The Society

Vision
The leading learned and professional body for geography in the world, widely respected for its independence, quality, innovation and for the breadth of its activities promoting and supporting geography as the means for everyone to discover, understand and respect the world’s people, places and environments.

Mission
A world centre for geography and geographical learning dedicated to the development and promotion of knowledge together with its application to the challenges facing society and the environment.

Registered Charity 208791

Society objectives
The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) exists for ‘the advancement of geographical science’. For the current strategy, 2012-2016, this purpose has been expressed as six strategic objectives of the organisation. The aims concern sustaining and promoting the discipline, advancing and sharing knowledge and understanding, and enabling professional and student communities of geography practitioners. In doing so, the Society also aims to grow its own reputation, enhance its membership and ensure sustainability for the future.

The Society’s work is organised into thematic departments, each of which contributes work to several objectives.

The Society is a charity that exists for public benefit and which also has a broad-based membership that supports its mission and aims. The Society was recognised in 2013 as the leading scholarly geographical society in the world.

1 International Benchmarking Review of UK Human Geography 2013
From the President

There is only one organisation on Earth devoted so effectively to supporting and promoting so many key areas of geography. I've always felt that my RGS-IBG sub was a very modest contribution to the future of this miraculous blue planet and now that I'm a trustee, I've joined the Society's 2,800 volunteers and can give my time, too.

Finding myself President is an immense honour. It's also brought a few surprises. During my thirty-plus years as a Fellow, I've been inspired by countless lectures, attended special events like the annual *Explore* weekend and joined in with Society activities to promote learning and initiative among young people. As a writer, I've found the library invaluable, and I have known what it feels like to stand quaking on the stage in Kensington and deliver one of the fabled Monday night lectures.

I thought I knew the Society fairly well, but in my first six months as President, I've been amazed by the breadth of engagement with the world of geography: with the public and government, with the various specialist communities within research, expeditions and fieldwork, and with education. I've met Fellows and members who are students, politicians, engineers, academics and those – like myself 30 years ago – who have joined because one of geography's many facets is its ability to bring together people of all backgrounds who share an interest in the world, its places, people and environments.

Among the highlights of my first half-year as President have been Society speaking dates in Exeter, Birmingham and Bury St Edmunds, and the 21st Century Challenges events in London, where topics including climate and cities were debated. I was also lucky enough to take part in the closing event of the two-year programme, *Rediscovering London’s Geography*, where I was able to meet and talk with many of the teachers and pupils who took part. The *Explore* weekend was – as ever – a festival of geographical inspiration and in November I was part of the team hosting HRH The Princess Royal and Vice Admiral Sir Tim Lawrence when they opened the *Enduring Eye* exhibition.

The last six months have also introduced me to the inner workings of this remarkable organisation. With so many initiatives covering such a broad, geographical span, the Society has to have a rigorous operational plan. The five-year strategy is monitored through annual plans with targets and reviewed outcomes. During the three, short years that I'm President, I'll be focussing my attention on retaining (and hopefully increasing) the Society’s membership and on exploring ways of spreading the work of the RGS-IBG more widely among the regions of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. I'm also looking forward to the collective process of planning the next strategy, which will run from 2017 through to 2021.

I'd like to thank the many RGS-IBG Fellows and members who have made me so welcome as President, and to thank you all for your continuing support of the Society.
The Society ends 2015 well with excellent feedback on our activities, professionalism and warm welcome; good staff morale; valued by the communities we serve; and with a modest budget surplus.

Geography ends 2015 in a better ‘place’ than any time in the past 20 years: a strong position in higher education; rapid growth in school uptake at GCSE and A Level; recognition of the importance of fieldwork; and increasingly valued by employers, the public and students. Much of that is the result of the Society working together with its communities over many years.

2015 had some remarkable highs and a few challenges. Memorable highlights – among many – were the two major exhibitions. The fully updated Britain from the Air exhibition in Leeds appealed to a wide demographic. Tens of thousands of people were informed and inspired by the images and stories of Britain’s environment, economy and society found in our landscapes.

Quite different, and as well received, the centenary Shackleton exhibition, Enduring Eye, celebrated the UK’s Antarctic heritage. It brought to the public gaze the Society’s historic collection of Hurley images, seen for the first time in digitised, intricate detail. It was a privilege to have the exhibition opened by HRH The Princess Royal.

A small policy team was appointed to develop the Society’s knowledge exchange activities. In education we focused on supporting secondary teachers with the new curriculum content, including a new project on data skills in geography. This followed the completion of five years’ work advising the Department for Education, and Ofqual, on developing the new geography curriculum and examinations.

The benchmarking of research and teaching of physical geography in UK universities was started. The core funding required for the Society’s collaborative international Field Research Programme – Migrants on the margins – was put in place, enabling a start in 2016. It was also particularly rewarding to see the Society’s press and media coverage return to full strength.

The main challenge was the need to re-organise the management of our facilities in central London, on which we depend heavily for our functions and as a source of venue hire income. A new staff structure was implemented, a permanent facilities manager appointed and venue hire income increased substantially.

Throughout, our strategy provided the development framework and we ended 2015 in line with the business plan. With thanks to donors, just under £2.4m was raised or committed to support specific developments in 2015 and beyond. We also saw incremental enhancements across many other areas of our work.

With a relatively small team of 58 dedicated staff, it is extraordinary what the Society achieves through effort, focus and value for money. Having no core funding from government enables a healthy independence, reinforces the need for careful attention to meeting income targets and prudent spending, and encourages a spirit of innovation.

We are also most grateful for the commitment of some 2,800 volunteers, in very many different roles, including the trustees; and for the support of c.16,000 Fellows and members. They all aided the Society’s work as the learned society and professional body for geography. And that work, we estimate, impacted some three million people in 2015.
1 Geography
Promoting and sustaining a vibrant discipline

Objective
Represent, promote and advocate for geography as a leading discipline, so that it is seen as engaging and useful by the public and it maintains a strong position in education, research, fieldwork and expeditions, and in informing policy and business.

Context
Major changes are underway in the UK in school and higher education, in the funding of research, and in the shaping of national policy. If geography is to sustain its strong position and fulfil its full potential it needs an effective champion, ensuring decision makers and others understand its relevance and contribution. Geography has an essential role in the 21st century. It is the spatial discipline that helps everyone understand our world – its places, people and environments. Without it, people would struggle to grasp how social, economic and environmental processes bring about change in communities, places and regions; and how to manage a sustainable future.

After three years of steady growth in student numbers at school and entering university, geography in 2015 was in a better position than at any time in the preceding two decades. It is a vibrant discipline and the Society is recognised as an effective and sought out advocate for it.

In particular

• A new policy team with a focus on knowledge exchange was established in order to increase the effectiveness of the Society’s work in promoting and demonstrating the value of geographical research as well as enhancing the networks between researchers, practitioners and the policy community.

• The Society’s advocacy of the importance of geography in schools over several years culminated in a geography curriculum that enables young people to have a more informed understanding of some of the big geographical issues and to learn from fieldwork embedded in the curriculum.

• The Society continued to be sought after to become involved in advisory bodies and to contribute to government consultations. The Society’s position as a leading learned society was further highlighted when it became one of the signatories of a climate communiqué, which called on governments to act on the risks and opportunities of climate change.

1.1 Making the case for geography
Over the past five years, the Society has played an instrumental role in the review of geography in the national curriculum (Key Stages 1 to 3); and at GCSE and A Level. In February 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) approved the subject content criteria for A Level geography after receiving advice from the A Level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB), of which the Society was a member. One important outcome from the Society’s advocacy with the DfE and Ofqual was the inclusion of an independent investigation in the new A Level, ensuring that geography students are able to develop their field and research skills and be better prepared for university and employment.

The revised A Level criteria also introduced new and more up-to-date elements of required study, as well as a greater focus on fieldwork and on the learning and application of data skills in geography.

The Society received funding in January 2015 to set up a new programme of discussions to demonstrate and promote the relevance of geographical dimensions,
and research, to both the policy community and the public. The topics in these 21st Century Challenges discussions were chosen to provide insight into some of the key economic, social and environmental issues facing the UK. By the end of the year, two events each for public and policy audiences had been held at the Society, covering topics of spatial disparity in economic development and the cities growth agenda, and resilience and adaptation to climate change. A further event, where the opportunities and challenges of decentralisation were discussed, took place in Newcastle. The five events attracted more than 750 people and provided both interesting discussion and good networking opportunities.

The Society initiated a review of physical geography to parallel the International Benchmarking Review of Human Geography that reported in 2013. Due to be completed by late 2016, the review will document the status of physical geography in the UK and help the community and its funders understand the challenges and opportunities the discipline faces.

1.2 Advising on geography

During 2015, the Society submitted eight responses to policy consultations on topics including open research data, professional development for teachers and the Nurse Review of Research Councils. Towards the end of the year, a series of consultations relating to higher education policy were announced and the Society will be responding to these during 2016.

Throughout the year, the Society attended regular community meetings with research councils including the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and liaised with key government agencies and departments including the Department for Business and Innovation, Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, and Universities UK, among others. The Society also brought perspectives from geography and from the learned society sector to its active involvement with the British Academy, as a member of their Higher Education Policy Development Group; with the Academy of Social Sciences, where the Director was a Council member; and with Universities UK on their Open Access Publishing Coordination Group.

In addition to advising on the geography curriculum in schools, the Society also had active and successful discussions with the DfE during the year about initial teacher training, and the need for quantitative skills and mathematics within geography courses. The latter discussions resulted in the new GCSE and A Levels containing a strengthened quantitative skills requirement that will benefit students whether they continue to study geography at university or choose to pursue other interests.

Given these new requirements for data skills in the curriculum and examination courses, as well as their importance both within the discipline and as transferrable skills, the Society developed a two year programme that aims to enhance and support the ability of teachers to embed data skills in their
teaching of geography. The programme was funded in July 2015 by the Nuffield Foundation, and commenced in October. Overall, the year saw the Society’s work shift from advocacy and advice on school education to greater liaison with the awarding bodies as they developed their GCSE and A Level specifications and to supporting teachers in introducing the new curriculum.

The Heads of Departments of Geography in Higher Education meetings continue to be hosted and administered by the Society. This forum provides an opportunity to share views of issues affecting geography, including proposed policy changes. It also provides an opportunity for the Society to update Heads about its work in support of the discipline.

1.3 Promoting geography to wider audiences

For the discipline to prosper, it is essential that geography is promoted to a wide range of audiences including the public, young people and employers. The Society achieves this directly through its projects aimed at the general public (see section 2) as well as through its work with the media (see section 4).

Reaching young people is often most effective through schools and in 2015 the Society’s Geography Ambassadors gave presentations to around 30,000 students from 300 schools. These presentations explored the value of studying geography at GCSE and A Level and the relevance of the subject to further studies and careers. To ensure presentations are of the highest quality and have the greatest impact, all Ambassadors – whether they are undergraduates, postgraduates or professionals – attend training sessions. In 2015, there were 32 training sessions for Ambassadors from 23 universities.

During 2015 the Geography Ambassador programme received additional support through the London Schools Excellence Fund for presentations to London students, and from the Department for International Development for presentations on a development theme. The feedback from teachers about the programme is excellent and demand for visits from schools across the country is high. In late 2015 the Society agreed to collaborate with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and Esri UK to run a pilot Ambassadors programme in Scotland.
2 Knowledge and understanding
Helping create a better informed world

Objective
Advance, interpret and share geographical knowledge more fully, so that the world is better understood and more people benefit from using and enjoying geographical knowledge in their work, leisure and communities.

Context
In a rapidly changing world we constantly need to advance our knowledge and understanding of it, so that we can better care for our environments and landscapes, respond to social and economic challenges as they affect our towns, communities and countryside, and act more responsibly as citizens. Helping to advance geographical knowledge through research and scientific expeditions, share it with professional users and make it accessible and engaging through interpretation to non-specialists are all at the heart of the Society.

The furthering of geographical knowledge and understanding, and sharing of that with a wide range of audiences from scholars to school pupils and the general public, lies at the heart of the Society’s work. During 2015, over three million people engaged with the Society’s work.

In particular
- The Shackleton centenary exhibition, *Enduring Eye*, was an ambitious and exciting project that brought to life Hurley’s extraordinary imagery, conserved those images by digitising the fragile glass plate negatives, and told the story of courage, leadership and survival to new generations.

- *Migrants on the margins*, the Society’s latest international, collaborative Field Research Programme addressing an issue of global importance, is certain to go into the field from summer 2016 thanks to a team effort in planning and raising the funds required during 2015.

- Three major international conferences were organised wholly or in part by the Society in 2015, extending the Society’s reach and impact with the academic community: the Annual Conference; the International Conference of Historical Geography and a joint meeting with the British Society for Geomorphology.

- More than 400 live events – lectures, discussions, interviews, conferences, training courses – were held by the Society, including those organised by its branches and Research Groups, over the course of 2015.

2.1 Advancing knowledge
The Society continued planning and fundraising for the next major Field Research Programme in partnership with a team of expert UK and international researchers led by Dr Mike Collyer of the University of Sussex. *Migrants on the margins* will address issues of resilience in the face of migration pressure, considering what impacts migrants have on the places, environments and communities they move to, and what combination of circumstances best support migrants to move out of poverty. The research centres on African and Asian cities, where the brunt of urban migration will be felt in the 21st century. Field studies will be in the cities of Colombo, Dhaka, Harare and Hargeisa and led by local research institutes.

The project’s International Advisory Group, comprises representatives from research, development, international agency, city governance, media and NGO sectors. It provides strategic advice on the project and the first meeting was held in June 2015.
The Society’s project Steering Group was also formally constituted in 2015, reporting to the Council and co-chaired by the Vice-Presidents for Research and Higher Education and for Expeditions and Fieldwork. It met three times in 2015.

By late December 2015, sufficient funds had been raised for the field studies and PhD studentships (c.£450,000) to confirm the start of the three-year project in August 2016. Fundraising continues in 2016.

The Society’s grants programme enables students, researchers, teachers and independent travellers to advance knowledge through original research, scientific expeditions and independent travel with a purpose. In 2015, the programme supported 58 projects, facilitating original geographical studies across 47 countries from Norway to North Korea, and covering topics from glacier hydrology to mapping malaria. These included four new Environment-Sustainability grants which were generously supported by the Deutsche Poste Foundation. In total, more than £174,000 was awarded and over 185 individuals were directly involved with grant-funded projects.

These projects shared their progress and findings in reports, publications including *Geographical* magazine and the national press, and through lectures at the Society. Increasingly, projects are reaching a broad audience online and on social media. In particular, *Into No Man’s Land* (funded by the Thesiger Oman Fellowship) featured in over 100 local media outlets, BBC News Online, and BBC World Service.

PhD students will continue to undertake research on the Society’s Collections for the next three years thanks to a successful bid, in partnership with the Science Museum and the Royal Society, to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for six collaborative PhD studentships across the three institutions. During 2015, two students supported through earlier stages of this scheme completed dissertations on the visual history of ice sheets and women in the expedition archives.

2.2 *Interpreting and sharing knowledge*

Professor Sarah Whatmore (Oxford) chaired the 2015 Annual International Conference, which was held in Exeter and attracted over 1,300 delegates from 47 countries – an attendance that is on a par with recent Society conferences held outside of London. Session organisers embraced the conference theme of the Anthropocene; and the Chair’s plenaries and associated discussion panels built on each other very effectively. There were also creative sessions, including those on Waterworlds and Attentive Geographies, that included elements of performance and exhibition as well as contributions from artists and filmmakers. A public event on flooding and its impacts was very well attended and helped raise the profile of local issues. Media coverage was considerably increased and improved compared to recent years (see Section 4 for details).
The Society also supports the research community through its 28 specialist research groups. In 2015 they organised over 54 events as well as publishing books and journals, and awarding publishing prizes. During the year, two new working groups – on Food and on Race – were started, while the Economic Geography Research Group had a strong presence at the Global Economic Geography conference in Oxford.

In July, the Society played host to more than 700 historical geographers from around the world who had gathered for a week of talks and fieldtrips at the International Conference of Historical Geography. The Society supported the conference with relevant displays related to the Collections. Also in July, the Society hosted the British Academy’s first geography lecture.

The Society co-organised an event in May with the British Society for Geomorphology on stormy geomorphology that brought together practitioners and academics around the topical issue of flooding to share understanding of how to better predict, measure and manage the effects of extreme events.

The Society’s online resources for schools continue to be in high demand, with a total of nearly 1.2 million pageviews during 2015. School Members can now access all of the online resources through the schools section of the Society’s website where they have been reorganised to align with the key sections of the new GCSE and A Levels. The resources are accompanied by expert interviews, Society lectures and 60 second guides, all of which support different elements of school geography. During the year, the Society also published subject overviews for the four core elements of the new A Level course which have been welcomed by teachers, and new resources on Russia, mapping London and glaciation were recognised by a Silver Award from the Geographical Association (GA).

Entrants to the 2015 Young Geographer of the Year competition were asked the question ‘Why does Antarctica matter?’. Nearly 1,500 entries from school students aged 8-19 were received for final judging by the Society, making it the most successful competition to date. Alongside the competition for students, the Society also recognises the work of a trainee or newly qualified teacher through the Rex Walford Award.

The Society also works in partnership with other organisations to develop high quality teaching and learning resources. In particular, the Discovering Antarctica website, developed jointly
with the British Antarctic Survey, British Antarctic Territory and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, was redesigned during 2015 to enable it to be used on a wide range of mobile devices. And the Discovering Galapagos website, developed jointly with the Galapagos Conservation Trust and completed in early 2015, was highly commended by the GA.

Enduring Eye: The Antarctic Legacy of Sir Ernest Shackleton and Frank Hurley – the Society’s innovative exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914-17) led by Sir Ernest Shackleton – opened in the Society’s Pavilion on 21 November 2015, exactly 100 years after the crushed Endurance sank beneath the ice of the Weddell Sea. The exhibition is one of the largest to draw on the Society’s Collections, and its production included the digitisation of 68 of Hurley’s iconic glass plate negatives making the detailed images available to the public for the first time. By the end of 2015, 15,000 people had attended the exhibition, and funding was in place, from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a private donor, to tour the exhibition to four other UK venues in 2016 and 2017.

The exhibition was accompanied by a programme of events during autumn 2015 including a screening of the film South, Hurley’s film record of the expedition, which attracted an audience of nearly 500. In addition, Meredith Hooper, the exhibition’s curator, gave a lecture in the Monday night series as well as the annual children’s lecture about Endurance.

The number of people accessing the Society’s Collections in other ways – through using the Foyle Reading Room, and attending Be Inspired talks, On View displays and other presentations – reached over 7,500 during 2015. Of these, nearly 60% were non-members.

During the year, almost 21,000 people attended 50 events as part of the vibrant London programme. The Society’s series of 30 Monday night lectures regularly attracted audiences of over 600 throughout 2015 with topics ranging from the Ebola outbreak and the discovery of HMS Erebus to migration and the Nepalese earthquake. Twenty of the year’s lectures are available to members to view online.

The nine UK regional branches and the Regional Theatres Programme enabled the Society to provide geographical lectures, talks and field visits across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Regional Theatres Programme worked with local theatres to give high profile speakers a platform and, in 2015, speakers including Jago Cooper, Callum Roberts and Iain Stewart attracted nearly 2,500 people.

The Society’s regional programme of events is organised by volunteer committees and ensures that Fellows, members and the public can engage with the Society outside London and the southeast. In 2015, more than 150 events were organised including field visits to the carbon neutral village of Ashton Hayes and Steart Marshes as well as talks, ranging from the
impacts of global tourism to the use of photography on expeditions. A debate on the future of upland farming featuring expert witnesses was organised by the North West region and attracted a sell-out audience of 170. This level of regional activity highlights the appetite for geographical talks, field trips and discussions across the country. The Society also continued to have an active Hong Kong branch.

2.3 Reaching new audiences
The Society’s public engagement project, Discovering Britain, entered a second phase of development in March 2015 with the aim of encouraging new audiences to learn about Britain through its landscapes. Short trails and viewpoints were developed to complement the existing longer geographical walks and a new, mobile-friendly website was soft-launched at the end of the year. During the year, 45 new interpreted viewpoints and 17 trails were completed. An estimated 50,000 people went on one of the walks.

The outdoor exhibition, Britain from the Air, also attracted audiences new to geography while it was on show in Leeds city centre in spring 2015. The exhibition, fully updated in early 2015, uses stunning aerial photography and 300 image-led stories to engage people with the UK’s geography – its peoples, places and environments. The feedback from the eight weeks it was on display, during which many tens of thousands of people engaged with it, was very positive.

The Society’s Learning and Leading programme continued to help realise the potential in disadvantaged young people at school, during a gap experience and at university, through high quality fieldwork and overseas travel with a purpose. During 2015, 22 young people planned and enjoyed their travel overseas on geographically focused gap experiences and as field-researchers working with an academic mentor as part of the programme. An independent evaluation of the programme commenced in 2015 and is due to report in 2016.

Building on the innovative and effective work done in previous years to engage new audiences with its Collections, the Society developed a toolkit during 2015 that brings together all the guidance on using the Collections into one place for the first time. This toolkit will enable community groups to access and engage with the Society’s Collections more easily. This is an outcome of the Society’s experience gained from working in partnership with diverse community groups over the past 12 years.

Students with special educational needs gained benefit from deep access to the Society’s Collections for the first time during 2015. The Society, arts organisation Flash of Splendour, and the University of Exeter worked collaboratively to produce an exhibition, workshops and a conference linked to the Society’s map collection and Michael Drayton’s PolyOlbion.
3 Geography in practice
Enabling professional and student communities

Objective Help meet the needs of practising geographers and students, so that there are vibrant, well trained, accredited professional communities, and highly employable students.

Context Geographical knowledge and skills are increasingly used at work and sought out by employers. Students have a keener interest than ever in training and employability in a world of greater competition. Professional accreditation is becoming more widely valued and rewarded.

The Society has developed as a professional body as well as a learned society in the past ten years. This is to meet individual needs for advising, maintaining and accrediting standards and in providing quality training for expeditions, fieldwork and subject knowledge. It is timely for that to expand.

The Society plays an important role, as the subject’s professional body, in helping to maintain standards in the practise of geography. It achieves this, with a wide range of audiences, through the provision of training, accreditation, professional networking and sharing good practice.

In particular

• The Chartered Geographer scheme continued to grow, aided by partnerships with trade and employers’ organisations.
• 2015 saw a significant increase in the numbers of teachers attending continuing professional development courses run by the Society.
• The Society contributed to the development, with the British Standards Institute, of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office’s Know before you go materials.

3.1 Developing a full programme of professional support and accreditation

By working in partnership with a range of organisations that represent the breadth of fields in which professional geographers now work, from environmental consultancies and insurance specialists to universities and local authorities, the Society is able to offer the benefits of Chartered Geographer status to an increasing number of professional groups.

Over the course of 2015, the Society built on existing and new collaborations with organisations such as the Association for Geographic Information and the Chartered Institute of Insurers to increase the number of Chartered Geographers to more than 630. This includes 11 people who gained CGeog Teach accreditation during 2015.

The Society was also an active member of a new cross-government geographers’ network.

The planning was undertaken in 2015 to underpin the Society’s introduction of (optional) accreditation for geography courses in UK universities from early 2016.

3.2 Sustaining a strong training function

Geography Outdoors: the centre supporting field research continued to provide expert advice and support, on a one-to-one basis, to individuals and small teams in the process of planning scientific expeditions or travel with a clear purpose. Geography Outdoors also ran 21 training courses, which were attended by over 340 delegates. The Society’s online Gap Year Toolkit, which provides support to young people considering a gap experience, was revised and updated.
in 2015. It provides advice on everything from what to do and where to go, to health precautions and responsible travel.

The annual expedition and field research planning weekend, *Explore*, attracted 200 delegates with a further 100 speakers, seminar leaders and exhibitors contributing to the lively and inspiring event. It included the inaugural Peter Smith Lecture, named for the Society’s former Vice President (Education) who had a passion for introducing young people to the outdoors through fieldwork. By the end of the weekend 65 expeditions were being planned and many attendees have since gone on to apply for Society grants.

The Society continues to be one of the biggest providers of continuing professional development for teachers of geography. In 2015, the focus was on geographical subject knowledge and key geographical skills and techniques such as mapping, using GIS, and fieldwork. During the year over 1,000 teachers attended a wide range of courses held at the Society and also regionally. This included a series of new training courses run jointly with Esri UK, the Field Studies Council and Ordnance Survey, and based on the *Rediscovering London’s Geography* project which was completed in autumn 2015.

Teachers working in schools facing challenges in their provision of high quality fieldwork continued to be supported by the Society through the *Learning and Leading* programme. In 2015, two fieldwork training weekends took place. Teachers from both weekends have reported increased motivation and confidence in delivering their own fieldwork activities.

### 3.3 Consolidating, sharing and promoting best practice

An important example of how the Society has helped to set and share good practice for the planning of overseas expeditions and fieldwork is through the development, with the British Standards Institute, of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office’s *Know before you go* materials. Launched in late 2015, the advice contained in the materials draws heavily on the British Standard 8848, which supports good practice for organising and managing visits, fieldwork, expeditions, and adventurous activities outside the UK. The Society also continues to provide ongoing training for expedition providers on the use of BS 8848 within their work.

In addition, the Society’s Expedition Medicine group contributed to the new edition of the *Oxford Handbook on Expedition and Wilderness Medicine* which was published in May 2015.

In partnership with the Field Studies Council, Ordnance Survey, Esri UK and the Geographical Association, the Society launched the Year of Fieldwork in September 2015. The Year aims to encourage more schools to undertake fieldwork by raising awareness of the benefits that fieldwork provides young people.

Following the publication of the subject content for the new GCSE and A Level courses, the Society started new collaborations with the awarding bodies, including a training day for teachers about the new courses. These partnerships will be developed further in 2016.

The Higher Education Academy funded the Society to document the teaching and learning needs of geographers in higher education. As a result of this research, a programme of subject specific events and resources is planned for 2016.

“I’ve never left somewhere feeling so inspired, full of ideas and excited about what lies ahead. I enjoyed the opportunities to deepen my knowledge of key topics for my future expeditions.”

*Explore* attendee
2015 at a glance

Research and Higher Education

- More than 1,300 geographers from 47 countries attended the Society’s Annual International Conference
- Society journal articles were downloaded more than 1.3 million times by researchers in 165 countries

Fieldwork and Expeditions

- Over 700 people from across the world gathered at the Society for the International Conference of Historical Geography
- The 600th Chartered Geographer was accredited
- Over £174,000 was awarded for field research projects and expeditions across the world
- The Society contributed to the development of new guidance from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on safer adventure travel and volunteering overseas

1,300

£174,000
Four new Environment-Sustainability grants, supported by the Deutsche Poste Foundation, were introduced.

- Geography Outdoors ran 21 workshops attended by over 540 people.
- More than 1,000 teachers attended the Society’s professional training events.
- The Society’s new teaching resources gained a Silver Award from the Geographical Association.

1,000

- Geography Ambassadors gave presentations to over 30,000 young people from 300 schools.
- Over 600 students from 70 schools attended the first two School Member lectures.

30,000
2015 saw: a **13% increase** in A Level candidates • **over 7,000 undergraduate students** accepted to study geography at

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**Policy, Governance and Fundraising**

- The Society’s new President, **Nicholas Crane**, was elected
- The Society joined **23** other leading academies and learned societies to publish the *Climate Communiqué*
- **Fundraising** was successful for Field Research Programme *Migrants on the margins*
- **£2.4m** was raised during the year in support of the Society’s work in 2015 and beyond

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**Public Engagement**

- **80,000** visitors to the *Discovering Britain* website downloaded over **15,500** walks
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- The Society’s website was used by over **1.9 million** people
• 108,000 people viewed *Enduring Eye* in person or online up to the end of February 2016

• The Society organised more than 300 events for public audiences, reaching over 30,000 people

• 300

• The Pavilion hosted ten commercial exhibitions on geographical themes

• Net income from venue hire fully covered the costs of running and maintaining the building for the first time

• 10

• 104 glass plate and celluloid negatives were digitised as part of the production of the *Enduring Eye* exhibition allowing the detailed images to be seen publicly for the first time

• 104

• Geographers remain among the least likely to be unemployed after graduation

• Universities across the UK
4 Growing our reputation
Building on tradition, independence and contemporary relevance

Objective Build further the Society’s strong profile and reputation, nationally and internationally, reinforcing and publicising its role as a leader among learned societies and a partner of choice.

Context The Society is one the largest, most active and most innovative of scholarly geographical societies worldwide. It is well known and highly respected in the UK. It has a well-developed international reach and reputation through its journals, the field projects and expeditions it supports, the Annual International Conference and an international membership. It is sought out for advice by other national geographical societies; and has two international branches. Global changes offer opportunities to establish stronger partnerships with selected nations and sister societies for the mutual benefit of the organisations, their memberships, and geography globally.

The Society further strengthened its reputation in 2015 as one of the most active learned societies in the UK and a leader among geographical societies worldwide, by building on existing activities and improving its public profile.

In particular

- The Society significantly improved its levels of media coverage in 2015, across the whole range of activities.
- The Society’s journals remained a flagship offering for the academic community in the UK and globally in terms of readership, helping to support the standing of UK geography in the world.
- The Society maintained a strong network of international contacts, liaisons and partnerships in 2015, aiding its work, reputation and outreach.

4.1 Developing and consolidating bilateral relationships

During 2015, the Society led (with the Research Information Network) a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council to share good practice, and support learned societies in their strategic planning. The project drew on the experience of a number of learned societies in the UK, including the Society, for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Working relationships were sustained with sister bodies, the Association for Geographic Information (AGI), the Field Studies Council (FSC) and the Geographical Association (GA); and liaison maintained with the International Geographical Union (IGU). In addition, the development of the Enduring Eye exhibition enabled a deepening of relationships with organisations linked to the polar regions, including the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, the British Antarctic Territory (FCO) and the British Antarctic Survey. The Society also maintained relationships with a multitude of exploration societies, university geography societies and with very many individuals and experts as part of its role as a world centre for geography and geographical learning.

In 2015, the Society started working with representatives of geography alumni organisations to explore opportunities for mutual benefits and closer working. The Society also hosted the University of Oxford’s annual geography alumni lecture.

The Society continued to liaise with the Higher Education Academy and discussed with the College of Teaching how best to
ensure complementarity of activities, building on existing strengths.

4.2 Enhancing communication and liaison

Media coverage of the Society and of geography increased significantly in 2015 compared to recent years. The launch of *Britain from the Air* in Leeds generated coverage both online and in print including: the *Guardian, BBC Online, the Daily Mirror, the Independent* and the *Telegraph*.

Research featured at the Society’s Annual International Conference, generated over 300 pieces of coverage. This included national print and broadcast features as well as local newspapers and radio, and specialist press.

The launch of *Enduring Eye* resulted in a *BBC Breakfast* interview and widespread national press coverage. International press included RTE, Al Jazeera, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Der Spiegel*.

The Society’s work to highlight the benefits of studying geography at GCSE and A Level saw mentions of geography’s increasing popularity in both the *Guardian* and the *Times*, and a *Guardian* editorial on why geography is the ‘must have’ A Level. An opinion piece from the Director was subsequently published in the *Times Education Supplement*.

During 2015, work continued on improving the Society’s website. As part of this, all of the Society’s resources for schools were brought into the main website. Schools are now also able to book a visit from a Geography Ambassador directly and an online map allows schools to find their nearest participating university.

In total, the website attracted over 1.9 million individual users who looked at more than 3.5 million pages.

The Society’s presence on social media continued to grow during 2015, with Twitter (@RGS_IBG) increasingly being used as a way to contact the Society and Facebook becoming an effective way to promote events to public audiences.

4.3 Extending the international dimension of current activities

The Society’s four established international journals (*Area, Transactions, The Geographical Journal* and *Wires Climate Change*) sustained their reach and stature during 2015.

The Society’s core journals were widely read and cited across the world and achieved 1.3 million downloads in 165 countries. Professor Keith Richards (Cambridge) was appointed as the new Editor for *The Geographical Journal* and Professor Peter Kraftl (Leicester) and Dr Kavita Datta (Queen Mary University of London) joined the *Area* editorial team. The Society’s new open access journal, *Geo*, published its first 11 papers with innovative submissions from across the breadth of the discipline.

Four books were published during 2015 as part of the Society’s book series, which is one of the few remaining opportunities for academic authors to publish monographs.

New international partnerships were initiated during the year to support the Field Research Programme, including through the International Advisory Board.

The Hong Kong branch of the Society continues to flourish, with over 70 events organised during 2015. This was complemented by a schools outreach programme which reached 5,000 pupils at 35 schools. Committee changes have taken place within the Singapore branch and a regular programme of events will resume in 2016.
5 Enhancing our Membership
An important source of expertise, funding and enthusiasm

Membership is fundamental to the Society. Fellows and members provide expertise, volunteer help, funding through their subscriptions, and contact networks, all in support of the Society’s charitable activities. They are also advocates for geography and the importance of everyone understanding our changing world. Throughout the UK, and globally in more than 100 countries, Fellows and members are a community of geographers – professionals and enthusiasts alike – sharing their passion, knowledge and commitment to a vibrant organisation.

In particular

- The number of Society Fellows and members remained healthy and Fellowship, in particular, continued to grow modestly.
- Improvements to emails and social media made the Society’s communications with the membership more effective.
- 2,800 volunteers gave their time and expertise to the Society to support its work in 2015. The majority were members or Fellows.

5.1 Improving communication with members
Completing the installation of the new audio visual equipment in the Ondaatje Theatre in early 2015 enabled the Society to produce high quality recordings of the Monday night lectures for the first time from February 2015. Now available to watch in the Members’ Area of the Society’s website, work continues to raise awareness of them.

The social media plan agreed towards the end of 2014 was implemented during 2015 and resulted in new Twitter feeds being created to serve audiences specifically interested in higher education (@RGS_IBGhe), schools (@RGS_IBGschooys) and Society events organised by the Cheshire and North Wales regional committee (@RGS_IBGcnw). The number of followers for each of these feeds is growing steadily.

Young Geographers can now also communicate with the Society and each other through a closed Facebook group. The group features links, news and announcements from the Society, helping Young Geographers make the most of their membership. By the end of 2015, the group had nearly 500 members, around a quarter the total.

Fellows and members were able to follow Society-grant-funded fieldwork and expeditions through the InTheField pages of the website. These pages feature Tweets, Facebook updates and blog posts from researchers sharing their experiences and findings.
The Society news pages of the website continued to be a source of timely information about the Society’s activities and the number of pageviews for this section of the website nearly doubled in 2015 compared to 2014.

Towards the end of 2015, the monthly news email that is sent to all Fellows and members underwent a redesign to make it shorter and include news about Society activities as well as information about forthcoming events.

5.2 Enhancing recruitment and retention of Fellows and members

The Society’s membership saw modest growth in the number of Fellows and School Members, to reach a total of c. 15,900. Retention remained high, as ever, among Fellows at around 94%; while members continued to have higher lapse rates. Exit surveys of members provided useful information and even aided retention.

Young Geographer continued to be popular in 2015, and many A Level students now include their membership of the Society on their UCAS personal statement when applying to university.

Free, termly lectures for School Members were introduced in summer 2015 to provide an opportunity for sixth formers to hear directly from leading geographers. The first two lectures were attended by over 600 A Level students representing nearly 70 schools. The lectures were filmed and are available online for schools unable to attend. School Membership increase during the year reversed the slight downward trend in recent years.

More than 1,000 undergraduate students, from departments across the UK, visited the Society in 2015 to learn about the Society and how it can support them with resources, career information and expedition advice, and to work with the Society’s Collections. The online resources for those unable to visit were further developed this year to include a series of short films about the Society’s work.

5.3 Reviewing members’ benefits

Geographical, the Society’s popular magazine launched as a digital app in early 2015. All Young Geographers now receive the digital edition as part of their membership subscription, while Fellows and Ordinary Members can choose to receive it digitally rather than in print.

The Society continued to give thought to its regional offering during 2015. In the second half of the year, plans were developed and funding successfully sought to take Britain from the Air and Enduring Eye to six UK city venues in 2016 and 2017.

The first 21st Century Challenges event to be held outside of London took place in Newcastle in December in partnership with Newcastle University. More regional discussion events are planned for 2016.

The Society thanks its highly committed regional committees for organising events for members and the public during 2015. The volunteers who make up the regional committees are just a proportion of the 2,800 volunteers, mostly Fellows and members, who gave their time and expertise during 2015 to support the aims and objectives of the Society. In total, an estimated 1,500 days of direct volunteer support was given by speakers at events, Geography Ambassadors, expert advisors, editors and editorial board members, peer reviewers, grant reviewers, committee members and people in many other roles. This is equivalent to roughly six full time staff.
6 Securing the future
As one of the world’s largest and most active scholarly geographical societies

Objective  Enable a robust future for the Society, by increasing income sustainably, using technology effectively, and enhancing staff capabilities.

Context  The Society is an independent body with a strong reputation for quality and objectivity. In common with most other learned societies and professional bodies, it receives no core government funding. It is proud to have developed to be among the most dynamic scholarly bodies worldwide. Over the past 15 years it has grown to be recognised both for its work to advance geography with the research and scientific expedition communities, and also beyond, with schools, students, the public at large and policy makers. The strategy 2012-2016 builds on the breadth of our activities and reputation, seeking new ways to involve people and to increase our income.

The Society exceeded its income targets for 2015 and prudently lived within its budget expenditure. This resulted in an operating surplus on the General Fund of £270,000. The Council approved net transfers from the General Fund to designated and restricted funds of £725,000 including transfers of £200,000 to support forthcoming essential repairs and replacements on the building, on an income of £5.41m. Major income sources were membership subscriptions, Enterprise company net revenue, operating activities and fundraising. The Society’s activities were in line with its strategy and the income consistent with the five-year business plan (2012-2016).

The financial review (pages 24/25) sets out how the Society generated and spent its income in support of the charitable activities. 2015 saw a welcome increase in income from the Enterprise company, and in particular from venue hire. This growth meant that for the first time, net income from venue hire fully covered the costs of running and regular maintenance of the building.

The Society continued to receive substantial support from donors. Society-led fundraising resulted in more than £2m being raised or committed in the year for core work and projects in 2015 and beyond. This included support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Ernest Kleinwort Trust and Walter Scott Ltd for UK exhibition tours; major donor funding for 21st Century Challenges and Discovering Britain; the Nuffield Foundation for the Data skills in geography project; the HLF for digitisation of the Society’s film collection, housed at the British Film Institute; the Polar Regions Department (FCO) for the Discovering Antarctica website; the DfE and GLA for a geography teachers’ hub; the AHRC for doctoral studentships to work on the Society’s Collections.

Members kindly contributed £51,000 to the Appeals in 2015; and a range of donors supported the Society grant-giving with a total of £103,000. In addition some awards and donations from previous years supported work in 2015 and are listed on the next page.

A further c.£375,000 was generated by the Migrants on the margins project team to support the key field surveys part of the programme and contributions to two PhD studentships.
Corporate partnerships
A total of £287,000 was provided in 2015 from valued relationships with corporate benefactors and partners, as described below. Trailfinders renewed its corporate support for a further three years in early 2015 and Rolex agreed a further three year commitment from 2016. The Society warmly thanks them and other corporate partners who were mid-term in their sponsorships. £50,000 was also committed to Britain from the Air in 2015/16 by Craghoppers; a new relationship. Silversea renewed its Corporate Business Member relationship for three years.

Corporate Benefactors

**Land Rover** supported our core scientific expedition and fieldwork training activities, including Land Rover driver training courses, the loan of a Freelander to facilitate outreach visits, and the Land Rover Bursary to support one major field expedition each year.

**Ordnance Survey Ltd** supported our core work with schools and teachers, helping to strengthen geography in education, to ensure sound use of maps and GIS, and to reward excellence in teaching and learning.

**Rolex** supported our core work with and through the Society’s large, unique and iconic collections of maps, photographs, books, documents and objects, helping to underpin public access, conservation and new uses for, and users of, the Collections.

**Trailfinders** supported the Society’s work with the public, to inspire and promote the wider relevance and enjoyment of geography and to foster a greater understanding of our world. This builds on a shared common interest in informed travel.

Corporate Project Partner

**Esri UK** the leading provider of GIS technology, supported the Society’s Geography Ambassador programme and brought GIS expertise to it. Ambassadors inspire 30,000 young people a year with geography and GIS.

Corporate Business Member

**Silversea** engaged the Society in providing educative materials on their expedition cruise ships.

Other supporters

Owing to space limitations, not everyone can be mentioned but we thank you all warmly as every donation matters. The Society would also like to thank those who provided support in earlier years for projects which are now taking place, those who have chosen to remain anonymous, and those individuals who have provided fundraising guidance and assistance.

Education

British Antarctic Survey
British Antarctic Territory
Department for Education
Department for International Development
Foreign & Commonwealth Office:
  Polar Regions Department
Greater London Authority
The Nuffield Foundation

Fieldwork and expeditions

Fellows’ and members’ Appeal donations
Land Rover Experience
Learning and Leading project supporter
Peter Smith family & friends

Grants

Deutsche Post Foundation
Geographical Club
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Hong Kong
John Pilkington and the BBC
HM Qaboos, Sultan of Oman
Neville Shulman
Paul and Mary Slawson
Ralph Brown Memorial Fund
Rio Tinto plc

Information services and resources

NADFAS

Legacies received

Estate of Dr Rosemary Helen McConnell
Estate of Professor Bill Mead
James Will Trust

Membership services

Phillip’s Publishing
Stanfords Maps and Books

Public engagement

British Antarctic Territory
Discovering Britain project supporter
Craghoppers Ltd
Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Picturae
Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851
Shell UK
The Clothworkers’ Company
United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust

Research and higher education

Arts and Humanities Research Council
Higher Education Academy
Financial review

The summarised financial statements for 2015 on the following page provide an overview of the Society’s balance sheet assets, liabilities and funds, together with its sources of income, and expenditure of resources by activity.

In 2015, the Society’s annual operating result before transfers was a surplus of £270,000 on the General Fund. This was ahead of budget for the year. The result after transfers between funds including the transfer of £200,000 to the major repairs and capital development designated funds, but before investment and pension valuations gains/losses had been taken into account, was a deficit on the General Fund of £409,000 (2014: surplus of £59,000).

2015 saw higher levels of incoming resources than the prior year (excluding exceptional income), up 17% at £5.41m (2014: £4.63m) with the main increase year-on-year being in donations which provided new project funding, including for Discovering Britain, 21st Century Challenges, and the Enduring Eye exhibition. The pie chart for incoming resources demonstrates the point with income from ‘Donations, grants and appeals’ representing 21% of income in the year (2014: 11%) with only the gross income from Membership (30%) and Enterprises (22%) larger. Other sources of income also made important contributions albeit income from charitable activities was down slightly (4% versus 2014), mainly due to a smaller Annual Conference held outside London, but still at a high overall level by historic standards. The Enterprises business income grew by nearly £100k with venue hire providing 59% of the Enterprises income, up from 53% in 2014. Meanwhile, membership subscription income rose by £84k; with net income from membership, after costs, totalling £821k.

The General Fund contribution levels also reflected a lower rate of cost increases than for revenue thus allowing for a larger surplus than in the prior year. Thus 2015 costs, at £5.15m, were 3.9% higher than the 2014 total. The second pie chart shows resources expended by activity (with the effects of depreciation removed) and, as expected, the costs associated with engaging wider audiences have increased as a proportion of the total (18% from 15% in 2014) due to the higher activity levels reported above under income. The main area of cost reduction was in Enterprises (down 22% in absolute terms) as the prior year effects of the Oman exhibition Pavilion hire dropped out, some staff costs were reallocated to other areas following restructuring, and third party services costs were reduced in venue hire in 2015, leading to the achievement of better margins.

The consolidated balance sheet shows that net assets increased by £1.56m (2014: £1.56m increase also), largely reflecting the actuarial movement in the FRS 102 defined benefit pension scheme accounting which resulted in a reduction in the liability of £1.08m (2014: £839k increase in the liability). The Society has not recognised the defined benefit pension scheme asset of £425,000 indicated by the FRS 102 valuation at the year end. This put the Society in the position of having a level of Free Reserves that exceeded the target level (£1m) for the first time since the introduction of the policy.

In 2015, the Society completed paying down the deficit on its closed final salary pension scheme, as per the actuarial valuation completed for the Trustees of the Pension Scheme in February 2015. The Society has retained £507k specifically in a designated fund to meet any future payment needs arising from subsequent triennial valuations. There were no other significant events in 2015 that had a financial impact on the Society.

Independent auditor’s statement to the Trustees of the Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers)

We have examined the summarised financial statements of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for the year ended 31 December 2015 set out on page 25.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the auditor

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law and the recommendations of the charities SORP.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements within the Annual Review with the full annual Financial Statements and the Trustees’ Report.

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 issued by the Auditing Practices Board.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full annual Financial Statements and the Trustees’ Report of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for the year ended 31 December 2015.

RSM UK Audit LLP
Statutory Auditor, April 2016

The Pinnacle, 170 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes MK9 1BP

These summarised financial statements are extracted from the Society’s full audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2015, which were approved by Council on 4 April 2016. The full Financial Statements and Trustees’ Report will be submitted to the Charity Commission after the Society’s AGM and are available on the Society’s website www.rgs.org and the Charity Commission website www.charity-commission.gov.uk.
**Consolidated Balance Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed assets</strong></td>
<td>5,030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,319</td>
<td>6,349</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investments</strong></td>
<td>2,810</td>
<td>1,996</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>2,028</td>
<td>8,504</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current assets</strong></td>
<td>829</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1,981</td>
<td>2,875</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current liabilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-807</td>
<td>-807</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-fund accounts</strong></td>
<td>-161</td>
<td></td>
<td>258</td>
<td>1,858</td>
<td>-1,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets</strong></td>
<td>8,508</td>
<td>2,254</td>
<td>3,593</td>
<td>2,566</td>
<td>16,921</td>
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**Funds balances 31.12.15**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funds balances 31.12.14</strong></td>
<td>8,744</td>
<td>2,273</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>1,939</td>
<td>15,787</td>
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**2015 net Funds movement**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-236</strong></td>
<td>-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>762</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>1,134</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities**

**Incoming resources**

(see right for analysis by sources)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>841</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
<td>4,373</td>
<td>5,407</td>
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</table>

**Resources expended**

(see right for analysis by activity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-1,034</strong></td>
<td>-34</td>
<td></td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>-4,057</td>
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</table>

**Net investment loss**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-92</strong></td>
<td>-59</td>
<td></td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-46</td>
<td>-201</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**(Deficit)/surplus before transfers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-285</strong></td>
<td>-13</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transfers between funds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td>-6</td>
<td></td>
<td>682</td>
<td>-725</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**(Deficit)/surplus after transfers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-236</strong></td>
<td>-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>762</td>
<td>-455</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FRS102 actuarial gain on pension scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Designated Research &amp; New Initiatives</th>
<th>Designated Other</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>1,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**-236**             | -19        |                                       | 762              | 627     | 1,134   |

**£5.41m income by source**

(2014: £4.63m)

- 30% Membership subscriptions
- 21% Donations, grants, and appeals
- 13% Income generated by charitable activities
- 22% RGS Enterprises turnover
- 6% Investment income
- 5% Corporate supporters
- 2% Tenants
- 1% Legacies & endowment

**£4.78m resources expended by activity**

(2014: £4.61 m) excluding depreciation £374k (2014: 350k)

- 19% Education, expeditions, fieldwork, grants
- 18% Engaging wider audiences
- 11% Information services & resources
- 5% Policy, communications, media
- 14% Research, higher education, grants
- 15% Membership services
- 12% RGS Enterprises costs
- 6% Other, including governance
Governance

The Society is governed by its Council which largely comprises Fellows elected from and by the Fellowship. They represent the main areas of activity of the Society. Up to four of the 25 Council members may be co-opted, including a postgraduate representative, to bring further breadth, expertise and contact networks.

In 2014 and 2015, in line with recommendations of good practice by the Charity Commission, the Council identified the skills and expertise gaps that would be most helpful to fill in the elections to the Council in June. Fellows standing for election were encouraged to state how they met those identified gaps. However, this approach did not preclude any Fellow standing for election to positions relevant to their background. This development has been generally welcomed by the Fellowship.

Council positions are elected for a single term of three years at the Annual General Meeting, including a postal vote of the Fellowship. Elected Council members also serve on the appropriate Committee of Council to provide liaison between the two levels.

The Council met, as usual, three times in 2015. The Executive Committee of Council, which comprises the senior-most Trustees, met in the intervening periods as the need arose. Attendance at Council meetings in 2015 averaged 82% across all three meetings. The Finance Committee, which oversees all financial matters, met four times, as usual, and comprises a core membership of accounting, financial, legal and investment professionals.

The following Council members were in office at the end of 2015

**President**
Nicholas Crane

**Immediate Past President**
Professor Dame Judith Rees

**Vice Presidents**
Dr Michael Firth (Education)
Dr John Shears (Expeditions and Fieldwork)
Professor David Thomas (Research and Higher Education)

**Honorary Treasurer**
Mark Humphreys

**Chair of Annual Conference 2015**
Professor Sarah Whatmore

**Honorary Secretaries**
Dr Simon Carr (Expeditions and Fieldwork)
Laura Stone (Education)
Dr Nicola Thomas (Research and Higher Education)

**Ordinary Members of Council**
Dr David Anderson
Professor Phil Ashworth
Dr Jenny Balfour-Paul
Alistair Carr
Barbara Hamnett MBE
Dr Vanessa Lawrence CB
Peter Mather
Dr Emma Mawdsley
Dr Kathryn Monk
Professor Joe Painter
Greg Thomas

The following also served as Council Members until June 2015:
Paul Baker
Professor Alison Blunt
Llinos Brown
Andrew Linnell
Dr Mark Mulligan
Michael Palin CBE
Rebecca Stephens MBE

Professor Wendy Larner resigned in December 2015 following her appointment to a post in New Zealand

The Council is advised by specialist committees for Education; Expeditions and Fieldwork; Finance; and Research and Higher Education. Attendance at these committee meetings averaged 69% across the year. In addition, advice was provided by the Regions Committee, a small number of specialist Sub-Committees, including one for investments and, where appropriate, individual professional advisors. RGS Enterprises Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Society, is governed by its Enterprise Board.

**Staff**
The Director reports to the Council and has responsibility for implementing the Society’s strategy, assisted by a senior team of five departmental heads and a staff that numbered 58 in December 2015. One new permanent and one new fixed-term position were appointed in 2015, in line with the Society’s strategy, to support policy work. All staff members are based at the Society’s headquarters in Kensington, London.
# Contact details

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
1 Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AR
+44 (0)20 7591 3000
+44 (0)20 7591 3001
enquiries@rgs.org
www.rgs.org

**Director and Secretary**
Dr Rita Gardner CBE
director@rgs.org

**Development**
development@rgs.org

**Policy**
policy@rgs.org

**Education and Outdoor Learning**
Steve Brace
eol@rgs.org
Ambassadors programme
ambassadors@rgs.org
Education general
education@rgs.org
Geography Outdoors
go@rgs.org

**Finance and Services**
David Wade
finance@rgs.org
Venue Hire
venuehire@rgs.org
Membership Office
membership@rgs.org

**Public Engagement and Communications**
Caitlin Watson
pec@rgs.org
Communications
press@rgs.org
webmaster@rgs.org
Exhibitions
exhibitions@rgs.org
Programmes
events@rgs.org
Public Engagement projects
pec@rgs.org

**Research and Higher Education**
Dr Catherine Souch
rhed@rgs.org
Annual Conference
ac2016@rgs.org
Chartered Geographer
cgeog@rgs.org
Research Groups & general
rhed@rgs.org
Academic publications
journals@rgs.org

**Grants (all types)**
grants@rgs.org

**Resources and Enterprise**
Alasdair Macleod
enterprise@rgs.org
Enterprise Company
enterprise@rgs.org
Foyle Reading Room
enquiries@rgs.org
Picture Library
pictures@rgs.org

**Exhibitions**
exhibitions@rgs.org

**Programmes**
events@rgs.org

**Public Engagement projects**
pec@rgs.org

**Current regional coordinators**

**Chair of the Regions**
Dr Kathryn Monk
regionschair@rgs.org

**Cheshire and North Wales**
Dr Diane Spivey
cnw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/cheshireandnorthwales

**East Anglia**
Michael Hand
ea@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/eastanglia

**Midlands**
Martin Haslett
midlands@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/midlands

**Northern Ireland**
Professor Stephen Royle
ni@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/northernireland

**North West**
Tim Foster
nw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/northwest

**South**
Vacant
south@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/south

**South West**
Derry Corey
sw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/southwest

**West of England and South Wales**
Dr Phillip Toms
wesw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/westandsouthwales

**Yorkshire and North East**
Chris Speight
yne@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/yorkshirenortheast

**Hong Kong**
Rupert McCowan
admin@rgshk.org.hk
rgshk.org.hk

**Singapore**
Jeremy Torr
singapore@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/singapore

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**Contact details**

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
1 Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AR
+44 (0)20 7591 3000
+44 (0)20 7591 3001
enquiries@rgs.org
www.rgs.org

**Director and Secretary**
Dr Rita Gardner CBE
director@rgs.org

**Development**
development@rgs.org

**Policy**
policy@rgs.org

**Education and Outdoor Learning**
Steve Brace
eol@rgs.org
Ambassadors programme
ambassadors@rgs.org
Education general
education@rgs.org
Geography Outdoors
go@rgs.org

**Finance and Services**
David Wade
finance@rgs.org
Venue Hire
venuehire@rgs.org
Membership Office
membership@rgs.org

**Public Engagement and Communications**
Caitlin Watson
pec@rgs.org
Communications
press@rgs.org
webmaster@rgs.org
Exhibitions
exhibitions@rgs.org
Programmes
events@rgs.org
Public Engagement projects
pec@rgs.org

**Research and Higher Education**
Dr Catherine Souch
rhed@rgs.org
Annual Conference
ac2016@rgs.org
Chartered Geographer
cgeog@rgs.org
Research Groups & general
rhed@rgs.org
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enterprise@rgs.org
Enterprise Company
enterprise@rgs.org
Foyle Reading Room
enquiries@rgs.org
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pec@rgs.org

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cnw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/cheshireandnorthwales

**East Anglia**
Michael Hand
ea@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/eastanglia

**Midlands**
Martin Haslett
midlands@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/midlands

**Northern Ireland**
Professor Stephen Royle
ni@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/northernireland

**North West**
Tim Foster
nw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/northwest

**South**
Vacant
south@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/south

**South West**
Derry Corey
sw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/southwest

**West of England and South Wales**
Dr Phillip Toms
wesw@rgs.org
www.rgs.org/westandsouthwales

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Looking ahead

2016 is a milestone. In 1996 the merger of the Royal Geographical Society and the Institute of British Geographers was put into practice, following votes of both memberships in 1995. The Society has evolved, while retaining the strengths of both organisations to become the leading scholarly geographical society in the world and something of a role model. We have developed major new areas of work – engaging the public, enhancing teaching and learning in schools, and advocating persuasively for the discipline to government and others. We have developed further the traditional support for expeditions and fieldwork and for research that the RGS and the IBG brought into the merger. We have become the professional body as well as the learned society for geography. We have stayed true to our purpose: advancing geographical science. Our membership, which supports what we do as a charity, has grown and diversified, including a vibrant Young Geographer membership. We engage much wider audiences and more sectors than most other learned societies. Our work is collaborative, aided by volunteer support from across the geographical community, and an excellent contact network that has been built over the years.

Income has more than trebled, from membership, Enterprise activities and operations, and including the £34m or so competitively raised to help fund the Society's development. We are enormously grateful to our donors – individual philanthropists, trusts and foundations, corporate supporters, and Fellows and members.

With this context in mind, 2016 will be a year for reflection and planning the Society's next strategy, 2017-2021, and a year of celebration. In spring we will celebrate public access to the Collections with the start of the UK tour of the *Enduring Eye* exhibition in Manchester.

In summer, we will celebrate making geography accessible to everyone, with *Britain from the Air* making its first visit to London, in our garden and Pavilion. We will celebrate our success in helping young people from disadvantaged backgrounds realise their potential through geography, with the completion and evaluation of the seven-year *Learning and Leading* programme.

In autumn, the launch of the *Migrants on the margins* collaborative international Field Research Programme in Asian and African cities, will endorse the Society's work in field research. Our support for geographical research as a whole will be celebrated by the Annual International Conference in September, with an expected 2,000+ delegates in London.

In winter, we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Society's expedition grants and the 40th anniversary of *Explore*, by striving to make contact with as many of the 11,000 individuals who have been on Society-grant-funded expeditions and field projects as possible and reflecting on the impact of their experiences.

Our building is essential to our work and is now used by around 300,000 people per year. Thanks to the operating surplus in 2015, we will be able to undertake some pressing capital replacements and repairs. Our financial systems and processes equally must be upgraded, responding to the significant increase in levels of activity.

In and around these events, we will naturally be continuing our whole range of established activities and ongoing projects, seeking to focus on outcomes and impacts, as well as outputs. Finally, in December, after consultation with members and committees, the next strategy will be agreed by the Society’s Council.
Recognising excellence in 2015

The Society’s Medals and Awards have recognised excellence in the breadth of geographical research, practice and public promotion since the foundation of the Society in 1830.

The two Royal Medals (The Founder’s and Patron’s Medals) are among the highest international accolades. They are awarded for ‘the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery’.

In 2015 Her Majesty the Queen approved the award of the Royal Medals as follows:

**Founder’s Medal**
**Professor Michael Batty CBE**
‘for development and promotion of the geographical science of cities’

**Patron’s Medal**
**Paul Theroux**
‘for the encouragement of geographical discovery through travel writing’

The Society further recognised excellence through the Young Geographer of the Year Awards, with over 1,150 entries from 300 schools (with thousands more students taking part in in-school competitions), and the Rex Walford Award to recognise newly qualified teachers. 24 Excellence Awards were made to the individuals who achieved the highest marks in GCSE, A Level and International Baccalaureate examinations in Geography.

The Society’s Council made the following awards:

**Victoria Medal**
**Professor Stephen Daniels**
‘for research excellence in cultural geography’

**Busk Medal**
**Jayalaxshmi Mistry**
‘for policy-relevant, conservation-related research in the Global South’

**Cherry Kearton Medal & Award**
**Sebastião Salgado**
‘for excellence in Amazonian photography as a record of natural history’

**Murchison Award**
**Professor Gill Valentine**
‘for publications relating to the geography of difference, equality and diversity’

**Back Award**
**Professor David Martin**
‘for influencing policy with respect to the census and its applications’

**Cuthbert Peek Award**
**Professor Heiko Balzter**
‘for advancing geographical knowledge of human impact through earth observation’

**Gill Memorial Award**
**Charlotte Lemanski**
‘for early career achievement in the field of urban geography’

**Ness Award**
**Robert Macfarlane**
‘for popularising geography through writing about landscapes, place, travel and nature’

**Ordnance Survey Awards (two awards)**
**Andrew Emms**
**Raphael Heath**
‘for excellence in geography education at the secondary level’

**Taylor & Francis Award**
**Professor David Lambert**
‘for leadership in the profession and practice of teaching geography’

**Alfred Steers Dissertation Prize**
**Christine McKenna**
‘for the undergraduate geography dissertation judged to be the best in 2014’

**Area Prize**
**Rory Horner**
‘for the best article in the journal by a new researcher’

**Geographical Award**
**Alain Hubert**
‘for furthering the understanding of polar scientific research in Antarctica’

**Honorary Fellowship**
**Professor Peter Wood**
**Professor Kenneth J Gregory CBE**
‘in recognition of outstanding commitment and contribution to the Society’s work’
This report summarises the Society’s charitable activities and finances in 2015 in pursuit of its objective to ‘advance geographical science’. The Society’s work is guided by its current strategy and benefits a wide range of professional and public audiences. The Society is a vibrant organisation that seeks to balance its stakeholders and activities for the benefit of all our users and of geography. The full annual accounts and report can be found on our website and that of the Charity Commission.

If you would like to receive a copy of this report in PDF so that it can be read in larger print or using Adobe Reader software, please visit www.rgs.org/annualreview

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