

# Institute *of* **Physics**

## Merseyside Branch Committee Meeting

Tuesday 26 November 2002

Oliver Lodge Laboratory, Department of Physics, University of Liverpool

Present: N Marks (Chairman), S D Barrett (Secretary), N R Clitherow, D M Farley,  
N Heritage, A Marks

Apologies: D S Martin (Treasurer), M F Bode, R N McGrath, S L Bennett

### 1. **Apologies and Welcome**

Welcome to Nick Clitherow, a retired neuroradiologist, who joins the committee to strengthen our connections with physicists in the medical community.

### 2. **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 25 September 2002 were accepted.

### 3. **Matters arising**

3/5(iv) Still no reply to emails to Bellerive FCJ school, and so the matter rests.

### 4. **Brief Reports on Recent Events**

*Liverpool Physics Olympics 2002* (October) Participation ~120 A-Level students. The Branch subsidised the lunch ( $120 \times \text{£}2.50 = \text{£}300$ ) from the new eatery in the Chadwick Laboratory, which operated very efficiently. Feedback from schools regarding the event was again very positive.

*Quasicrystal Surfaces...* by Ronan McGrath (October) Attendance ~30. Well received by the audience, which included a number of undergraduates.

*The Challenge of Climate Prediction* by Alan O'Niell (October) Attendance ~45. A very good lecture, delivered to a relatively wide audience. Especially pleasing were the references made, for the benefit of the undergraduates, to the diverse fields of physics that underpin the various aspects of climate prediction.

### 5. **Report from the Chairs of Branches Meeting 1 November 2002**

NM commented on some of the issues raised at the meeting — his notes are appended to these minutes.

## 6. **Branch Finance – Bid to HQ for 2003**

The budget request for £3200 was accepted, with the £200 requested for Paper Clip Physics being handled centrally. Thus, we will receive £3000 in the coming year. It was noted that in future (i) there will be a three-year rolling budget, (ii) balances will be carried over into subsequent years, (iii) the budget will be rationalised into three headings (admin/programme/outreach), (iv) the budgets exclude VAT. It is not clear what the mechanism is for VAT recovery, so DSM was asked to investigate.

**Action DSM**

## 7. **Schools and Education initiatives**

AM reported that the Paper Clip Physics competition has 10 entries. NH will be a teacher judge (or will find a substitute). SDB will approach PJN to see if he is available as an academic judge.

**Action SDB, NH**

NH suggested that the Branch should organise some activities for Science Week (the first week in March 2003?).

**Action NH**

SDB reported that the Christmas Lecture, *Astronomy on Merseyside* by Mike Bode, has 70 places reserved to date, mainly A-Level students.

## 8. **Industrial Initiatives**

MM has led the initiative for about a year and now feels that he has taken it as far as he can and so has stepped down from this position. The committee records its thanks for his efforts, and hopes that he will remain on the committee for another year to see the results of his work. NM has talked to Phil Latchford (Manchester and District Branch) and has agreed to co-chair further meetings of the joint working party.

**Action NM**

## 9. **Commemorative Plaques**

RNM was asked to expedite progress with the plaques for Chadwick and Horrocks.

## 10. **Physics in Medicine**

NRC reported that the talk on Fast CT (computed tomography) on 20 March 2003 has been awarded a credit in the Continuing Professional Development scheme of the Royal College of Radiologists. CPD participants requiring an attendance certificate will be provided with one at the talk. Closer to the date of the talk, SDB will contact University departments to advertise the talk.

**Action SDB**

NRC informed the committee that Professor Rhodes, the President of the Liverpool Medical Institute from 2003, will be organising evening events comprising three short talks on topics in the fields of medicine, science and the arts. This is intended to get a wider audience at their meetings, and there may be opportunities for collaboration between the LMI and the Branch.

## 11. **Another Other Business**

None.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the committee will be Thur 13 Feb 2003.

S D Barrett Honorary Secretary  
Merseyside Branch  
Institute of Physics  
6 December 2002

Copies to:

NM, AM, SDB, SLB, NRC, DSM, DB,  
MFB, EB, AGB, DMF, AF, NH, RNM,  
MM, PJN

**Issues raised at Chair of Branches Meeting 1 November 2002**  
**for discussion at**  
**Merseyside Branch Committee Meeting 26 November 2002**  
**Neil Marks**

Papers circulated before the meeting can be found on the IoP web at:

[http://physics.iop.org/IOP/docrepos/COB\\_Nov02.doc](http://physics.iop.org/IOP/docrepos/COB_Nov02.doc)

[http://physics.iop.org/IOP/docrepos/COB\\_Nov02.xls](http://physics.iop.org/IOP/docrepos/COB_Nov02.xls)

They are referred to in the notes below as 'COB/nn'.

**1. Staff and Policy Changes**

*COB/81*

There have been staff and policy changes at Portland Place which will have significant impact on the branches.

**Chief Executive**, Alun Jones, has retired and is succeeded by **Julia King**. Also, the Director Education and Science, Peter Cooper, has moved to the Mathematical Society. **John Brindley**, an existing employee of IoP as '**Director Membership and e-Services**' has had his responsibilities expanded to include branch liaison. He will be supported by **Sue Lipman** who, from January 2003, will be designated as his Assistant Director. Additionally, the new **President, David Wallace**, has taken over from Peter Williams, though this is part of the normal bi-annual change in the presidency.

The change in policy (initiated by the new C.E. and president) is that branches are to play a greater role in the support of the membership – this is the reason for the move of the branches from the Education and Science Directorate (now headed by Peter Main) to Membership. Liz Parvin (Chair of the Chair of Branches Meeting) and I strongly questioned this policy at an informal meeting with John B. and Sue L. in October. We were concerned that the branches' role in physics out-reach and the public understanding of science (part of the central role of the Education and Science Directorate) was being reduced. We were assured that this was not the case – time will tell!

Exactly how we are to expand our services to members is not yet clear – I expect there to be some central guidance but with significant room and flexibility for our own initiatives. It is accepted that this could be seen as more work for the volunteer elected representatives, so there is an agreed commitment for the Institute now to employ a staff member whose principal role will be to work with and support the English and Welsh branches in this initiative. The Irish and Scottish Branches already each have an identified employee working directly with

the branch committees. The single new post will be 'shared out' between all the other branches. How this will work in practice is unclear – it was pointed out that a location at Portland Place would be very eccentric (in the true meaning of the word). The Manchester and Merseyside Branches made a strong case for a north-west location being ideal for road/rail/plane communications, access to Wales, etc. Again – time will tell!

## 2. Newsletters

COB/83

An arrangement is now being put in place to allow branches to submit their copy for newsletters to IoP Publishing, who will do the printing and will distribute with the next Physics World mailing. This had been voiced in the past, but we had been told that it was not possible; now, selective inserts into the mailing envelopes appears to be possible. Features of the proposed arrangement are:

- branches have the choice of whether to use this service or not;
- the centrally produced newsletters will have a unified format (template generated by graphic arts staff at IoPP in Bristol) and the same quality paper/printing for all branches (two or three colour printing was mentioned);
- branches would have total control of the copy;
- the service would be rapid – a week or so to print and distribution in the next Physics World;
- if a branch were to use the service, the 'communications with members' component of the branch budget would be clawed back, rather than a recharge system established.

I think this arrangement has much to commend it – it would unify the newsletters' formats (there is considerable variation in quality between branches) and the work for the local production is non-negligible. I am inclined to think that we shall use it.

Notwithstanding the above, branches were encouraged to find commercial sponsorship to support the cost of newsletters!

## 3. Budget

COB/87

The excellent news is that we have an allocation of £3,000. This excludes the sum of £200 that was requested to support Paper Clip Physics, which will now be attributed centrally. Hence, we have our full bid.

The additional good news is that it is now clear that the allocation **excludes** VAT. Invoices which include a VAT element should be sent to Portland Place; the VAT will be recovered and returned to the branch budget.

Agreed new arrangements for budgets are:

- a three year rolling budget framework will be established;
- balances (positive and negative!) at the year end will be carried over into subsequent year;
- budget structures will be simplified into three sections – core administration costs/ member's programme/outreach programme.

#### 4. **Teachers Network**

*COB/88*

The local teacher networks are to be expanded by the appointment of local co-ordinators; this initiative is being driven by Catherine Wilson, recently retired from full-time Education Manager at Portland Place. Six people are already in post but no details were available; they are to be circulated in the near future. The co-ordinators will work with the local Education Reps in the branches.

It is intended that the co-ordinator covering the Mersyside region will be invited to attend a branch committee once the organisation is clearer.

I think this should prove to be a worthwhile addition to our education initiatives.

Neil Marks