

THE UNIVERSITY *of* York
Department of Biology

OUTREACH COMMITTEE : 22 November 2007

- Present:** John Pillmoor (Chair and Strategy Board Link)
Caroline Calvert (CNAP)
Nicola Charlton (Technical Representative)
Jasper Green (Postgraduate Representative)
Adrian Harrison (Departmental Outreach Organiser)
Thorunn Helgason (Academic Representative)
Ottoline Leyser (Research Committee + Academic staff Representative)
- Guests:** Sean Sweeney (Biology co-ordinator for the BA Festival of Science, York 2007)
- Apologies:** Baur Aituov (Undergraduate Representative)
- In attendance:** Margaret Newton (acting Secretary)

Action

07/12 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2007 were approved.

07/13 Matters arising from the minutes

- 07/006(2): The conference ‘Profiting from Greener Business’ was a successful event and it is believed that the Committee’s sponsorship would not be needed after all as sufficient delegates had attended to meet the costs.
- 07/007: Work replacement requests – to be carried forward to next meeting. **ABH**
- 07/008: Teaching workload equivalent. Strategy Group had noted our concern that long events can generate excessive teaching credits but had commented that there was not necessarily a direct correlation between teaching credits and the actual workload. No change to the current arrangements is therefore proposed. It was suggested that a specific ‘Outreach’ column is added to the main spreadsheet to make this activity easier to track. **ABH** agreed to discuss with Jenny White. **ABH**
- 07/008: Green points arrangements for outreach activities have been streamlined and seems to be working well.

07/14 BA Festival of Science review

SJS spoke to his report and thanked all concerned. He felt that the department had offered a wide range of very stimulating events and had made a major contribution to the overall festival. However, he was disappointed at the lack of support for some of the events arranged by Biology. He noted that neither the BA nor the University had been well organised. He had spent £800 of the £1k budget offered by Dale Sanders, mainly on publishing a separate Biology advertising leaflet. He had therefore not required any of the money from the Outreach Committee.

ABH will add the details to the events log. **ABH**

There were a number of problems with the events organised by NYBEP and ABH will be writing to them to outline the issues.

ABH

JBP thanked SJS for his report and all his hard work under difficult circumstances.

07/15 Previous events update

The previous events were discussed. All had proceeded well with the NAGTY summer school perhaps being the key event.

TH mentioned a new contact with the Nidderdale tree wardens who would like to visit the Department to see current work.

07/16 Events log

ABH noted that a replacement for Jo Brighton as the nominated secretary for the Outreach Committee had not yet been made and that it was hard to keep the outreach log up-to-date. Advertising for a replacement secretary will take place in January.

It was noted that the web still quoted Jo's e-mail address and JBP will request an update to the web site.

JBP

It has been suggested that we allow the BBSRC to have direct access to our events log. This would not only save us time in filling in demands for outreach activities but will also improve the profile of the log. It is likely that other funding bodies may also request similar access. The Committee supported this proposal and suggested that an extra column is added for the sponsors/ affiliations of those involved. However, it would be important not to imply that the events were being funded directly. JBP will modify the form in consultation with ABH.

JBP

The number of entries to the log is currently very low and it was agreed to send out a new call for items before the end of the year. MEN kindly agreed to collate the responses in the absence of a replacement secretary for the committee.

JBP

07/17 Science Education Advisory Group

ABH reported that this Group had now closed down as it had been concluded that the existing Science and Society Group (SSG) was already covering the same areas. John Holman from the National Science Learning Centre is the current chair of the SSG. It was suggested that they should co-opt a representative from the Department of Education. ABH will continue to provide feedback from the SSG.

07/18 Next major events

A wide range of different schools are scheduled to visit with microscopy and the DNA fingerprinting workshops continuing to be the most popular events. ABH commented that, in general, the great majority of schools always request a repeat visit the following year. With a healthy pool we have not felt the need to target new schools. However, it was agreed that we should consider specifically targeting schools from Sheffield, Bradford and Leeds to try to increase subsequent undergraduate admissions from these parts of Yorkshire.

ABH

ABH noted a new contact from a school in Matlock who had found out about us from the Outreach web site.

Discovery and Explore will be 10-13 March 2008 with the main themes being how science works and engineering. ABH has put in a bid for RCUK funds for this event.

HMOL noted that she had been invited to give the Merchant Adventurers lecture.

ABH reported that the NAGTY summer school was to be replaced by regional Centres of Excellence. It has been suggested that smaller events are organised rather than the current 2 week format. A further suggestion that events should be held at weekends is being resisted by Biology staff. He felt the demise of the NAGTY summer schools a real shame and noted that he is starting to see students from previous summer schools now starting to apply for undergraduate admissions.

In answer to a question from HMOL whether Biology was involved with the York Council run workshops for years 10, 11 and 12, ABH noted that no approach had yet been made. It was agreed to maintain a watching brief with this new initiative.

TH will be applying for a Royal Society grant in Ecology work with Archbishop Holgate's school.

CMC noted that CNAP is working with schools in Scarborough and Filey to develop Key Stage III materials. The project is funded by AstraZeneca Teaching Trust and follows on from the Key Stage IV changes. If anyone gets requests for Key Stage III material, please forward these to CMC.

EPSRC have put out a call for public participation events, unusually applicants do not have to be EPSRC funded

JBG has applied to EMBL for training teachers in Bioinformatics and a decision is awaited.

07/19 Budget

a) 2006/7 Expenditure Summary

ABH tabled the budget summary for 2006/07 and highlighted the following points:

- The total spend of approximately £1,500 was similar to the previous year
- The two key expenditures were:
 - £496.37 on Biology Matters
 - £985.56 on general consumables
- ABH had successfully obtained external funding of £974.50
- The under spend against the budget was mainly due to the fact that the monies allocated for the BA Festival and the 'Profiting from Greener Business' had not been required after all and the additional external income that ABH had managed to bring in.
- Significant funds remain in the reserve accounts. It was agreed that NC and ABH will prepare a proposal listing desirable items for the Teaching labs with a view to using some of these funds. The proposal will need to be cleared with Duncan Rotherham before activating and it would be worth

**NC/
ABH**

closing some of the older accounts at the same time.

b) 2007/8 Budget

The allocated budget for this next year is £3,075. It was agreed to allocate approximately £500 for the next issue of Biology Matters and approx £900 for consumables costs for 2007/08. However, it was noted that no confirmation that there will be further issues of Biology Matters and an update has been requested from the editor. The remaining funds could be used for other activities.

07/20 Technician time in Teaching

ABH appreciated the help given by the Teaching technicians but realised that their time on outreach activities was not formally accounted for. NC commented that demands on their time was increasing, especially in the vacations as more and more schools who had enjoyed their visit want to come back every year. To date we have not yet had to turn down requests for visits but this may be an issue if the demand continues to grow. NC will prepare a rough calculation of technicians' time for last year so we can have these figures to hand if required.

NC

As this was a core part of University activity, HMOL suggested that perhaps a booking system could be introduced so that school visits could be planned in the last week of the spring term and the last two weeks of the summer term.

07/21 Bid to Alumni Fund

ABH has put in a bid for £40k to the alumni fund for kit that schools can borrow, e.g. spectrophotometers, pipettes, and microscopes together with protocols for experiments.

The current loan system has worked well with few losses or breakages.

07/22 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held mid-spring term.

MEN

22 November 2007