

Summary Report & Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2019

In writing this annual review, I reflect on six years as Chair of the Trustees and Board. We have made a great deal of progress, though there remain some frustrations about matters unresolved.

Highlights have undoubtedly been raising the profile of geography, and the Society, to yet higher levels so that we are even more recognised as a source of objective authority on society and the environment. We continue to reach a greater number of people with our *Inspiring People* talks programme and our quarterly magazine *The Geographer*, a source of valuable information and knowledge, opinion and debate about the major issues of the day. Our literature about the opportunities which geography provides enables us to highlight the contributions of top-rate individuals. Our awards programme has expanded to recognise excellence in national and international milieux.



We continue to have financial ups and downs with not yet the financial security which I and my fellow Trustees feel is necessary. But we have not been idle. We have captured funds from sources not previously available to us and now have a firm plan of action for our fundraising over the coming months and years. Already conversations are ongoing with many individuals, trusts and foundations. We hope that these will come to financial fruition, but it takes time to develop and cultivate relationships. Lack of resources has meant that we could not employ more staff to enable us to undertake the ambitious programmes and capture the opportunities available.

Frustrations remain, particularly in education. The secondary schools curriculum remains of real concern, and the numbers of students taking geography and being taught by qualified geography teachers are both declining. Despite our many meetings with government officials and agency representatives, little progress has been made. We continue to have good working relations with higher education geographer colleagues who are leading outstanding research. But geography and the Society are not getting the public financial support that they need and deserve. We have a great opportunity to provide new insights from research into addressing the issues of the day. Let's make sure we do that. Our *Journal* makes progress with tremendous efforts by our two editors, but we need more academics to submit papers.

The Board has performed more effectively, monitoring delivery of the new strategy, monitoring progress on annual work plans, reviewing risk, setting and reviewing financial targets, budgets and financial performance, and approving awards.

On the financial front, we have reduced our deficit. We entered a new sponsorship arrangement with the Open University in Scotland, received a major funding package from the Scottish Government for development of a Climate Solutions qualification, and achieved record ticket sales with several sell-outs at talks. Our membership rose by 112 (net) and membership income by £6,526. For the future, we have firm notes of two legacies which will help improve our financial position. We developed and consulted on our Case for Support, and developed terms of reference for a fundraiser.

Our outreach programme gathered further strength. We produced issues of *The Geographer* on the Tay (with SEFARI), Arctic (with the Scottish Government), oceans, and space (with the Open University in Scotland). A Young Geographer editorial team was established. We celebrated ten years based in Perth, and our Chief Executive's ten years in office, with a booklet, an exhibition, and a reception for long-standing members. We reached the highest measured attendance at our talks programme with some amazing speakers including Michael Portillo and Wade Davis.

Our special relationships with explorers continued with Explorers-in-Residence Luke & Hazel Robertson, Craig Mathieson and the Polar Academy, and teacher and student trips to Oman. Our Writer-in-Residence, Jo Woolf, was busy contributing articles for *The Geographer* and for our website. We convened and played a key facilitating role on issues including rail connections, climate emergency declarations, hosting the launch of Climate Week with the Cabinet Secretary, and future farming in a warmer world. We awarded Medals and Fellowships to many distinguished individuals for excellence in their field of endeavour, including the late Polly Higgins, Wade Davis, Kevin Edwards, and the founders of Social Bite.

We supported the Geographical Association (GA) in its 125th anniversary, established good working links with the new Director of RGS-IBG, convened the first meeting between SAGT, RGS-IBG, GA and ourselves, and maintained contact with our Canadian equivalent. We convened discussions with academic colleagues on research priorities for the Society. We successfully launched Knowledge Exchange Grants designed to promote the impact of geographical research.

We have made progress, most importantly with plans to improve our financial performance, but more needs to be done. I complete my six-year term at the 2020 AGM. As a geographer in every way, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to be the Chair of this vitally important Scottish charity. I have enjoyed working with the staff and volunteers, giving talks and writing articles, and introducing the Society to other networks and individuals. My thanks go to the Committee Chairs for helping to deliver our work programme and for energising their volunteer teams; to the volunteers at Fair Maid's House, a hidden gem; to the Board members, and especially the other office bearers, for their wise counsel and continuing support; to the President and Vice-Presidents. Thanks to our small and dedicated staff for their enthusiasm and perseverance; thanks especially to Mike Robinson for his creative leadership, skilled networking, and endless energy and determination. And thanks to my wife Lindsay for her unending support and sharing tweets in her networks.

Roger Crofts, Chairman