

Text for BSG Annual Report 2023 (prepared June 2024):

COMMITTEE REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The financial statements [pending – these are currently in preparation by the Society's accountants and will be appended to the text below in advance of upload to the Charity Commission by 31st October 2024. The narrative below nevertheless provides a detailed account of the Society's financial activity in calendar year 2023] have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's [governing document], the Charities Act 2011 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019).

Objectives and activities

The charity is established to advance research, education and professional practice in the science of geomorphology, in particular: through the promotion of research; by the formation of working parties dealing with co-operative projects; by the publication of the results of such research; by the holding of meetings; and by cooperating with kindred organisations. The trustees confirm that they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in setting the grant making policy for the year.

The charity's missions are to support scientific excellence in geomorphology through: fostering excellence and increased investment and support for geomorphology; developing applied geomorphological research; having a major impact on environmental policy and practice and providing a public benefit; disseminating new geomorphological research and policy agendas; and developing a new generation of geomorphologists equipped to address interdisciplinary challenges.

The charity achieves these missions through the award of small grants, primarily to postgraduates, early career researchers, and other higher education and professional practitioners; through support for organisation of and attendance at, scientific and educational meetings, through sponsorship of working groups; through the publication of the results of research in books including the online Geomorphological Techniques and, especially, through its Journal, *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, published in association with Wiley; and through the maintenance of an open access website. These activities are overseen by five Sub-committees of the Executive Committee. Grants are awarded on an open competitive basis twice a year. Recipients of grants are required to report to the relevant Sub-committee on the supported activities.

The Charity is in the form of a Society open for membership to anyone with an interest in geomorphology.

The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

Achievements and performance

At the end of calendar year 2023 the Society continued to exceed its target reserves; cash on hand was £140,297.92 against a target reserves balance of £89,847.60. This was despite a managed drawdown of £21,334.85 across the year, in large part due to an elevated budget for the Research Sub-committee and slightly uplifted spend for various other Sub-committees. This level of spending was intentional – the Society's financial strategy in 2023 still focused on drawing down our cash reserves (from a recent high during the Covid-19 pandemic, when spending was limited but income remained largely at pre-Covid levels) so that we close the gap to our target reserve level, before a switch to an intended 'breakeven' model of income and expenditure was to come into operation in calendar year 2024 onward. This is being trialled at the time of writing and we will be in a position to reflect on the level of success in the next reporting cycle.

The Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual Meeting was hosted by the University of Edinburgh in early September 2023. It was well attended and is to be regarded as a success. The meeting saw the introduction of the Cuchlaine King Symposium, which included an all-female roster of invited speakers; this element of the meeting will be retained for subsequent editions and is intended, in part, to strengthen links with the Society's publishing affiliate, Wiley, by encouraging meeting participants and the wider membership and geomorphological community to contribute to an associated Special Issue of *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*. The Society subsidises the Annual Meeting (maximum £20,000, reducing to £10,000 for 2024) and was invoiced for £18,293.74 – this expenditure was invoiced in February 2024 and is therefore to be included in the next set of accounts. For reference, the recipients of the Society's various awards for 2023 were: Colin Woodroffe (Linton Award), Edwin Baynes (Mike Kirkby Award), Louise Slater (Gordon Warwick Award), Tamsin Carpenter (Marjorie Sweeting Award), and Carmine Donatelli (Dick Chorley Award).

Grant Disbursement and Awards

One of the main activities of the Society consists of providing grants to support research and outreach and facilitate conference attendance, especially to postgraduate and early career researchers. The Society also provides funding to support geomorphological sessions at scientific conference in the UK and abroad, and it has awarded prizes to individuals to mark particular achievements. Grants and awards are competitive, with the selection process being overseen by the relevant sub-committees (e.g., Research sub-committee and Outreach sub-committees for research and outreach grants, respectively). Outreach sub-committee for outreach grants). An overview of grant disbursement is found in the 'Financial review' section of this report.

Postgraduate Development

The Society's main Postgraduate Development activity is the December Windsor workshop, which consists of a series of training courses aimed at new postgraduate researchers. The workshop is subsidised by the Society, and the International Association of Geomorphologists offers financial support for international students. Another well-attended and successful workshop was run in December 2023, and the total cost to the Society (after income from registration) was £8,187.21, including venue hire fees and volunteer expenses.

Enhancing the reputation of the BSG

The Society continues to develop its international profile through sponsorship and co-sponsorship of sessions at conferences, including those hosted by the European Geosciences Union (EGU). These sessions sometimes run jointly with other allied societies including the Quaternary Research Association, and the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG; RGS-IBG). The Society has an avenue for members to become Chartered Geomorphologists, CGeog (Geomorph) via the RGS-IBG. This is the professional status qualification for those with competences, experience and professionalism in the field.

Financial review

The activities outlined above are possible thanks to membership subscriptions and the annual Wiley grant and royalty payments in relation to the Society's academic journal *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, whose title is jointly owned with the Society. The Society incurred a minimal operating cost in 2023, primarily due to the commitment of unpaid committee members, and a model of substituting in-person committee meetings with virtual alternatives – committee expenses totalled £541.02 for the year. We employ a financial and administrative assistant part-time, and this incurred an overall expenditure of £8,690.34.

Annual surplus and cash flow

Total income in the year was £89,847.60 and expenditure was £111,182.45, generating a drawdown of £21,334.85. At the end of the 2023 reporting period, the Society held £79,295.05 in its current account and £20,724.29 in its PayPal account. True cash reserves were therefore £100,019.84, and overall reserves were £140,297.92 including externally held investments.

Income from membership subscriptions was £10,117.31 in 2023, up from £8,902.92 in 2022, and £8,331.16 in 2021). This remains a relatively low income compared to its pre-Covid peak (£19,429 in 2019) and is because the Society's membership fees remain low to encourage steady growth of the membership base – this strategy appears to be working. Income from Wiley in the form of a block grant, and royalties attached to the Society's journal *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, increased slightly in 2023, amounting to £79,193 compared to £76,499 in 2022, an increase of £2,694, with this difference explained mostly by inflation adjustment applied to the block grant; income from royalties remained more or less static.

The operational costs associated with running the society in 2023 were £20,079.89, an increase of £4,904.44 compared to 2022. This difference is attributed to the first sponsorship payment (of £5,000) from the Society to Royal Geographical Society-affiliated “Fi Wi Road” internship programme, which provides support for Black and mixed-Black heritage students in building networks, voice and experience within geographical disciplines, and which the Society is committed to for the next two years. It is itemised as a miscellaneous cost in 2023 but may be attached to a separate budget heading next year. Other “running costs” include committee expenses, employment of the financial and administrative assistant, and additional miscellaneous expenses (liability insurance, accounting costs, bank fees, website domain hosting, etc); they amounted to ~22% of the Society’s income, or 17% excluding the Fi Wi Road sponsorship (compared to 18% in 2023, 14% in 2021, 16% in 2020, 19% in 2019).

In 2023, the Society disbursed £51,041 to support research, attendance at scientific conferences, working groups and workshops, mostly to postgraduates and early career researchers (£49,289 in 2022, £49,643.06 in 2021). The total amount available for research-related grants will reduce in 2024 to £35,000 – this is more comparable to pre-pandemic spending and is required to maintain a breakeven budget.

Reserve and Investment Accounts and reserves policy

At the end of 2023 the value of our Jupiter Ecology Fund Investment was £40,278.08; this investment had increased in value by £4,021 over the course of the year. In a more recent valuation (25th March 2024) the investment was worth £43,123.50. At the end of 2023, the Society’s available funds stood at £140,297.92 (£157,611 in 2022, £173,153 in 2021). The Society therefore maintained a surplus of £51,192.92 above its target reserves balance of £89,105. However, given that the vast majority of the Society’s income is received in Spring (i.e. the two Wiley payments) and expenditure is distributed more evenly throughout the year, it is useful to reflect on the available funds at the ‘low point’ of the year – this occurred on 28th April 2023, at which point the Society held £131,334 in available funds, which was £42,229 above the target reserves level. The Treasurer and wider Finance Sub-committee will continue to closely monitor income and expenditure, with a view to ensuring that, ideally, the Society’s available funds do not dip below the target reserves level at the Spring low point. Members of the Executive Committee met with the Society’s accountants in 2023 to discuss the appropriateness of the current target reserves level – it was decided that the current level is appropriate under the current circumstances, but that increasing this slightly (to ~£100,000) could further improve resilience and would be prudent given that the Society’s operational costs, and the various activities that it supports, are not immune to inflationary pressures. The Society’s reserves policy may be updated in due course to reflect an uplift, and will continue to be reviewed annually.

Risk management policy

The Executive Committee has reviewed and keeps under review the risks facing the Society and has in place the necessary policies to mitigate those risks.

Forecast income and expenditure 2023 and beyond

The Society retains a surplus. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Society’s ability to disburse grants and financially support various other activities has now diminished, signalled by renewed interest from members in the Society’s various grant offerings, and healthy attendance at recent meetings and workshops, including the Windsor Workshop, and CPD-focused events organised by the Professional Geomorphology Sub-Committee.

The Executive Committee has decided to reduce discretionary budgets as we move into 2024. For example, the research grants budget has been reduced from ~£50,000 to £35,000, and Annual Meeting support has been reduced from £20,000 to £10,000 – combined these are the two most significant areas of outlay. The Society’s financial position will continue to be regularly reviewed by the Treasurer and discussed at Finance Sub-committee and Executive Committee meetings. As above, we are aiming for breakeven income-expenditure in 2024.

The Society remains largely dependent on Wiley and our journal, *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, for its income; combined, these sources represent ~90% of the Society’s income. For now, this income stream remains stable, and has increased by a total of 16% since 2019. However, a future shift by Wiley to an Open Access publishing model is almost certain and given the uncertainty that this might create, the Society is exploring ways to diversify its income and adapt expenditure to increase future financial resilience. The Treasurer has undertaken financial forecast modelling to better understand the likely impact of any future income uncertainty, and a range of scenarios have been (and will continue to be) discussed at Finance sub-committee and Executive Committee meetings.

Membership of the Society continues to present excellent value for money given ongoing access to grant opportunities, reduced registration rates for the Annual Meeting, network-building initiatives, and a growing

range of activities that promote and advance geomorphology through research, education, and the dissemination of knowledge. For the last few years subscription rates have remained suppressed to incentivize membership during the pandemic. Moving into 2024 the Executive Committee are discussing an increase to the current subscription rates, and which would come into force later that year.

We retain a positive outlook for 2024. We expect income to largely remain stable, whilst expenditure will decrease with a view to balancing this against income. It is anticipated that any surplus will be retained and used to increase our reserves. As above, the Society's finances will be discussed at various points in 2024, and budgets for the following year will be reviewed and agreed prior to Christmas.

Structure, governance and management

The BSG is a charitable incorporated organisation registered on 6 August 2018 under charity number 1179467. The governing document is the charity's constitution registered on the same date. Its address is c/o Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

The Trustees who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Trustee	Role	Notes
Dr Elizabeth Dingle	Active	Appointed 14 September 2021
Dr Lucy Clarke	Active	Appointed 14 September 2021
Dr Hywel Griffiths	Active	Appointed 14 September 2021
Dr Matthew Westoby	Active	Appointed 14 September 2021
Dr Sarah Louise Callard	Active	Appointed 9 September 2021
Dr Anne-Marie Ockelford	Active	Appointed 7 September 2022
Dr Hannah Williams	Active	Appointed 9 September 2020
Prof Heather Viles	Active	Appointed 9 September 2020
Dr Fiona Caithness	Active	Appointed 8 February 2024
Dr Christopher Hackney	Active	Appointed 7 September 2023
Dr Harry Sanders	Active	Appointed 7 February 2023
Dr. Richard Williams	Inactive	Resigned 8 February 2024
Miss Kathryn Kemble	Inactive	Resigned 7 September 2023
Dr Richard Jeffries	Inactive	Resigned 7 September 2023

There must be between eight and fourteen charity trustees (currently 11). The trustees retire by rotation.

Information pertaining to the Society's constitution, and finance, ethics, and data protection and security policies are publicly available on the Society's website, which is maintained at www.geomorphology.org.uk.

The Society is led by the President, and managed by the Executive Committee which normally meets three times each year. The Executive Committee membership comprises: the President and five principal officers of the charity (Chair, Senior Deputy Chair, Junior Deputy Chair, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer), plus three Vice-Chairs (Research, Publications, Outreach) and three Ordinary Secretaries (Research, Publications, Outreach). At Executive Committee meetings, postgraduate members are represented by one or more of the three elected postgraduate representatives.

There are five Sub-Committees concerned with: Research, Education & Outreach, Publications, Finance, and Professional Geomorphology and Practice, as well as a Postgraduate Forum. Together, these Sub-committees drive the missions of the Society and report to the Executive Committee.

The day to day running of the Charity rests with the Executive and Sub-Committees but in practice falls largely to the Chairs, Honorary Secretary, and Honorary Treasurer, supported by a part-time administrative and finance assistant.

Relations of the Charity with Other Organisations

The British Society for Geomorphology is affiliated to the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) and to the Geological Society of London. The charity's permanent office is located at the premises of the Royal Geographical Society.

The British Society for Geomorphology is also a member of the International Association of Geomorphologists, to which it pays an annual membership fee.