

ECSITE-UK COMMITTEE MEETING

10 July 2003, Observatory Science Centre, Herstmonceux, 14.30-17.30

Present: Colin Johnson (CJ), Melanie Quin (MQ), Gail Bromley, Linda Conlon, Stuart Monro, Gillian Pearson, Ian Simmons

1 Apologies

Tristram Besterman, John Durant, Roland Jackson, Paul Jennings, Sally Montgomery

2 Minutes of meeting held on 7 May 2003

Minutes were approved.

3 Matters arising not covered below, or already superseded

▪ Gift Aid

Mike Nangle was to advise Sally Montgomery on an appropriate plan of action, with costs and schedule for taking this forward. He has been busy with W5's audit, so has been prevented from doing so yet.

- In advance of the October Committee Meeting, if possible, a document to be circulated c/o **Sally**.

4 Executive Director's report

▪ Advocacy

Charles Clarke meeting

Committee members have already received CJ's feedback email following the 11 June meeting. In summary: The DfES – we were told – has some difficulty in assessing the severity and the urgency of the revenue funding problem, since the information received from different sources is not consistent. We have agreed to work quickly with the Department in a further attempt to resolve this issue, in order that proper consideration can be given to what may be needed. This will be dealt with by the Executive Director and (in the first instance) At-Bristol as a representative Millennium Centre. A meeting seeking to achieve a clear, shared understanding of the situation will be held on 16 July.

Funding Proposals to be developed for DfES

Also at the 11 June meeting with Charles Clarke, ECSITE-UK was invited to work with the Department to assemble "a set of proposals with a variety of structures and patterns of delivery" which could be considered for inclusion in their bid for the next Spending Review. Consultation with members has been put in train, and a consultation meeting will be held on 15 July at Techniquet.

- **MQ** to provide feedback from the 16 July DfES meeting to the SDCs that were reviewed in Autumn 2002, and from the 15 July meeting to the membership, also copying the Committee
- **MQ** to progress both advocacy issues, seeking a resolution of the millennium centres' funding difficulties "before the end of the year" – the Secretary of State's words.

▪ Activities

'**sciZmic**' Funding from Aventis enabled sciZmic to run the Aventis book prizes junior judging panel, involving almost 1000 youngsters aged 10-14 in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England

Funding has been secured from the Wellcome Trust for sciZmic to run 'Great Debate Days' for science club members at science centres. This funding is not restricted to England, so further partner SDCs are now being identified.

'**Meet the Scientist**' The communications skills workshop has been held at W5 with 'dialogue events' scheduled through the summer and autumn, including a careers evening and special

events for Chemistry Week. Three further workshops are to be held during September, in Edinburgh, Leicester and Oxford.

▪ **e-newsletter and membership subs paid**

e-newsletters continue to be issued monthly, to a growing list of subscribers.

As reported at the ECSITE (Europe) Board Meeting in Copenhagen, 13 June, 66% of members located in the UK have already paid their fees, as compared with 63% on the continent. Two associate members have this year upgraded to 'full membership': the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth, and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.

- The Committee congratulated Ian and Rachel on their marriage, and asked **Ian** and **MQ** to convey congratulations – and appreciation for continued hard work – to Rachel Fenton-Simmons.

5 **Treasurer's report**

Paul Jennings (Treasurer) had commented by email:

- Subscription is a **phasing** issue. We have to transfer 70% of subscription income to the Brussels office, and this has not yet been done for 2003
- The '**Subcontractors**' nominal introduces possible confusion. Subcontractors in KB (core office costs) are currently £1409 under budget. There is however a contractor spend also in KC (sciZmic) - totally unrelated to the KB subcontractors and funded by project-specific grants not by the core grants from OST and Wellcome.

Further, he requests a revision/clarification of the reporting of finances:

- The (3 year) financial plan shows no changes, other than in the end column. I feel it is important to see how this plan changes as it gives an indication of outturn. So, it would be useful to put in year-end, and 2003 actuals, delete figures in between, leaving of course the future numbers
- (Please) insert a line at the bottom of the 3-year financials to show cashflow – this would be the figure in the bank account at the start of the year, then adding or subtracting the profit / loss each month to give a snapshot of what's happening at the bank and give directors some confidence that we remain solvent.

- **MQ** and **John Gagg** (BA) to revise and clarify the reporting procedure.

6 **Long-term sustainability of ECSITE-UK**

This 'milestone' was set as a condition of the OST and Wellcome Trust grants to the network. The draft 'Future Funding Strategy' prepared by PSP (ref Belfast Committee Meeting) is useful, but does not offer a complete solution. OST civil servants now want evidence – in the form of a Strategic Development Plan – that networking activities will be self sustaining, as a condition of paying the current invoice. Discussion identified points of principle that should inform the drafting of the Plan:

- 'success' of advocacy work should be a measure of process (best efforts) rather than result (filthy lucre)
- it is a priority to lever funding, and deliver a sustainable sector, but this is a long-term not three-year target
- ECSITE-UK's value is (also) in raising the sector's profile nationally, providing a unified voice for SDCs, developing innovative/collaborative learning projects
- since its establishment, ECSITE-UK has levered £XXX into the sector; £YYY in-kind; and further input by acting as a point of reference, improving practice, providing information and advice to others (eg NNSLC consortia; British Council; National Trust; POST)
- currently Brussels receives 70% of members fees; we could consider keeping more than 30% as ECSITE-UK grows over the next 5 years
- as SDCs achieve financial stabilisation and strength, ECSITE-UK should develop a new income stream by charging them for specific bespoke services.

- **MQ** to draft revised aims of ECSITE-UK for email discussion by the committee

- **MQ** with **Rachel** to consult the broad membership on these revised aims, to inform the Strategic Development Plan
- **MQ** and **CJ** to submit a draft Plan for discussion with OST mid-August, and draft-2 informed by the consultation in mid-September.

7 AGM and BA annual festival

AGM: 12 September, Manchester Museum

Owing to Jonathan Bryant's departure from Thinktank, and Ian Simmons' from Inspire, two positions are open on the ECSITE-UK Committee.

- **MQ** to invite nominations, seeking a Committee Member to represent each of small science centres and museums.

BA annual festival: session on 11 September, Salford University

The ECSITE-UK session is convened and chaired by Lesley Glasser and MQ, entitled 'Sustainable science centres', 2-5pm Thursday 11th September, Salford University. The overall theme of this year's BA Festival is Sustainable Science – which requires a sustainable supply both of scientists and of science-literate citizens. The ECSITE-UK session will look at sustainability from three perspectives: the need for a sustainable supply of students to go into science; the need to raise awareness of the contribution of science and technology to quality of life and sustainable living; and the sustainable operations of the museums and science centres that inspire the scientists and citizens of tomorrow.

8 Any other business

Thanks to Committee members are recorded, for making hot, sticky, delayed journeys to and from Herstmonceux, and to Steve Pizzey for putting the 'observer's room' at our disposal.

9 Date and location of meetings through to March 2004

AGM at the BA festival, Manchester Museum, 12 September, 10.00 concluding with lunch

Committee Meetings

- *At-Bristol, 11.30-15.30 on 13th October*
- *RBG Kew, 11.30-15.30 on 9th December*
- *Our Dynamic Earth, 11.30-15.30 on 11th March*