

**The 182<sup>nd</sup> Committee Meeting of the British Biophysical Society, held from  
10.00 am – 1.00 pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021 online via Zoom**

## **Edited Minutes**

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Present:** Olwyn Byron (Chair), Tharin Blumenschein (Secretary), Ann Dixon (Treasurer), Guy Grant (Meetings Secretary), John Sanderson, Svetlana Antonyuk, Matthew Horrocks, Dave Scott, Mark Leake, Syma Khalid, Robin Leatherbarrow, Jayne Wallace, Tony Watts, Alice Pyne, Mark Wallace, John Seddon.

**1 Apologies:** Peter Crowley, Ehmke Pohl.

**2 Approval of Minutes of the 181<sup>st</sup> meeting**

Was not possible as the minutes hadn't been circulated.

**3 Actions and Matters Arising**

Actions are now kept in a live document online.

Mark W. and Ann will set up a 4<sup>th</sup> bank account to handle online payments.

**4 Chair's Report (Olwyn Byron)**

### **EPSRC**

Olwyn has been interacting with Luke Boldock (Portfolio Manager for Biophysics and Polymers at EPSRC) in her role as a member of the 4-person Programme Mid-Term Evaluation Board for the Building Collaboration at the Physics of Life Interface: Strategic Priority Fund Programme. Olwyn invited Luke to join us for this BBS committee meeting. He said he would have been delighted to do so but he and his wife were expecting the delivery of their child yesterday - so she let him off!

### **BBS bevvies (15 Dec 2020)**

Nice occasion. Thanks to those who turned up.

## BPS Ambassador

In response to a request from the BPS, Olwyn wrote an article at the end of 2020 offering a few thoughts on the year that has been and a look forward to the next, from a UK perspective.

## Biophysics Week 2021

Does anyone else have anything planned? The suspicion is that folks are too time poor for this. EBSA is planning to have an online seminar for Biophysics Week. Tony will be speaking virtually at the Balkan States Biophysical Society.

No progress has been made on the proposed BBS lecture series online - starting in Biophysics Week.

## New Biennial Prize for Outreach / Public Engagement

The committee agreed on the suggestions to name it after Elspeth Garman. Tony suggested Elspeth could be asked if she “knows of a way of endowing a PE Prize”. She is used to this, being at an Oxford College and a BBS prize winner.

**Action:** Olwyn to ask Elspeth if she’s willing to have the prize named after her

**Action:** Tony to ask Elspeth about suggestions for endowing it

## Committee structure and turnover

Feedback (not verbatim):

- The election of officers at the AGM was always for the Secretary, Treasurer and Meetings Secretary, with the Chair being elected at the next Committee meeting. The rules may have changed recently, and it would make sense to do them all at the AGM, but if not, you may want to formalise things at the next committee.

2017 AGM (Edinburgh) - all 4 officers were elected at the AGM.

2018 AGM (Southampton) - all 4 officers were elected at the AGM.

2019 AGM (Oxford) - Tony chaired - all 4 officers were elected at the AGM.

2020 AGM (Zoom) - all 4 officers were elected at the AGM.

So, it seems like we’ve already moved to electing all 4 at the AGM!

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## Treasurer’s Report (Ann Dixon)

1. **Balances:** The balance in the accounts remains healthy after the payments were done.
2. **Payments:** We are up-to-date on all submitted claims and payments.
3. **60th Anniversary Meeting:** all £6750 in prizes to John Christodoulou, Seamus Holden, Daniel Hurdiss and Giulia Paci have been paid and received (£5K covered from Sosei-Heptares fund and awaiting £250 from IUPAB for their Young Scientist Award). We paid £750 to STFC for Zoom and admin and received

£800 in sponsorship from Refeyn which nicely covered this cost.

4. **Yearly Audit for HMRC:** In progress – Ann has prepared all information for accountant to complete this on time this year.
5. **Membership:** Membership income has dropped slightly to £4769 (232 Members) in 20/21 from £5145 (251 Members) in 19/20. New bank account for membership fees will be prioritised after Ann submits accounts to HMRC. 91 members are still paying fees of £2-15.

## 6 **EBSA/IUPAB Activities** (John Seddon/Tony Watts)

**EBSA** –EBSA Congress, 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July 2021, in Vienna. All invited speakers have already confirmed their **on-site participation**. As planned, the meeting will be held as a hybrid conference. Sessions will be double-chaired to ensure a good mix between on-site and virtual participants. Breaks will be highly interactive with coffee & cake for on-site participants and attractive meeting rooms for virtual participants.

There will be **full flexibility** in choice between on-site and virtual participation. Participants can switch, at any time point before the conference starts, from on-site to virtual participation. Registration Fee will be adjusted accordingly, and any excess paid will be refunded.

**Vienna will provide a safe welcome.** They will be continuously monitoring COVID regulations of the different countries, and will adapt on-site safety measures accordingly.

- Bursary submission Deadline: 2<sup>nd</sup> April;
- New Abstract Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April;
- Deadline for Early Registration: 30<sup>th</sup> May.

**2021 Avanti/EBSA Award lecture:** Professor Elina Ikonen, Department of Anatomy, University of Helsinki, Finland for her work on lipid biophysics and lipid biology (<https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/persons/elina-ikonen> ).

**2021 EBSA Young Investigator Award lecture:** Dr. Yaser Hashem (INSERM, Université de Bordeaux). His research (<http://hashem-lab.fr/>) focuses on mRNA translation and ribosome function using cryo-EM and biomolecular simulations.

**IUPAB** – The IUPAB 2020 congress will now be virtual from Brazil, 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

IUPAB is now sponsoring lectures at meetings, and will sponsor a lecture at EBSA 2021 and BPS 2022. This is a possibility for future BBS meetings.

A new initiative (<http://iupab.org/sponsorship-policy/>) is the “ 7. Sponsorship of a prize for communications made by students or young biophysicists. This

prize could be obtained by undergraduates, Ph.D. students or postdocs with less than 3 years since obtention of a Ph.D. degree." BBS has benefitted from this award and should apply again for future meetings.

IUPAB held an extraordinary general assembly by email (no video meeting) to change the statutes to permit on line voting by email or some other on-line platform, and to restrict the role of Treasurer to a French person, since the charity and banking system is based in France. These changes were accepted by more than a quorum of respondents.

IUPAB has an obligation to hold a GA every 3 years and this will be in June 2021. The main business is (by popular vote, on-line in 2021, by nominated delegates from the adherent societies – Council members have no vote unless a delegate) to:

- elect a new President for 2024 - 2027 (vice-President, then President, then past-President; 3 x 3 years);
- elect a new Treasurer (who must be French to accommodate the banking system, based in France) – note, a candidate has been identified;
- elect about 1/3rd of the retiring 17 council members, and
- decide the location of the 2027 congress (2011, Beijing, 2013 Brisbane, 2017 Edinburgh, 2021 Brazil, 2024 Kyoto)

80 societies are adherent to IUPAB with voting rights varying from 0 (associate), 1, 2 or maximum 3 votes. The BBS represents the UK and has 2 votes. Representatives for the GA will be needed. It'd be good to elect a UK representative for Council.

IUPAB will hold an EGA at the virtual IUPAB congress, 4 – 8<sup>th</sup> October, to introduce the new council members and new vice-President to the congress. The current past-President (Z. Rao, China) will step down, the President elect (M. Prieto, PT) will become the new president, and the current President (M. Morales, BR) will assume the role of past President.

The IUPAB congress in June 2024 will be held in Kyoto.

## **7 IOP Activities (Mark Leake)**

Mark L. circulated the latest confirmed minutes of IoP BPG.

Another document was circulated for discussion, entitled "Towards a UK must-go biological physics meeting", which can be found as Appendix 1.

The discussion started with the philosophical question of why these communities developed outside the BBS.

The practical discussion is if we want to be involved. The meeting will happen anyway, so it is to our advantage to be involved. We discussed the possibility of having the meeting moved to 2024. This would be too late for PoLNET funding, but it'd allow us to merge our Biennial meeting with a big meeting in 2024, which could work very well.

## 8 **Physics of Life Network** (Olwyn Byron/Mark Leake)

### **Biophysics and evolution: improving models to predict influenza vaccine effectiveness**

Together with 3 University of Glasgow colleagues (Will Harvey, Ed Hutchinson and Richard Reeve), Olwyn organised a [PoLNET workshop on biophysics and evolution on 25 & 26 February](#). The workshop was online and hosted around 40 participants - the number was limited in order to preserve effective networking and discussion at the event. The reason for mentioning the workshop here is to encourage BBS committee members to apply to host a workshop or sandpit event. The application process is quick and easy and support from Karis Baker, the PoLNET administrator, is superb. For those interested, the talks can be viewed on the PoLNET YouTube channel.

### Upcoming events

There are none - COVID-19 has finally caught up with everyone!

### Other events

There was a PoLNET steering group meeting on 11 Nov and a Physics of Medicine SG meeting on 15 Dec.

### Building Collaboration at the Physics of Life Interface: **Strategic Priority Fund Programme**

All the meetings with grant holders have taken place and we are in the process of writing our report. Once the report is published, we expect the call for outline proposals for the second tranche of this SPF to be issued.

### Biological Physics “go to” meeting

Olwyn attended a meeting of in February to discuss this event. The vision is described in the document we discussed under agenda item 7. Olwyn is representing BBS at these discussions.

### Physics of Life Student Summer Bursaries 2021

PoLNET is offering summer bursaries to undergraduates interested in pursuing interdisciplinary research projects that combine physics and life sciences (biology and/or medicine). Students will be provided with a bursary of £260/week to cover their expenses during the studentship. [The application deadline is 19 April 2021](#). Applicants will be notified of outcomes by the end of May 2021. Supervisors and students from any UK based university/institution can apply.

## 9 **RSC Biophysical Chemistry Group Activities** (Mark Wallace/John Sanderson)

The RSC Biophysical Chemistry Group had stopped being active for a few years, with a new committee reviving it now. Mark Wallace attended their latest committee meeting, and Matthew Horrocks attended this committee meeting to represent the Biophysical Chemistry Group. Matthew found it very interesting to see the discussions that take place at BBS.

Matthew has been co-opted into the BBS committee to provide a stronger link with the Biophysical Chemistry Group. We should also consider cross-sponsored talks at future meetings.

A Faraday meeting is taking place soon, we'll aim to publicise it to our members.

**10 Royal Society of Biology Activities** (Tharin Blumenschein)

1) *Newsletters continue to be circulated to the committee.*  
Member Organisation and Policy newsletters are circulated.

2) *Royal Society of Biology Diversity and Inclusion group* – The DIWG has submitted a response to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM inquiry. The response contains presents recommendations to assist in creating a more diverse and inclusive environment for current and future STEM workers. The submitted response is available from the RSB website. Jayne has attended one meeting of the DIWG.

**11 Secretary's Report** (Tharin Blumenschein)

Nothing to report.

**12 Meetings Secretary's Report** (Guy Grant)

**2021**

*24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July, EBSA Congress, Vienna*

*Online meeting on condensates* – Dave is happy to organise it if he has a deputy

**Action:** Dave to consider

**2022**

*BBS Biennial Meeting, Ireland* – Peter and Guy have secured some funding for a meeting with over 100 attendees to hold the meeting in Galway.

They can also apply for support from IUPAB and EBSA.

A meeting in Ireland could appeal to American scientists as well, which could be interested in visiting Ireland.

**Action:** Peter to gather information about accommodation etc at NUI Galway

The committee is very happy for this idea to go ahead.

**Bursary eligibility**

Only PhD students and postdocs based in the UK are eligible. We should work out the rules in detail at the next committee meeting, when looking at the rules in general.

Guy will step down from the Meeting Secretary role, and transfer it to John Sanderson. The committee approved a large vote of thanks to Guy for his service and for steering John as he takes over the new role. Thanks for staying in the committee as Education Secretary, this will be an important role in the next few years.

**13 Newsgroup/Publicity Officer** (Syma Khalid/John Sanderson)

There are currently 1258 newsgroup members. The handover from John to the next committee member taking over will take place before the next committee meeting

**Action:** John Sanderson

**14 Website** (Mark Wallace)

Mark has figured out how to implement payments on the website, and is working on the details with Ann.

**15 Membership** (Ehmke Pohl)

Absent. However, topics relating to membership were covered under the Treasurer report and Newsgroup item.

**16 Irish Sub-section** (Peter Crowley)

Peter could not attend, however, the proposed joint BBS/Irish meeting was covered by Guy under Meeting Secretary's report.

**17 Honorary members**

Four honorary members have been suggested for 2021.

**Action:** Olwyn to contact suggested nominees

**18 Discussion of possible ways to engage the student community**

We should have a session organised by students at one of our meetings – suggestion for the BBS Biennial meeting in 2022.

We should also fund local travel for guest speakers to present at student-led activities. This should be as matched funding to the amount provided by the department. The limit for this used to be £150.

As most seminars are currently online, we could support online lectures. They shouldn't be the same lecture for different locations, as they can all be attended online, but different lectures in different "locations".

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**AOB**

The AGM will need to be organised for 2021. We may need an Extraordinary General Meeting to approve the new rules (to be discussed next meeting) in order to have an online AGM.

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**Date of Next Meeting**

The next committee meeting will be in June 2021, online. The date will be decided after a Doodle poll.

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## Appendix 1

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### Developing the UK “Must Go” biological physics/physics of life/biophysics meeting

**Context:** The UK community that operates at the interface between the physical and life sciences, fuelled by the past community building efforts from the UK Physics of Life Network (PoLNET), the Biological Physics Group (BPG) of the Institute of Physics (IoP), and the British Biophysical Society (BBS), has been successful in organising a range of small- to medium-sized conferences. These smaller scale meetings have synergised important activity in specific areas and have had significant impact. Larger meetings have also been organised previously by these communities, for example, the BPG flagship meeting “*Physics Meets Biology*”, and the BBS biennial meetings. However, despite the undoubted quality of these meetings, encouraging high attendance from the breadth of the UK community remains a challenge. The successful collaboration between BBS and BPG in organising the joint IUPAB / EBSA Congress in Edinburgh in 2017 shows the potential for joint action.

Currently, there is no UK meeting at which attendance of the biological physics community is consistently high: senior PIs tend to only attend meetings to which they have been invited. Likewise, there is buy-in from life science groups working on topics with significant overlap only when they are invited. The closest we have to such larger-scale meetings (the Physics Meets Biology conference and the Cambridge/French “*Physics of Living Matter*” [PLM] meeting) have not attained this status and are still comparatively small-scale. Equally, attendance from leading figures in the biological physics community at the BBS biennial meetings could be improved. The lack of a large and high-quality meeting that covers our common ground may be holding us back: such a large-scale meeting, as we propose here, could act as a showcase of our work to funders and to an audience of leading life and physical scientists, as well as to cement the community together.

In a post-COVID-19 world, centralising several aspects of community involvement may also make sense, thereby minimising overall travel.

**Proposal:** The idea is therefore to organise a “big” meeting to make a statement that this is a field which deserves to be taken seriously and which is here to stay. The meeting would include keynote, plenary talks as well as up to 3 parallel sessions. Ideally it would be held every 2 or 3 years after the initial meeting. An aim would be that this meeting would serve as a genuine national focus at the physical-life sciences interface as well as drawing in significant international interest, with a secondary aim that it may serve to mitigate against the dangers of fragmentation of meetings in this area.

**Community buy-in:** Such a meeting will need very careful and sympathetic preparation to ensure unfettered buy-in from all parts of the community that operate at the physical-life sciences interface. To be successful, many other normally stand-alone meetings may need to become sessions within the overall meeting, although we do not want this to be taken as a signal for “business as usual”; each session will need to face outwards to broaden its traditional audience. Buy-in will be needed in particular from BBS and *Physics of Living Matter* organisers, this is absolutely crucial. Different communities have been well-served by an array of fantastic meetings organised by members of these communities. What we seek here is to strengthen all of our activities in this area through a big meeting that may allow us to focus on areas where there is broad and common ground.

Other relevant learned societies, for example the Royal Microscopical Society (RMS) and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), will need to be aware of our plans, and we should aim to encourage their buy-in at a sponsor session level (to avoid being swamped by a much bigger community). In particular, given the size and significant scope of the new and developing “Physics of Medicine” communities, a similar approach might be adopted for engaging with clinically-facing research. A successful precedent was set for a big multi-societal sponsored meeting by the EBSA/IUPAB 2017 Congress.

**Date, venue, size:** To be able to qualify for PoLNET funding, the meeting will need to be held by Spring 2023. A possible date would therefore be around Easter 2023. Based on previous experience, holding the meeting in Edinburgh is a possibility, an attractive destination which might help to attract international speakers. The meeting could be 3? days in duration. Holding it in 2023 also avoids clashing with some but not all competing conference series, for instance the next BBS Biennial Meeting is scheduled for 2022. Size: lower limit 150, plan for 350, upper limit 500? Possibly brand plenary speakers by theme to help map future grand challenges beyond PoLNet3. Carefully structured discussion sessions are also possible.

**Funding:** PoLNET, BBS, IoP, RMS?, RSC?, RSB, Journals (IoP: Physical Biology, Elsevier: Cell Systems, Company of Biologists), EPSRC/BBSRC/MRC, Wellcome, Business contribution via exhibitions (but critical mass issue)

**Make-up of conference committee:** One possibility: equal representation (2 people) from BBS, IoP BPG, PoLNet3, PLM, plus chair (currently Martin Howard).

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