

Ecsite-uk: the Network of Science Centres and Museums

MINUTES OF THE 2005 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Place: Inspire Discovery Centre, Norwich

Date: 7 September 2006

1 Opening of the meeting

Linda Conlon, Chair of Ecsite-uk, welcomed all Ecsite members and thanked James Piercy, Manager, for his welcome to Inspire and arrangements for the AGM meeting space. The AGM was minuted by Melanie Quin (executive director).

2 Apologies for absence

Committee members sending apologies were:

Roland Jackson, the BA

Heather Mayfield, Science Museum, London

Sally Montgomery, W5, Belfast

Leigh-Anne Stradeski, Eureka!, Halifax

All other Committee members were present, together with some 20 members. Apologies received were noted, and assumed from other absent members.

3 Minutes AGM 2005

The Minutes of the Dublin AGM, 8 September 2005 at the National Museum of Ireland, were approved.

4 Chair's report

Linda Conlon introduced and summarised her report by announcing a mixed year for Ecsite-uk, with considerable success on the project front, but continuing frustration in gaining recognition for the sector in England and Northern Ireland. She referred members to www.ecsite-uk.net as a dynamic archive of the year's activity, and spoke to the four points that were Ecsite-uk's aims at its establishment in 2001:

- Rediscover, the major **capital fund** for refurbishment of science centres has now made all its grants, and the achievements of the scheme were celebrated at a one-day conference on 28 October 2005. Almost all the new exhibitions have been launched, and three travelling exhibitions produced by the Ecsite-uk Travelling Exhibition Consortium are now available to rent,
- national programmes** have been funded (grant applications made by Ecsite-uk) and are being delivered by collaboration partners locally/regionally UK-wide. These are detailed on the Ecsite-uk website, and invitations for partners for new projects are invited in the monthly eNews. Thanks and congratulations were expressed to Drs Rosalind Mist

and Louise Webb, project managers, and Savita Custead project officer (who has just ended her contract with Ecsite-uk). Generation Genome, the newest and largest collaborative project, will be a major touring exhibition with an accompanying learning programme – members' input and comments will be very welcome both later today and during subsequent stakeholder consultations,

□ **advocacy** has been conducted with reference to the agendas of the three key spending departments: DfES, DTI (OSI) and DCMS. Lobbying at Westminster produced modest support for some English millennium centres ending March 2006. Under discussion is a potential further £500k to March 2008, to be used to increase the sector's financial sustainability. Used as leverage, these sums have led to a more realistic level of support for the Scottish science centres. In Wales, Techniquest continues to receive approx 30% of annual operating expenditure from the Welsh Assembly. In Northern Ireland, W5's position is being assessed yet again – the third time in five years,

□ members' **communication and information** needs are addressed through www.ecsite-uk.net and the monthly e-Newsletter, as well as the quarterly Ecsite (Europe) newsletter. Specialist Seminars (3-4 annually) provide opportunity for discussion by senior staff of specialist topics. Thanks and appreciation were expressed to Rachel Simmons, Admin Manager, Martin Glancy, Webmaster, our colleagues in the Brussels office (Walter Staveloz and Michaël Renvillard, now replaced by Catherine Franche and Alikì Giannakopoulou), and to Melanie Quin in London.

Linda thanked the BA for hosting the Ecsite-uk office in the Wellcome Wolfson Building – the BA/Ecsite-uk connection offers valuable synergy; and for John Gagg's financial administration.

5 Treasurer's report

Peter Trevitt reported finances over the six months to June 2006. The 2005 accounts are available for reference on the website.

Ecsite-uk's finances are in two portions, one represents the core activity (such things as lobbying, fundraising and administration), and the other is a bundle of different projects that Ecsite-uk is managing at any given time.

Core income and costs tend to be fairly constant, and can be easily followed. As normal with projects, cash flow is quite variable, depending on agreements with funders, rate of progress, and so on.

Overall, the period January to June 2006 opened with £213k in the bank, much of it due to project cash flow at the time. At the six-month point this figure stands at £68,177, the difference almost entirely due to where project cash-flow happened to be at end June, and no cause for concern.

Finances are therefore fairly healthy in the short and medium term. Care continues to be needed in ensuring that project activity does not jeopardise the core finances. The team are managing this well, and I do not see this as a major concern.

Ecsite-uk is reliant on the OSI grant of £34k (2005/06) and the contributions from project activity to remain afloat, and members may wish to consider whether this is satisfactory or not.

6 Elections to the committee

ECSITE-UK's statutes specify a Committee composed of the Chair, between 8 and 10 members (8 elected; up to 2 more co-opted), and the chief executive of the BA. The AGM was presented with four candidates for election or re-election to three open positions: Robin Hoyle, Glasgow Science Centre; Heather Mayfield, Science Museum, London; Stuart Monro, Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh; and Peter Trevitt, Techniquest, Cardiff.

Ballot papers were distributed and votes (including proxies) cast.

The Committee members are:

Linda Conlon (Chair), Life science centre, Newcastle
Kelvin Boot, National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth
Goéry Delacôte, At-Bristol
Judith Harvey, W5, Belfast
Roland Jackson, the BA
Heather Mayfield, Science Museum, London
Stuart Monro, Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh
Gillian Pearson, The Oxford Trust
Leigh-Anne Stradeski, Eureka! The Children's Museum, Halifax
Peter Trevitt (Treasurer), Techniquest, Cardiff
Nick Winterbotham, Thinktank, Birmingham

8 Action Plan 2006/07

Linda Conlon commented the different scenarios unfolding in each of the English regions as RDAs, SLCs and SETNET establish new relationships. Ecsite-uk will continue lobbying **nationally** – through our on-going discussions with OSI/DfES regarding funding to support science centres in developing their financial sustainability; jointly with the BA, SETNET, and SLCs, in discussion with DfES to pilot 250 science clubs; opportunistically through the press and face-to-face meetings, as in Linda's own recent letter to the Financial Times in response to the issue of recruitment to science and engineering generated this summer by Sykes (Imperial College) and Lambert (CBI). It will also be Ecsite-uk's job to support member institutions in becoming part of the **regional** agenda.

On the **advocacy** front, an Ecsite-uk brochure will be launched in the autumn celebrating the sector's achievements and highlighting science centres' contributions to national agendas. This will be 'generic' allowing it also to be used to support individual members' lobbying with local/regional stakeholders.

On the **projects** front, Generation Genome has already been mentioned, and is due to be launched in December 2007.

Linda invited the AGM to inform the action plan.

Animated discussion of the advocacy strand ensued, and clear recommendations emerged from the floor:

- Members should be required to tell national Government that existing support for English science centres is unacceptable
- What has Ecsite-uk to loose? Stakeholders should be badgered persistently
- HMT should be approached – their decisions influence DfES policy
- A vocabulary and awareness of the sector's impact needs to be embedded in the policy-making environment, in the UK as it is already in the US
- The sector needs to decided precisely what it wants to achieve, and articulate that clearly at all stakeholder levels.

Members were invited to continue contributing to shaping the agenda through the year, by email and phone to the Ecsite-uk office.

9 ECSITE-UK AGM 2007

The next AGM will take place during the BA annual festival, 10-14 September 2007, in York.
