

BIOLOGY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting: Friday 8th June 2007 (Biology Room B/M049)

Present: John Pillmoor (Chair and Strategy board link)
Caroline Calvert (CNAP)
Nicola Charlton (Technical representative)
Adrian Harrison (Departmental outreach organiser)
Thorunn Helgason (Academic representative)
Ottoline Leyser (Research committee + academic staff representative)
Jasper Green (Postgraduate representative)

In attendance: Jo Brighton (Secretary)

Guest: Sean Sweeney (Biology co-ordinator for the BA Festival of Science, York 2007)

Apologies for Absence:
Baur Aituov (Undergraduate representative)

Action

07/001 Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising:

The minutes of the previous meeting (Wednesday 28th February 2007) were approved by the committee with the following matters arising:

06/28 NYBEP – JBP informed the committee on the feedback he had received from Trevor Sheldon regarding NYBEP. A central approach to NYBEP is being considered and our concerns regarding multiple approaches to the department and acknowledgement of inputs have been forwarded to Trevor Sheldon. There seemed to be a general feeling that there should be a main contact point, a contract between NYBEP and the University and that we (the department) should charge for any future input.

06/36 Gifted and Talented Activities – ABH confirmed that this summer will definitely be the last of the residential formats and that he has been asked to participate in the new model to be run from next year onwards.

Nothing has yet been finalised regarding the new model but it is thought the summer school will be shorter and only have 2 day/weekend residentials. ABH has agreed to be involved in principle, subject to the actual details.

07/002 BA Festival of Science update

SS informed the committee that all items have now been submitted to the BA, including the public programme and events programme and a glossy magazine has been produced to advertise the event.

Items that are still to be dealt with include:

- A website link for the BA Festival to be added to the Biology department main web page.
- Publicity flyers – to be handed out to the public around York city centre. These flyers should also advertise the department of Biology.
- A programme for the event.
- Organisation of porters.

SS

There has been some confusion regarding the payment of helpers at the event. SS suspects volunteers recruited by the department will not be paid for their help. However the BA will be paying their recruited volunteers around £5.30 per hour. SS therefore has some worries about recruiting sufficient volunteers and is trying to clarify whether the BA will pay for volunteers that we use.

JG made the suggestion that if 'Green Points' are offered as a payment for helping, there would be a lot more interest from graduates. It was suggested that SS discuss the mechanism with Hilary Jones.

SS

Adverts should be posted in the biology weekly web bulletin nearer the time to advertise the events that are to be held in the department. However, SS will consider mentioning the event at the next Academic Staff meeting.

SS

It was also noted that a few events have not been counted as taking place in Biology, even though they are.

The BA will be charging a fee for school pupils every day. It is thought the charges will be as follows: £4 per child per day (key stage 3), £6 per child per day (Key stage 4 &5). It is still unclear whether public events will have an entrance fee, what that charge will be or if it is to be free of charge to the public.

07/003 Science Education Advisory Group (SEAG)

ABH presented the outcome of the latest SEAG meeting (7th June '07) to the committee. It has now been a year since he was approached by Chris Henshall requesting that he attend the SEAG. However, at the meeting it became clear that many elements of the group were already covered by the Science and Society Group. Therefore, the SEAG is currently in the process of disbanding with the Science and Society Group taking on a strengthened remit.

07/004 Previous Events and Outreach Log

- 1) 26.02.07 **Life Swap** – TH ran this outreach event by 'YorkCares' which involved 25 school children from Park Grove Primary, taking part in this careers day. The day consisted of the Year 6 class presenting careers they would like to take up and talking about the skills involved.
- 2) 05-07.03.07 **Discover and Explore...ENERGY** – This schools workshop was held over 2.5 days at the Early Music Centre, Walmgate, York and arranged by Adrian Harrison in conjunction with Science City York. Students were given the chance to explore ENERGY and its uses in science. The event was run in conjunction with Chemistry and Physics. Approximately 150 students took part.
- 3) 21.03.07 University **Science Trail 2007** - A 1 day workshop which was organised by Adrian Harrison and the University of York Communications Office. 48 school children taking part in 4 different activities: DNA Fingerprinting, The Human Bodyworks, Soil Ecology and Hidden World Secret Lives.
- 4) 22.03.07 **HE Summer School (Green Apples)** – An hour long workshop organised by Adrian Harrison and the University's Widening Participation Office, involving 16 pupils taking part in DNA fingerprinting.
- 5) 23.03.07 **DNA Fingerprinting** – A work shop spanning 1 day,

involving 16 pupils from Boston Spa School.

- 6) 21.04.07 **Freshwater Invertebrate Identification** – Geoff Oxford ran a 1 day long 'Wild Workshop' on Freshwater Invertebrate Identification. (Organised jointly by University of York and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, at Barlow Common, Selby)
- 7) 01.05.07 **Mathematical Biology is fantastic** – Jon Pitchford gave a 1 hour talk to sixth form students at Queen Margaret's School in York.
- 8) 14-15.06.07 **Ripon Junior School** - Microscopy workshops involving 60 pupils.

These are the main events that have taken place so far this year, for the full list, please see the Outreach Log at:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/biol/dept/outreach/>

A recent entry that involved graduate teaching at another University was noted and it was concluded that this did not really qualify as outreach. JBP to follow-up. **JBP**

It was noted that it is still proving difficult to persuade people to send submissions for inclusion in the outreach log with the recent email call only eliciting a very small response. HMOL suggested that a better response may be obtained if it was possible to reply directly to the email request with the details rather than having to open the response form on the log. This will be included in the next call. It was also agreed that JBP should raise this at the next Academic Staff Meeting. **JB**
JBP

07/005 Next Major Events

- 1) **Driffield School visit to Pocklington Canal** – 28.06.07
- 2) **Archbishop Holgate School - Talk** – 29.06.07
- 3) **King James School, Knaresborough** – 11.07.07
- 4) **Canon Lee School – Art of Microscopy** – 12.07.07
- 5) **Great Yorkshire Show, Harrogate** – 12 - 14.07.07
- 6) **DNA Fingerprinting** – 16.07.07
- 7) **NAGTY** – August 2007
- 8) **BA Festival of Science, York** – 09 - 15.09.07

CC informed the committee that CNAP have applied for a biology grant involving Astra Zeneca. This is work to develop the key stage 3 curriculum.

JG reported that Peter Young's group are trying to get funding for their CPD group for teachers 'Learn to create practical lessons' sessions etc. ABH suggested they should try the National Learning Science centre for a grant to fund their work and JG noted that this had been considered. **ABH**

07/006 Budget

1) Budget Update

ABH informed the committee, the remaining budget stands at £2115

Recent expenditure has been:

- £1017 Public understanding of science

There is also £1000 still to come out of the budget for SS for Leaflets for the BA Festival of Science.

Some £11.6k remains in the reserve accounts

2) Sponsorship request from organisers of the “Profiting from Greener Business conference”

HMOL has been approached by a group of graduate students who have organised the ‘Profiting from Greener Business’ conference, to help with costs/funding for advertising. This is a conference concerned with environmentally friendly businesses and the organisers require £600 for final marketing and would like the outreach committee’s help. There was some debate over whether this was an outreach event. However, it was concluded that there are elements of outreach regarding this event and so therefore the committee agreed to provide the funds on a condition that this should be treated as a refundable loan to be paid back if the event makes a profit. Should there not be a surplus, the committee agreed to waive the fee.

ABH said he will inform the organisers of the decision.

ABH

07/007 Work Placement Requests

ABH noted that there is a registered scheme already set up in York and it was agreed that we should really be using this scheme. ABH said he would look into getting the department registered on this official scheme. It was agreed that ad-hoc requests should be avoided and instead requests should go through proper official channels to ensure that checks such as health and safety and CRB etc are properly carried out.

ABH

07/008 Teaching workload equivalent

ABH raised concerns regarding extended outreach activities and the number of teaching credits that can potentially be gained. For example, he pointed out that a week’s event can generate 30 hours teaching credit which added up to half an academics teaching workload. The teaching credit system is a way of promoting volunteers and should definitely stay but consideration should be given to weighted the credits differently and/or introducing a cap. JBP to discuss with Dale Sanders further.

JBP

Another issue was raised over how to gain volunteers to help with events and how to promote outreach making people more aware of its existence. Ideas were raised such as sending bulk emails and posting adverts on the biology weekly bulletin. It was felt that we should explain more carefully what outreach is and what an event consists of. A colourful glossy poster for the notice-board should also be considered.

JG made a point about the ‘Green points’ system. He said that currently the system of applying for green points meant having to go through a long process of applying and completing forms etc and suggested a new system should be created so students can gain their points quicker. JG also suggested that by stating in emails or in bulletins etc, how many points are available for certain events will attract more students. ABH agreed to discuss with Hilary Jones whether a streamlined procedure could be adopted for outreach activities.

ABH

07/009 Castle Howard Arboretum Trust

ABH reported on having been appointed to the advisory panel for the Castle

Howard Arboretum Trust which is funded by lottery money. Catherine Forsey, a former student of the department, works for the trust and is attempting to build up the education element by organising school visits. ABH noted that he will be including this as part of this year's NAGTY summer school. Lottery funding is confirmed to pay for Catherine's role full time for the next year and 1 year's part time pay for the following year.

07/010 Biology Matters

To be discussed at next meeting.

JBP

07/011 Date of next meeting

TBC

JBP/ABH

Joanne Brighton
John Pillmoor
25th June 2007