

2025 Annual General Meeting minutes

Thursday 6 November 12:30-1:30pm GMT

Hybrid meeting

Present:

Gordon Dougan (President, in the Chair)

Karen Robinson (General Secretary)

John Sinclair (Treasurer)

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive and Company Secretary)

28 members of whom 22 were voting members.

In attendance:

Sarah Buckman (Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer)

Joanne Manning (Chief Operations Officer)

Charlotte Mitchell (Chief Communications Officer)

Yon Young (Events Executive)

John Beagan (Technical Operation Manager)

1. Introduction by the Chair

The Chair, welcomed attendees to the Society's 2025 online Annual General Meeting (AGM). He declared the meeting open and quorate after a show of hands of Full, Full Concessionary, Post Graduate Student and Honorary Members of the Society.

He observed that the papers had been made available on the Society's website. He further confirmed there were no motions that he had been made aware of to put forward at this AGM.

He reminded members who were in attendance that anyone addressing the AGM should do so by digitally raising their hand and then when welcomed should clearly state their name and affiliation, and that those eligible to vote at the AGM were Full, Full Concessionary, Post Graduate or Honorary Members of the Society.

He then handed to the Society's Chief Executive to give a brief summary of the achievements of the Society over the reporting period. He highlighted the main areas and reported under the Society's three strategic objectives:

1.1 Building Communities

- Each year we celebrate our thriving microbiology community through our Annual Conference, which provides opportunities to amplify our members' voices and advance the understanding of microbiology and the ways it can have an impact and influence in the world.
- 2024 was no different and we welcomed our delegates to Conference in Edinburgh for four days of world class science and networking across 33 sessions, with 350 speakers during the event.
- While Annual Conference remains our biggest event, we had already kicked off the year with our first collaborative meeting with Unilever, the Microbiome Safety event held in January.
- Also in January we ran the first Knocking Out AMR workshops, hybrid events which brought together 135 cross-disciplinary experts (including 22 industry representatives, nine government agencies; nine not-for-profits; and six funding bodies) across a one-health perspective, with expertise covering bacteria, fungi and viruses.
- In July we welcomed our early career community to their annual summer conference in Glasgow and we followed this with a series of international events across our global community with the International Biennial Pseudomonas Conference in Copenhagen, the International Blastocystis Conference in Crete and Harnessing Microbial Biotechnology in Amsterdam.
- In October we had another first, our joint webinar with the UK's Science Media Centre on 'Engaging with the media' featuring member and experienced media commentator Lindsay Broadbent with the SMC's Senior Press Manager, Tom Sheldon. We continued to work with the media throughout the year to extend the reach of the research of our members – amplifying their voices across the mainstream press and broadcast channels.
- Elsewhere in partnership work we officially launched our ExhibitionPlus initiative in March, designed to help our industry partners to target the right people in our membership and community and increase their engagement with the Society as a result.

1.2 Impact and Influence

- In 2024 we undertook a review of all of the Society's communications and one major output of this was the redesign of our website, our main digital window to the world.

Going live in September, the site was for the first time fully mobile optimised and easier to navigate and retrieve key information on the activities we know are important to our community – like making grants applications and registering for events.

- The new-look site attracted over 16,000 users per month by the end of the year and elsewhere, our social media channels continued to grow with LinkedIn exceeding 86,000 followers and X over 76,000.
- 2024 was our first full year on the Chinese social media app, WeChat. As our main channel to reach Chinese researchers we used the platform to grow awareness of our role as a not-for-profit publisher and as a membership charity. We highlighted articles from Chinese researchers published across the portfolio and this helped gain us over 1,000 followers, with an increase in submissions from China of almost 25%, versus 2023.
- 2024 was the first full year of activities under the banner of our ambitious Knocking Out AMR project. Following our series of workshops with influential people across the AMR community in January 2024, a vision statement and policy briefings were developed, setting out our programme of activities and policy recommendations.
- Over 70 members engaged with the Society's UK AMR National Action Plan survey and the NHS Antimicrobial Products Subscription Model consultation, with insights fed to the UK Department for Health and Social Care, and we are replicating this work in Ireland.
- The Society continues to act as a conduit between Government and scientific experts and our parliamentary internship with Martyn Day MP was successful, culminating in the tabling of two parliamentary questions and debate on this vital topic. Relationships with key government agencies are going from strength to strength, as demonstrated by our ongoing communication support to the UK Health Security Agency, via their 'Antibiotic Guardian' newsletter.
- 2024 saw co-Chairs of the project, Tina Joshi and Catrin Moore representing KO AMR at the UN High-Level Meeting in September 2024. Prior to that we had joined the Quadripartite AMR Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Platform, ensuring robust representation of the Society in global AMR discussions among 203 organisations, including research organisations, civil society organisations, industry, governments and funders.

- Expert input to the UK's global Science and Innovation network was also facilitated through meetings with Science and Innovation Officers worldwide, driving knowledge exchange between AMR experts and policymakers on both a local and global scale.
- The UK's response to and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was the focus of the UK Inquiry into COVID-19. During the year, the Society met with legal representatives of module 9 of the inquiry. As a result, we were served with a Rule 9 request for evidence and submitted a 20,000 word report. We are grateful to members Alan McNally, Paul Kellam and Mark Harris for their support in reviewing and refereeing the submission.

1.3 Sustainability

- It was agreed in 2024 by Council that a complete review of its structure was needed for the Society to continue to thrive in the modern world as the environment in which it operates continues to change dramatically.
- During a process of discussion, review and with expert legal guidance, the principal broad decisions taken by Council were to:
 - Establish a new, smaller, more streamlined Board of Trustees including the Officers and elected members and with provision for the inclusion of a minority of non-member trustees with external expertise and;
 - Establish a new 'Advisory Council' to lead the Society's important programmes, freed from the formal legal burden of being Directors and Trustees.
 - At last year's AGM the membership carried a special resolution to amend the Society's Articles of Association, which are its governing constitution. The amended Articles, approved by the UK's Charity Commission, allowed us to change the governing body to incorporate the two new groups.
- One of the ways the Society is navigating change is increasing the routes by which authors can publish **Open Access** across our titles. In 2024 we announced our intention to transition our titles the *Journal of Medical Microbiology* and the *Journal of General Virology* to Subscribe to Open (S2O) from 2025. S2O is an impactful, simple and compliant model which is internationally recognised. It provides a sustainable approach to transitioning subscription-based journals to OA, one year at a time.
- At the Society S2O joined other routes for authors to publish OA including our popular **Publish and Read model**. New P&R agreements in 2024 included a consortium deal in

Germany, and others with Fudan University in China and Yonsei University in South Korea.

- We continued our successful '**Publishing for the Community**' campaign throughout the year, designed to encourage members of our community to make the link between the revenue generated by submissions to the Society and the benefits available to microbiologists as a result.
- At the end of 2024 we looked to the new year as we launched our new **fundraising campaign**, following the success of our Unlocking Potential initiative which gave ten grants to microbiologists facing a career challenge, providing bespoke packages of support and training. Our new campaign – '£80 for 80 years' – looked towards our 80th anniversary in 2025, recognising 80 years since our founding by visionary microbiologists including Alexander Fleming and Marjory Stephenson.

The Chief Executive concluded his presentation by emphasising that now more than ever, the founding members purpose in forming the Society holds true. He noted that the Society's ability to bring groups of microbiologists together for knowledge exchange and to forge new collaborations remains essential to the Society's role. He expressed thanks to everyone who was involved with Society activities and achievements over 2024.

2. Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved *nem con* via a digital show of hands from voting members.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Financial report

The Chair invited John Sinclair, the Treasurer, to present the financial report for 2024.

The Treasurer opened his presentation by explaining that the financial challenges for the Society, brought about from the changes to the publishing landscape - continued into 2024. He noted that the Society continued to be dependent on its journals for its main source of income and that once again the principal funding sources of income were from the sale of subscriptions and Publish and Read access to the Society's publications, investment income and membership subscriptions. He reported that the Society's Publish and Read business model continued to perform well throughout 2024 reminding members that the Publish and Read model means that in return for a fee, institutions get access to the Society's journal content and authors have an unlimited opportunity to publish in our journals. He also noted

that the Society continued to ensure that its Open Access policies were compliant with funder mandates and engaged with the Open Access policy community to influence the development of pragmatic guidelines around an open publishing future. Over 2024, the Society continued the move towards Open Access by taking the decision to move two further titles to Open Access from 1 January 2025, using the Subscribe to Open business model. He also reported that 2024 also saw a full programme of Society events, with income from event registration fees and exhibitor and sponsorship fees increasing thanks to the support of over 3,500 delegates from academia, industry and clinical settings coming together to enjoy science, strengthen relationships and expand their knowledge. He reported that the Society had continued expenditure on journal publishing, grants, policy, and membership activities but this expenditure also enabled a series of changes which ranged from reviewing our digital communications and the launch of a new-look website, to the way we organise events, deliver grants, and promote our publishing portfolio.

He was clear that while there were financial challenges, there were also opportunities and he gave some examples to illustrate this:

1. Annual Conference continues to be a major event in many microbiologists' calendars - 2024 was no different and we welcomed over 1,500 delegates to Conference in Edinburgh for four days of world class science and networking and the largest and most financially sustainable Annual Conference to date.
2. We succeeded in further growing our Publish and Read customers and secured a large consortium deal with 400 scientific institutions and 2000 hospitals in Germany, and other small deals across Asia.
3. We are continuing to pursue other sources of funding - from individual giving to traditional fundraising campaigns to professional development activities such as 'Publishing Fundamentals to corporate partnerships.

In conclusion he emphasised that the Society's continued strength depends on its income from all of its activities. He noted that 2024 saw continued turbulence in the global financial markets due to geo-political events and this had an impact on currency valuations too (the Society receives a significant proportion of its income in dollars), and as such, Council in 2024 and then the Trustee Board from this year onwards has continued to scrutinise the budget in detail. This has included measures to (i) reduce costs; such as developing a roadmap to allow Annual Conference to breakeven - on direct costs - by 2026. (This was in fact achieved by 2025) , (ii) increase income; such as diversifying income through the journals portfolio and increasing the number of titles the Society has; and (iii) increase the

Society's impact, such as embedding and further promoting the Society's 'Publishing for the Community' campaign.

As always, he noted that this could not be done without the support of members, and he was pleased that members have supported and embraced the plans so far. However, to ensure that the Microbiology Society continues to serve the community in the most financially-stable way it can for many years to come, he invited members to get in touch.

He thanked members for their time and invited questions.

There was one question from Justine Rudkin, University of Glasgow, who asked whether the Unlocking Potential Grant, which was still a live grant on the Society's website but that it was not open for applications, would be reopened in the future given its success when it was open previously. The Chief Executive confirmed that it remained an important grant scheme to the Society and that discussions were still ongoing in terms of reopening it but ensuring that it is reopened in the most financially sustainable way.

With no further questions, the Treasurer thanked the members.

4.1 Receiving of the annual accounts

On the recommendation of the Treasurer, the Chair invited the membership to receive the annual accounts for 2024. The annual accounts for 2024 were received by the membership by a digital show of hands from voting members.

4.2 Appointment of auditor

The Treasurer reported that following a competitive tender process for the Society's auditors he would like to invite the membership to appoint Moore Kingston Smith as auditors of the Company to hold office from the conclusion of this AGM until the conclusion of the next general meeting.

This was approved *nem con* by a digital show of hands from voting members.

5. New Members of the Trustee Board, Advisory Council, Committees and Divisions

The Chair listed the incoming members of the Trustee Board for 2026 as:

David Clarke – General Secretary and Trustee

Marguerite Clyne – Elected Trustee

The Chair listed the incoming members of the Advisory Council for 2026 as:

Jose Bengoechea – Co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee

Nicolas Locker – Co-Chair of Building Communities Committee

Yinka Somorin – Co-Chair of Members Panel

Julian Parkhill – Elected Member of Advisory Council

The Chair confirmed that the names of incoming Committee and Division members were available on the Society's website in the papers for the meeting and welcomed them to their roles and thanked them for engaging with the work of the Society.

The Chair thanked the outgoing members of the Trustee Board, Advisory Council, Committees and Divisions who would step down at the end of 2025, expressing his gratitude for the time, expertise, energy and input contributed to the activities of the Society during their term of office.

He specifically noted the contributions of:

- Jack Ferguson

He thanked Jack for serving as one of the Early Career Forum Executive Committee co-Chairs and as a trustee of the Society, noting that he ensures that the invaluable early career perspective is brought into all of our discussions and decisions.

- Kevin Maringer

He commended Kevin as one of the founding co-Chairs of the Members Panel, noting that he has held the position for four years he has been instrumental in setting the manifesto for what they have, and what they continue to strive to achieve.

- Kalai Mathee

He commended Kalai for her role as Chair of the Scientific Conferences Panel and co-Chair of the Building Communities Committee where during her term she planned a fantastic suite of events and the financial loss on Annual Conference had been significantly reduced.

- Catrin Moore

He thanked Catrin for being an integral part of the launch of and leading on the Knocking Out AMR project as co-Chair of the impact and Influence Committee.

- Sheila Patrick

He thanked Sheila for her role as Elected Member of Advisory Council, active on the Finance Committee and a long standing member of the Society.

The Chair also extended special thanks to Karen Robinson, General Secretary. He noted that during her term, Karen oversaw a major and impactful project to literally ‘review everything’ the Society does and how it does it, and how that had led to significant changes to our events programme and across our digital communications. He continued that she had also been General Secretary during the Society’s review of its governing structure, which led to the establishment of the Trustee Board and the Advisory Council. He particularly noted her guidance and counsel during this period of change. He expressed thanks on behalf of staff and members alike –for her time, her unwavering support and the personal qualities she has brought to the role of General Secretary.

6. AOB

There were no other items of business raised

7. Closing comments

The Chair thanked the Society staff on behalf of the Trustee Board for all of the work they do to deliver Society activities for the benefit of the microbiology community.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1:20pm.