

Royal Society of Chemistry Eastern Regional Meeting

MINUTES of the Eastern Regional Meeting held at 18:30 on Thursday, 29 January 2009 at Thomas Graham House, Science Park, Milton Road, Cambridge, CB4 0WF.

1.0 Welcome

Neville Reed welcomed the members to the meeting.

2.0 RSC Activities

Dave Garner gave a brief presentation focussing on the new RSC Strategy on a Page, how current activities map to this Strategy and future activities.

3.0 Discussion

Neville Reed invited members to comment on the content of the presentation and related issues including:

3.1 What will the charging structure for the Chemistry Centre be?

- It was pointed out that room costs need to be cheap enough for interest groups to use or they will meet elsewhere.
- There will be a charge for the use of rooms in Burlington House from Jan 2010 but the exact pricing structure is still being finalised.
- The use of the available space in the Chemistry Centre needs to be maximised, however, the RSC wants its Groups to use the rooms and therefore rates for members will be heavily subsidised and better value than using the SCI or the IOP.
- A more reasonable way of charging for catering is also being examined.

3.2 Chemistry for our Future

- What ground rules are being debated for an extended scheme?
- In the pilot scheme only six out of the nine regions benefited; the Eastern Region was not one of them. Will the three regions not included in the pilot be considered as a priority in the future of the scheme?
- In response to this question, staff noted that HEFCE funded the scheme originally but only saw it as a pilot and did not roll it out to all regions. They are now passing control of all pilot schemes to new project leaders at the University of Birmingham. What happens next depends heavily on what Birmingham and HEFCE decide. The new leaders seem to want to start from scratch therefore the RSC is currently assuming that all CFOF projects will stop in July when the funding runs out.
- The RSC acknowledges that it is very disappointing to see all the successful previous work potentially unrecognised, but discussions are still ongoing. Some CFOF initiatives have been brought under the Discover Chemistry banner.
- Physics is now seen as the priority area by HEFCE since chemistry is doing well.

3.3 In the Strategy on a Page, under the target increase in number of students studying chemistry, why is chemistry referred to in inverted commas?

- A whole range of chemistry degrees are available. Only those where chemistry is a major or equal component in the syllabus (F1XX courses) are counted in the

student number target.

- One member suggested that the inverted commas be removed from the Strategy on a Page document.

3.4 What is the extent of the RSC's influence on policymakers in Brussels?

- It was acknowledged that this is a very difficult arena to have influence in, but the RSC keeps up to date with developments and is trying to make legislators more aware.
- Must start engaging in dialogue earlier because by the time an issue reaches a vote it's too late. We were too late to have any influence on REACH and the pesticide legislation.
- Must get the message across to politicians that decisions need to be based on science rather than emotion. The way in is via the Commissions in the EU, rather than through MEPs, as they drive the policies. However, we have a stronger voice when part of a consortium rather than speaking as the RSC alone.
- The RSC is using its Parliamentary Office as best it can to gain influence.

3.5 How does the pharmaceutical industry in the UK fit with the Roadmap?

- This plays an important part in the 'Human Health' section. Several major pharmaceutical companies contributed to the development of this section of the Roadmap.
- The Roadmap addresses issues of importance which could lead to policy making, publishing in specific areas and identifying where funding is needed.

3.6 Public lectures

- It was mentioned that a recent public IOP lecture was attended by ~200 people.
- Does the RSC host a series of lectures like this? Some Local Sections run lectures already but this is something which is being looked at in more detail for the Chemistry Centre. Starting Oct/Nov 2009, public lectures will be put on once a month with a different theme each time. Hope to attract ~100 people each time.
- One member asked that the relevant interest group be consulted when putting on these lectures. Staff responded that this would happen.

3.7 Can you do chemistry in the Chemistry Centre?

- Yes. The RSC is currently planning how this can be done practically including issues such as the correct fire alarm setup etc.

3.8 Can the RSC link to the Royal Academy for events?

- The RSC does hope to do this by, for example, arranging lectures on Chemistry and Art. The courtyard is also booked for 5 weeks in summer 2010 for use by the RSC.

Neville Reed invited members to discuss points that had been raised in advance of the meeting:

3.9 New Officers Briefing Day – raised by Dr Alan Osborne

- Dr Osborne reported that the Treasurer from his Local Section was disappointed with the last New Officers Briefing Day. Only 6 people attended making

networking difficult. Unlike at previous briefing days, there was no breakout session to cover in detail the role of Treasurer. He commented that some of the staff giving the presentations had not been at the RSC very long.

- In response, staff explained how the day had been organised. All Sections had been invited to send new Officers but only six people had responded. Some staff members were relatively new to the organisation but they had been fully briefed and more experienced staff members were present throughout the day. Rather than individual breakout sessions, additional support and specific advice was offered outside of the meeting. Gemma Wood was sorry if the Essex Treasurer did not find the day particularly useful and would be happy to discuss the matter with him at any stage.
- It was commented that not many people can attend such meetings on weekdays due to work commitments. The RSC acknowledges that daytime events are difficult for all members to attend and runs many events in the evenings and at weekends to accommodate these members. However, staff are aware of timing issues and are looking at scheduling events in a more appropriate way based on requirement and staffing resources.
- It was suggested that this New Officers training could be rolled out to other RSC groups.

3.10 Presentation gift for long-standing members of Committees

- Is it possible to supply a gift for long serving members of Committees? The RSC can look into this however, there is not usually enough demand for such a thing. Alternatives such as discounted books and commemorative plates are currently offered.

4.0

Close and thanks

Neville Reed thanked all those attending for their contributions. The meeting was closed at 20:20