



**Summary of
141st MEETING OF THE CHALLENGER SOCIETY COUNCIL**

Thursday March 13th, 2-4.30pm

Maeve Lohan gave a President's update on two important community activities. Firstly, she attended the Marine Science UK in February. The overall aim is to represent the collective voice of the marine science community in the UK and to interact with Government and key policymakers, to raise the profile and importance of marine science with stakeholders nationally and internationally. Discussions surrounding how this group will look and operate are still underway, but there will be an update in the near future. The Challenger Society will remain engaged with these activities, and provide a community voice to the group.

Secondly, Maeve attended the Future Marine Research Infrastructure (FMRI) board meeting in March as Challenger representative. The scientific requirements framework (SRF) document is due to be completed soon to be refereed by the end of May, and the aim is to have it completed by the end of June. The Challenger Society will continue to feed into community engagement, and will support upcoming activities including podcasts, Q&A sessions and workshops. Sustainable future marine infrastructure is critical, and is a topic that is taking centre stage on an international level and wishes to engage with all the marine science community.

Alex Brearley (Honorary Treasurer) gave a brief financial update. Given the current financial landscape, the Challenger Society is at risk of losing institutional support. The Council noted that it's important for institutions and individuals to know the support that Challenger provides including payment of SCOR contributions as well as travel grants and awards.

Kate Hendry (Honorary Secretary) and Chelsey Baker (Membership and GDPR officer) updated the Council on governance, risks and policies. There was a discussion on data storage, and it was agreed that we would look into alternative providers (currently Dropbox).

Chelsey gave an update on membership, after a thorough revision of membership and standing order numbers. There was a peak in membership at the end of 2024 due to 2 years complementary membership being activated post-conference. A spring 2025 dip in membership is due to removing members who at some point in the past paid by standing

order but being contacted three times have not set up a new payment or made any contact with us. Switching bank accounts has allowed for a clean slate in terms of tracking memberships and so now we should have accurate records and estimates of membership dues going forward.

Anthony Lucio updated on a few updates to the Challenger website. There was a request from a member to upload Council meeting minutes to the website. The Council discussed various options, and was agreed that we would trial a summary that would be provided after each Council meeting that could be emailed to members, and included in *Challenger Wave*. It was noted that AGM minutes, in the form of the PowerPoint report, are available on the website already.

Robyn Tuerena provided a written report on Education and Outreach. There has been good progress on our new YouTube channel, and we hope to soon go live with video clips including talks from the last Challenger Council. She is also working with partners on ideas for school engagement.

Alessandro Tagliabue gave a verbal update on UK SCOR. The next UK SCOR meeting is coming up in June 2025 in Leeds when they will review the working groups and carry out strategic discussions on promoting UK engagement with SCOR. Gaps were identified in the UK SCOR group membership, resulting in a recruitment process that led to four new members including two ECRs. The group now represents good coverage with respect to institutions and geography, as well as good career stage and gender balance. It was emphasised that this group is particularly important in an international context for sponsorship and sustaining working groups.

Angela Colling and Stephen Dye updated on *Ocean Challenge*. They are keen to hear from anyone with ideas for articles, and would encourage those that have suggested items before to get back in touch.

Sophie Wilmes updated on Stepping Stones and Travel Grants. There were no Stepping Stones awarded in this last period, allowing more funds to go to Travel Grants. There was a brief discussion as to whether working in industry constitutes a “break” from career that could extend the eligibility for ECRs. It was agreed that, especially in the case of Stepping Stones awards, working away from academia in any way could realistically limit an individual from working on important criteria for their CV, for example, academic papers. It was noted that there has been an increase in the number of MRes students applying for grants, and there was a question to council as to whether these students should be ranked differently to postgraduate/PhD students. It was agreed that the current scoring system is flexible enough to record any differences in impact because of career stage.

Sophie also gave a brief update on plans in hand for the Challenger Conference in Bangor in 2026, which we're all excited about!

Cecilia Liszka gave an update on the Special Interest Groups (SIGs). The History SIG has been active with a talk series, which is being recorded and will be posted on the YouTube channel when live. Cecilia will be carrying out a review of the SIG web pages, and so there should be

some updates coming there soon. Deep Sea and Waves SIGs have requested funding for meetings later in the year.

Siddhi Joshi gave an update on the Early Career Researcher (ECR) network. There are plans for an in-person event this year for the ECR network. Options were discussed, and the Council recommended that Siddhi reach out to SIGs who are holding meetings.

Gillian Damerell gave an update on the Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Accessibility (EDIA) working group. There was discussion on how to incorporate applicants' personal extenuating circumstances into award application reviews, with some thoughts from Council that could be trialled. There was a suggestion to Council from the EDIA working group that Council funds could also support undergraduate placements. Unfortunately, it was agreed by Council that, at this point, it wouldn't be possible given the low undergraduate membership numbers and the current financial landscape.

There were no reports from Industry Liaison/Sponsorship, Policy Liaison, NOC-A, Communications or Challenger Wave portfolios.