

ECSITE-UK COMMITTEE MEETING
7 May 2003, W5, Belfast, 11.30-15.45

Present: Colin Johnson (CJ), Melanie Quin (MQ), Linda Conlon, John Durant, Roland Jackson, Paul Jennings, Sally Montgomery

1 Apologies

Tristram Besterman, Gail Bromley, Stuart Monro, Gillian Pearson, Ian Simmons

2 Minutes of meeting held on 3 February 2003

Minutes were approved.

3 Matters arising not covered below, or already superseded

▪ RDA activities

The 2 May e-News carried an item on RDA priorities/objectives, and possible opportunities for science centres (<http://www.ecsite-uk.net/news> and click on: Read ECSITE-UK e-news May 2003 >)

- **All Committee Members** to supply to MQ outline information of the regional programmes/initiatives in which they are involved.

4 Executive Director's report

▪ e-newsletter and website

Reports from Rachel Fenton, Admin Manager, and Martin Glancy, Webmaster, had been circulated
Thanks to both are recorded.

- For 2004, **Rachel Fenton** to investigate a reduced fee for early payers.

▪ Activities

sciZmic

Funding secured from Planet Science extends *sciZmic's* operation from four to eight English SDCs (At-Bristol; Centre for Life, Newcastle; Green's Mill, Nottingham; Inspire, Norwich; Kelham Island Industrial Museum, Sheffield; London Wetlands Centre; National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth; Observatory science centre, Herstmonceux), and to end August 2003

Additional funding has been secured from the Royal Society of Chemistry, the British National Space Centre, and Girlguiding UK to support events at regional and national level, and in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and from Aventis to run the Aventis book prizes junior judging panel

Grant applications have been submitted to Wellcome/EngagingScience, and to IBM/TryScience.

Meet the Scientist

The EPSRC has awarded continuation funding to roll out the programme with two English partners and one each in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In response to the email 'ECSITE-UK project seeks 4 partners', expressions of interest were received from

1. *Scottish consortium (Sensation, Royal Observatory Edinburgh, Our Dynamic Earth), with the training element hosted at Our Dynamic Earth*
2. *W5, Belfast*

3. *Life, Oxford Trust, Inspire, National Space Centre*

(1) and (2) were approved. For England, the Oxford Trust and National Space Centre bids were approved, since Life and Inspire are already partners in a collaborative project (viz sciZmic).

- **MQ** to inform successful partners, and progress the programme with EPSRC and training partners Graphic Science

▪ **Advocacy**

Government lobbying

As reported in notes to the Agenda,

- the Ministers (DfES, DCMS, OST) are due to meet in May, to pin down what support (if any) can be provided, for which millennium centres
 - we have secured a date for a small meeting with Charles Clarke, DfES, 11 June
- **MQ** to meet Kirsty Pearce (our new DfES civil servant) after the ministers' meeting, to inform discussion with Charles Clarke. Also to ask if we can see the reports prepared by consultants for the ministers' meeting – they have been produced at no little cost (in senior management time) to the 15 centres involved
 - **MQ/CJ** to draft a one-page 'script' for the Charles Clarke meeting, to be commented by all Committee members and submitted to the Secretary of State as a pre-meeting brief. This is to ask for 'stabilisation' for millennium centres on the lines indicated in Margaret Hodge's letter (Feb.2003); ask for specific funding streams for all SDCs, contingent on delivery of agreed educational goals; ask for continued dialogue with Government to identify targets/revenue streams for SDCs to support the formal education sector, and to support delivery of the government's Science and Society agenda.

BA/OST 'Science and Society' consultation

OST now welcomes responses to the BA report from all interested individuals or organisations. The 12-week public consultation period ends 30 June,

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/ost/ostbusiness/puset/association.htm>

- **MQ** to respond to the OST's response to the BA report – identifying ECSITE-UK as a network worthy of support, and as a partner in running the 'Annual providers' conference/forum'
- **Committee members** to reply on behalf of their own institutions, and as members of ECSITE-UK – this raises the profile of the institution and of the network.

5 Treasurer's report

Paul Jennings (Treasurer) commented:

- variance in expenditure is due to under-spend to date, and not to real saving
- OST and Wellcome were invoiced in the second week of April, for the quarter ending 31 March, so balancing income and expenditure
- The £10k expenditure on subcontractors was queried. Upon investigation, this represents expenditure on both core-costs contractors and sciZmic-project contractors. Expenditure on core-costs contractors alone is £990 for the quarter to end March, compared to a budget estimate of £3000 for the quarter.

6 Strategic review & long-term sustainability strategy

Further to discussion at February Committee meeting, and with our OST and Wellcome Trust 'paymasters', independent consultants (PSP) were engaged to research and draft a Future Funding Strategy.

Three broad conclusions emerge:

1. Fundraising sector-wide appears to be – and should not be – ECSITE-UK's prime function
 2. Advocacy is important, but the begging-bowl approach to be avoided at all costs
 3. Delivering tangible benefits to members – networking services and project brokering/bidding – is the key to long-term sustainability and member approval.
- **MQ/CJ** to have a final debrief meeting with the PSP consultants
The document as is to be filed "*in confidence*", as a draft "*in consultation with*"
 - **MQ** to circulate a Questionnaire to Members, to seek priority-ranking of ECSITE-UK's activities, and expressions of approval/appreciation of specific benefits
 - **Rachel Fenton (Admin.Manager)** to investigate reasons for late payment – or non-payment – of membership fees
 - **Linda** to advise on approaches to national sponsors for projects of nationwide reach.

7 Reports from Committee Members on devolved tasks; allocation of next tasks as appropriate

Paul Jennings' proposed Membership Scheme

The scheme's aim is not to increase visitor numbers per se, but to raise the public's brand awareness of SDCs

- **Paul** to progress the scheme, with input from **John, Linda, Roland**.

Gail Bromley's (BGEN) approach to soliciting/collating statements from CEOs of ECSITE-UK's value and usefulness

In 1992, letters to all Britain's listed Botanic Gardens/Arboreta invited their directors to endorse a 4-bullet-point mission statement

- **MQ** to draft a letter and mission statement on this model – for comment/approval by the **Committee**
- **MQ** then to send this letter to all SDCs, in conjunction with the Questionnaire to Members (see 6 above).

8 Chair's business

- **BIG event** 10-12 July at the Observatory, Herstmonceux
The session convened by ECSITE-UK will be held 11.30-12.30 on Thursday 10th, immediately before a keynote by Charles Clarke. The session will
 1. Report on Projects (Meet the Scientist; SciZmic)
 2. Report on meetings with DfES, to spawn audience questions later to Chas Clarke
 3. Address 'where we go from here' – ECSITE-UK's strategic review and new Chair
- **ECSITE-UK AGM**, 12 September at the BA Festival, Salford – Committee succession
CJ nominated John as successor to the Chair, and invited other nominations from the Committee. With the election of Paul and Stuart in 2002, and Jonathan Bryant's departure from Thinktank, two or three Committee members are due to stand down/be replaced in September 2003
 - **CJ** to write to the full Committee inviting their nominations for the Chair, and their expressions of interest in continuing or standing down.

9 Any other business

▪ **BBC**

Through by eight SDCs' hosting of the BBC Life of Mammals exhibition, ECSITE-UK is developing a relationship with the BBC

- **MQ** to pursue the relationship with the BBC: SDCs should act in concert, with brokering by the SavileRow office, to mutual benefit.

▪ **Gift Aid**

Mike Nangle, W5 auditor, outlined the implications of the recent relaxation of gift-aid rules. It is now possible to convert admission fees to gift aid donations under specific conditions. From a £10 ticket, £1 might be allocated to admission (to preserve the VAT situation), and £9 to gift aid – 22% of this can be claimed back from the Inland Revenue. Currently, the rule is applicable only to 'heritage properties' and 'wildlife' – SDCs are not specifically excluded, but the legislation dates back 20 years, before the first SDCs in the UK. It might be possible to rectify this apparent anomaly in Treasury rules by a class act: a consolidated submission from the members of ECSITE-UK to the Inland Revenue.

- **Mike Nangle** to advise Sally on an appropriate plan of action, with costs and schedule for taking this forward
- **ECSITE-UK members** would be required to make a specific payment for this work. It cannot be funded from ECSITE-UK core office costs.

10 Dates and locations of meetings through 2003

Committee meeting during the BIG annual event, *Herstmonceux – morning of 11th July/afternoon of 10th*

AGM during the BA festival, *Salford – morning of 12th September* at the Manchester Museum
Full Committee meeting *13 October – 11.30am-3.30pm At-Bristol*