cover

Journey of a Lifetime 2019 recipient Redzi Bernard © Redzi Bernard

Page 1

Rt Hon Baroness Lynda Chalker of Wallasey, RGS-IBG President © Fabio Burrelli

Page 3

Professor Joe Smith, RGS-IBG Director © RGS-IBG

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Research and Higher Education

Delegates discussing the 2019 Annual International Conference programme © Panel 8 Photography

The Society's journals stand at the 2019 Annual International Conference © Panel 8 Photography

Fieldwork and Expeditions

2019 Geographical Club Award recipient Kwame Awuah carrying out fieldwork in South Africa © Kwame Awuah

Explore 2019 delegates © RGS-IBG

Education

One of 100 career profiles on our website: GIS Officer Heather Bell © Heather Bell

2019 Young Geographers of the Year © Panel 8 Photography

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Policy and professional

Taking notes © Panel 8 Photography

Newly accredited Chartered Geographer James Riley © James Riley

Public Engagement and Collections

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