

Council recently held two meetings in short succession. We have decided we need to focus on the strategy and governance reviews in coming months with the work on inclusion forming a key part of both.

We need to hear your views on the [Governance Review](#). You will find a summary of the recommendations [here](#). We are holding an informal online Q&A session on Saturday 5 December – booking details [here](#). We ask that you register in advance and give us your views on the proposals. That way we can produce a revised set of bylaws for agreement at an EGM early next year that will be informed by the membership viewpoint.

November marks the anniversary of my unexpectedly early ascent to the role of your President of the RPS. Part of the role is to deliver a President's Address which was given directly after AGM in September. Since then it has also been given at the Nature Group AGM and you will find a written version in the next edition of the RPS Journal. In there you will find it split into 2 parts: a review of the past year and my plans for the coming months. I do hope that you will sense my pride in the role and following on a long line of worthy individuals.



Alan Hodgson

UPDATE ON THE RPS CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP (CCWG)

Following the establishment of the CCWG, the Trustees subsequently approved its Terms of Reference, which essentially covered three main areas:

- 1) Evaluating and making recommendations on how the RPS, at the corporate level, can reduce its own carbon footprint, including, but not limited to: Premises, Review of the RPS Investment Portfolio, Travel Policy and Waste Disposal.
- 2) Providing advice to members as to how they can help reduce their own carbon footprint. The RPS website will eventually have a resources section where members can gain information on aspects such as travel carbon offsetting initiatives and the sustainability credentials of major photographic equipment suppliers.
- 3) Identifying opportunities within RPS Programming in relation to initiatives, such as exhibitions and competitions, to highlight climate change and associated issues.

Needless to say, the current pandemic has meant that both internal and external resources have been focussed elsewhere, especially with the furloughing of many RPS Staff. That said, the initiative is still progressing well.

Initial suggestions on virtual meetings, training, presentations and exhibitions all seemed quite daunting at first. Then, along came Covid-19 and the transition to virtual became the norm very quickly. The future challenge will be to embrace that change from the 'have to' into the 'want to'.

A review of the RPS Investment Portfolio has taken place and initiatives are now in hand to incorporate Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria into the portfolio metrics.

As part of the current Science Photographer of the Year competition there is now a 'Climate Change' category.



Martin Hancock, Chair of CCWG

GOVERNANCE REVIEW

As Alan has highlighted above, our work on Governance has moved at a good pace this past month with the external consultants. The Governance Review report is now on our website [here](#). The Board commend this to you and hope that as many members as possible will engage with this process and read the report. The By-Laws are key to the operations of the RPS and as members we invite you to take active involvement at working with the Board to provide the best new By-Laws possible to ensure our Society is governed and structured to ensure best practise in all we do in the future. However we appreciate that the Report is a lengthy document so we have also provided a summary for you, which provides a top level overview of the key recommendations. You will also find a feedback form on the web page and we welcome your thoughts. We have already engaged widely with key stakeholders, but we also wish to hear the views of members across the RPS. We are listening!

We feel it is also important to share with you our plan of how we will proceed with this work.

- Firstly we will read all the feedback you provide to us.
- On 5 December at 11.00 GMT we are holding an online discussion that will be open to all members. To book your place, please click [here](#). This will be your opportunity to engage with the discussion, ask questions and understand the direction the Board wish to recommend to you and why.
- Once we have assimilated the information and debated issues further at the December Board meeting we will then formulate the draft By-Laws.
- The draft By-Laws will be made available on the web site and another open online debate will be organised to answer your questions and hear your thoughts.
- The final version of the draft By-Laws will then be passed through our solicitors to ensure they are legal and will not pose any inadvertent problems for us in the future.
- The legally ratified draft By-Laws will be posted on the web site and we will start the process of convening an EGM to enable the membership to vote and approve the new By-Laws.
- It is anticipated that the EGM will be held in February 2021.



Janet Haines

WHAT ARE THE RPS 'OBJECTS' ?

The word 'Objects' is something we hear stated with reference to the Society but how many of us really know what this means? As it is terminology that you will read with reference to the Governance Review and Strategy we felt it might be useful to give you some more information. It relates to our Royal Charter as follows....

Our [Royal Charter](#) was granted by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice of the Privy Council on 27 July 2004. The Charter states the objectives of the Society, what it may and must do, and how it may be run. In defining the objects of the RPS, the Charter states:

"The objects of The Society are to educate members of the public by increasing their knowledge and understanding of Photography and in doing so to promote the highest standards of achievement in Photography in order to encourage public appreciation of Photography.

In this Charter 'Photography' shall mean the Art or Science of the recording of light or other radiation on any medium on which an image is produced or from which any image may by any means be produced."

FINANCE AND BUDGETS

Well, finance is a subject that many of us normally switch off from, but its important for each one of us as members, to be aware of our financial position, as this influences many of the decisions we make as Trustees that ultimately affect all of us as members in one way or another.

It is with this in mind that I want to update everyone on where we are at in relation to the budget for 2021. It's only in the last few weeks that the staff team produced and presented the first iteration of the budget. As the Honorary Treasurer, I have a particular responsibility to monitor the financial governance of the Society, providing advice to my fellow Trustees on the financial health of the RPS, in line with best practice, and in compliance with our governing documents and legal requirements.

With this responsibility in mind, I have worked closely with Evan, Nikki and the remainder of the staff team to subsequently produce our final version of the budget for next year.

As anyone who has read the annual report will know, we have been making financial losses for the last few years. There are a number of reasons we find ourselves in this position, but the most important thing to note is that both the staff and the Trustees are very focussed on reversing this relatively recent trend.

So, for next year's budget, we looked at any areas where we could make further savings, having already been through an extensive cost saving exercise earlier this year. The result is that the budget for 2021 is now showing a reduced deficit of a little over £200k, a huge improvement from the position we inherited as Trustees, just over a year ago now. It's important to note that making losses of any scale is both unacceptable and unsustainable. However, we believe that our cost reduction exercises have largely exhausted the opportunity to make further savings, so we now need to look at opportunities to increase our income going forward.

As has been mentioned elsewhere, the Trustees are working on a new strategy for the RPS and a key aspect of this will include additional income generating activities. This is an exciting time for the Society and we all believe we can make it more relevant, not just to our members, but within the wider population as well.

All of our members, particular our hugely committed volunteers, have a part to play in making the RPS the most relevant and exciting photographic organisation in the world today. As I say, exciting times, even for financial matters!



John Miskelly

STRATEGY

In addition to the steps identified by Simon below, over the past few months, we have been working closely with Evan to have conversations with many stakeholders within the RPS (including current and past volunteers, and staff) and people from relevant external organisations too. All of this information is being distilled to help us create an ambitious new vision, strategy and business plan for the organisation. We are in the process of developing a high-level summary to begin testing some of the concepts and themes and to gain valuable input from our members and stakeholders. Please do keep an eye out for a members' survey that will be sent in the coming weeks.



Heather Field

TRUSTEES SKILLS

The success or failure of any organisation, however large or small, depends so much on the calibre of those entrusted with its governance, and their individual and collective skills, experience, knowledge and personal qualities. Good governance puts extreme demands on Trustees so it is essential that the skills of the Board of Trustees (what we call 'Council') encompass all of those skills that are required to deliver the organisation's strategy.

When Council considered the process of identifying and appointing co-opted Trustees, we decided to look first to our strategic plan and then to the skills of the elected Trustees. We found that the RPS does not have an effective strategic plan. I was tasked with designing a process for undertaking a strategic review (June 2020). For this, I followed best practice guidance from the Charity Commission, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and New Philanthropy Capital. The strategic review process is almost complete and Heather is now leading on completing the review and transitioning this to a strategic planning process.

My next task was to find a way to identify and map the skills of the existing Trustees (July 2020). All RPS Trustees have now completed a Skills Audit using a model that we developed following a wide-ranging scoping exercise with reference to competency framework and skills audit models from the Institute of Directors, the Community & Voluntary Services Organisation and the Chartered Governance Institute.

When the strategic planning process is complete, Heather and I will be able to undertake a gap analysis that will identify what additional skills are required on Council. This can then inform the Trustee co-option process to ensure that Council has the necessary skills to deliver the Strategic Plan for the RPS.



Simon Hill

We hope that this 'Trustees' Talk' email sets the scene for you all.

If you wish to provide any feedback to this email then do by all means contact any of us. You will find our email addresses on www.rps.org/about/meet-the-team

Please feel free to share this email with any RPS member who might be interested. If you have received this email via a third party and would like to be contacted about future Trustees' Talk updates, please email janet.haines@rps.org. Similarly, if you no longer wish to receive this email.