The Society

**Vision**
A 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.

**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\(^1\) in 2013 as the leading scholarly geographical society in the world.

\(^1\)International Benchmarking Review of UK Human Geography 2013

Registered Charity 208791
For the Society, geography is the ‘spatial discipline that helps everyone understand the world – its places, people and environments.’ And the Society’s objective, of advancing geographical science, has never been so important. So I’m going to begin by thanking all of you for supporting the continuing work of the Society. Every Fellow, member, donor and volunteer makes a difference.

This has been another exciting year and I encourage you all to explore the details in the following pages. By way of introduction, I’d like to share three current aspects of our work.

The Society spent considerable time and effort in 2016 planning its next strategy, which will guide work over the five years 2017-2021. Led by the Executive Committee of the Council, which comprises senior trustees and the Director, there was widespread consultation during the second half of 2016. This included consultation with the four main Committees of Council; representatives of the 11 regional committees; the Research Group sub-committee; the Professional Accreditation committee; the Policy Advisory group; the Society’s staff; and a consultation paper circulated to all Fellows and members. A number of discussions have been held among the Society’s senior management team and the Council. This work continues into 2017, with the Council formally agreeing the strategy.

Autumn 2016 saw the start of the Society’s international Field Research Programme, Migrants on the margins. In collaboration with the universities of Sussex, SOAS and Durham and research institutes in each of the four cities that are being studied, this is the first time the Society has engaged in a largely urban project. It is led by Professor Mike Collyer at the University of Sussex. The choice of topic reflects the fact that migration of the rural poor to cities in Africa and Asia will be one of the defining global issues of the 21st century. The first field research meeting, to plan the 2017 field surveys, was held in Colombo in early October. This followed the success, led by the research team, in raising c £1m in support of the project, which is scheduled to end in December 2020. Thanks are warmly extended to the Fellows and members who donated in support of this project.

The Society’s Collections were in the limelight too in 2016. The Enduring Eye exhibition, drawing on the Society’s extraordinary collection of Hurley glass plate negatives, completed its three month exhibition in London in February 2016. Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, it started a four-city UK tour in Manchester in summer 2016, to be followed by Birmingham and Edinburgh in 2017 and Hull in 2018.

Little known among the Society’s Collections is the archive of moving images, stored at the British Film Institute (BFI). A further £150,000 grant in 2016 from the Heritage Lottery Fund means this is about to change. The films are being digitised by specialists at the BFI and will become available to the public in digital form in 2017. This includes the film of the first flight over Everest in 1933.

None of the above would have been possible without the dedication and expertise of the staff at the Society. Thank you all for putting in the long hours and for your devotion to the future of geography.

Finally, the Society was delighted to welcome HRH The Princess Royal as Patron.
From the Director

2016 was both a demanding and an excellent year. As the last year in the current strategy (2012-2016), it was the culmination of five years of growth and reputation-building across our breadth of activities; and a year with important new developments. We end the year with the Society and geography in very good shape and heart.

As a charity, our work continued to reach non-Fellows and members, both nationally and internationally. We estimate more than 3.5 million people in 2016 engaged with it, from conferences and seminars to scholarly journals; from training courses to online resources; from debates to interviews and lectures; from our Collections to geographical walks; from professional accreditation to grants and Ambassadors; and much more besides. These are described in the following pages that set out how we met our charitable objective ‘the advancement of geographical science’.

We also developed a number of new activities, partnered initiatives and projects, in line with our strategy. They include:

• A formal strategic alliance between the Society and the Association for Geographic Information that focuses on public affairs activities.
• Environmental Resources Management (ERM) becoming a new corporate benefactor, supporting our work in professional development; and the renewal of support from Esri UK and Trailfinders.
• A new programme to accredit degree courses, introduced at the request of some universities. This complements the Chartered Geographer professional accreditation, which reached 673.
• The Society being selected by the Department for Education as its partner to award prestigious teacher training scholarships to recognise and encourage high calibre trainee teachers. This followed the announcement of a national shortage of geography teachers, reflecting the increasing popularity of the subject. Entrants to GCSE and A Level reached a 15 year high, of 244,033 and 36,363, respectively.

We were delighted to receive donations of more than £800,000 to enhance the Society’s grant-giving for field research and scientific expeditions.

Finally, the culmination of two years’ work by Chartered Geographers in Whitehall, and the Society, resulted in the excellent news that a Head of Geography will be appointed within the Science and Engineering Profession in Government. This will be the first time that geography and professional geographers have been officially recognised in UK government. A great way to end the year!
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.

Geography ended 2016 in excellent health overall, continuing the upward trend in recent years in England and Wales especially – at school, in higher education, and in terms of recognition of its value by employers, parents and in government. The Society continued to be an influential, widely sought out, and effective advocate for the discipline.

In particular
- The contribution that geography makes to analysis, policy and delivery in government was formally recognised with the agreement to appoint a Head of Geography within the Government Science and Engineering profession.
- In response to geography being designated a teacher shortage subject, following its continued growth at GCSE and A Level, the Society was funded by the Department for Education to administer a Geography Teacher Training Scholarship programme.
- The Society and the Association for Geographic Information (AGI) entered into a formal strategic alliance in late 2016 to promote the understanding, use and applications of geographic information in a world of ‘big data’.

1.1 Making the case for geography
The Society continues to have strong links with networks of key influencers across the government, business, research and learned society sectors. The Society is a powerful advocate and well placed to ensure that the voice of geography and of geographers is heard where it matters.

During 2016 the Society worked closely with the Geographers in Government network to make the case for geography and geographers being formally recognised by the introduction of a Head of Geography under the umbrella of the Science and Engineering Profession in Government. Other links with government and closely related bodies were maintained throughout the year, including with the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Department for International Development (DfID), Environment Agency (EA), Defence Geographic Centre (DGC) and Ordnance Survey (OS).
After discussions during the year, the Councils of the Society and AGI agreed in late 2016 to enter a strategic alliance between the two organisations. This will build on the Society's expertise and experience in public affairs and the AGI's insight into the use of geographic information, to provide a stronger voice for professional geography in this field. As part of the alliance, a Public Affairs Manager will be recruited in mid-2017 to deliver a joint programme of work.

Advocacy from the Society, and others, over the previous six years to ensure that geography education in schools includes opportunities for high quality fieldwork and independent study, as well as preparing students for both higher education and employment, came to fruition in September 2016 with the first teaching of the new GCSE and A Level courses.

The importance of geography to key policy issues was highlighted through the four 21st Century Challenges policy forum events that took place during 2016. The discussions on migration, housing, flooding and energy featured leading researchers, practitioners and policymakers, and attracted audiences of around 100 people to each event.

Two well attended 21st Century Challenges public discussions also took place on the topics of social integration and energy supply.

1.2 Advising on geography
The Society's position at the heart of the geography community enabled informed responses to be submitted to six policy consultations on topics including the purpose and quality of education in schools, the impact of the UK leaving the EU on higher education, and the Research Excellence and Teaching Excellence Frameworks. The Society also continued to monitor the many changes occurring in higher education, working closely with the university Heads of Geography to respond to the Higher Education and Research Bill as it passed through Parliament, and on the implications of Brexit on students, staff and funding.

The Society’s long term relationship with the DfE, together with its standing as the professional body for geography and well-developed networks with both students and employers, led to the Society being funded to run the Geography Teacher Training Scholarship programme. Geography was formally recognised as a teacher shortage subject in 2016 and the programme – similar to those in place for physics, chemistry and maths – aims to help address the shortage of geography teachers by attracting high calibre individuals into the profession. The programme, which started in September 2016, will recruit 80 outstanding prospective geography teachers in 2016/17 and offers a £27,500 scholarship and support including membership of the Society and the Geographical Association.

“It was an excellent opportunity to explore this key issue across academics and professional groups.”
21st Century Challenges: Policy forum attendee
1.3 **Promoting geography to wider audiences**

To help geography to prosper and raise its profile, the Society promotes the discipline to a wide range of audiences, including the public, young people, parents and employers.

The Geography Ambassadors scheme continued to be successful at reaching young people with Ambassadors providing presentations in several hundred schools to c 30,000 pupils during 2016. Feedback from both teachers and pupils about the presentations – which explore the value of studying geography and the relevance of the subject to careers – continued to be overwhelmingly positive. To ensure the quality of the presentations, all Ambassadors, whether they are undergraduates, postgraduates or early-career professionals, participate in training sessions.

Two of the Society’s public engagement projects, *Discovering Britain* and *Britain from the Air*, reached large audiences during 2016 (see section 2), while even more people learnt about the Society’s work through profiles in the media (see section 4).
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.

Advancing and sharing geographical knowledge and understanding represents a significant proportion of the Society’s work. During 2016, the Society engaged with over 3.5 million people, including Fellows and members, scholars, field scientists, teachers, students, community groups and the wider public.

In particular

• Migrants on the margins, the Society’s collaborative international Field Research Programme, got underway.

• The Society’s Annual International Conference enabled almost 2,000 geographers from across the world to share and learn about the latest developments in the discipline.

• Discovering Britain, with its national spread of geographical views, trails and walks was launched publicly and the Britain from the Air exhibition was on show at the Society and in Birmingham and Nottingham city centres.

• The Society ran more than 450 live events – lectures, discussions, interviews, conferences, field visits and training courses – over the course of 2016, including those organised by the regional committees and Research Groups.

• The Society’s active support for teachers continued with a focus on resources and training to help with the first teaching of the new GCSE and A Level courses, including the first full year of the Data Skills in Geography project.

2.1 Advancing knowledge
The Society’s major Field Research Programme, Migrants on the margins, started in October 2016 with a meeting of the project team in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This was made possible by fundraising efforts over 18 months, led by the project team, which successfully reached the target of £1m. Migrants on the margins is a three year project focussing on the vulnerability and opportunities of migrants in some of the world’s most pressured cities, including Colombo (Sri Lanka), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Hargeisa (Somaliland). The project is a partnership between the Society and UK and international researchers, and is led by Professor Mike Collyer of the University of Sussex.
The Society’s grants programme, through the field research and scientific expeditions it supports, advances geographical knowledge and helps develop careers.

In 2016, the Society awarded grants to 63 projects, directly involving 155 individuals, with over £170,000 of funding. The projects ranged from investigations of ground water resources and indigenous land rights, to research on the geomorphology of desert wadis and transnational identities.

In September, an event was held to celebrate 60 years of Expeditions and Geographical Fieldwork grants. Over 11,500 people have been directly supported through these grants, along with very many in-country participants. Projects have been conducted in 148 countries across all seven continents. Close to 250 former grant recipients attended the event which was hosted by Sir Ranulph Fiennes.

During the year, the fundraising target for the grants programme during the strategic period 2012-16 was exceeded thanks to the generosity of donors (see section 6 for details).

2.2 Interpreting and sharing knowledge

During 2016, over 26,000 people attended more than 200 events as part of the Society’s London programme. The Society’s renowned series of Monday night lectures for Fellows, members and guests, regularly attracted audiences of over 600 to listen to talks on a wide range of topics including the making of British landscapes, the global politics of climate change and life in Yangon. The majority of the year’s lectures are available for members to watch online and short ‘trailers’ of the lectures are being used on the website and shared via social media to encourage people to join the Society.

The London programme of public events included the Discovering People series of interviews and the Discovering Places series of travel events. Discovering Places featured Kazakhstan, Nicaragua and Senegal, providing potential visitors with practical information and cultural insights about these less-visited destinations.

The nine UK regional branches and the Regional Theatres Programme provided a range of geographical talks, lectures and field visits for both members and the public across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 2016, the Regional Theatres Programme attracted over 3,280 people to 23 events.

The regional programme of activities organised by the volunteer-led regional committees was full and varied during 2016 with more than 160 events taking place. These included guided walks based on Discovering Britain activities, field visits to the Lion Salt Works in Cheshire and the cave system of Barbondale, and talks on topics ranging from extreme weather and Antarctic exploration to shark conservation and human migration.

Discovering Britain, the Society’s project to get people exploring the stories behind the country’s diverse landscapes through geographical walks, trails and views saw a boost in users following its launch to the press in May (see section 4 for details). By the end of the year, the mobile-friendly website featured over 350 activities.

The Discovering Britain website now also contains the images from Britain from the Air, the Society’s outdoor exhibition of large scale aerial photographs. The exhibition itself was on display in the Society’s gardens in London from 10 May to 12 July, before
moving to Birmingham city centre from 15 July to 11 September and then to Nottingham city centre from 8 December to late April 2017. Thanks to project sponsorship from Craghoppers Ltd and the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, over 1.5 million people were able to see the exhibition during 2016.

The *Enduring Eye* exhibition received over 107,000 physical and online visitors during its residency in the Society’s Pavilion from 21 November 2015 to 28 February 2016 and received widespread coverage in the national and international press during that time. An ongoing UK tour of the exhibition, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is exploring the connections between the *Endurance* expedition and local communities. While at Manchester Central Library (April-June 2016) it was seen by over 20,000 people and resulted in a gallery of local connections on the Society’s website.

Other events designed to increase access to the Society’s Collections, such as the *Be Inspired* talks and *On View* displays, attracted more attendees during 2016 thanks to wider promotion beyond the Society’s membership and immediate supporters.

“What wonderful and inspiring photographs. Such an informative and thought-provoking exhibition.”

*Britain from the Air* visitor
Almost 2,000 geographers from across the world attended the 2016 Annual International Conference, which was held at the Society in London over four days. The Chair, Professor Peter Jackson (University of Sheffield), chose ‘Nexus thinking’ as the conference theme. Sessions, plenaries and discussion panels explored the urgent need to address the interconnected challenges of food, water and energy security, through integrated research across the social and environmental sciences.

The conference programme also included field visits and exhibitions, sessions for postgraduate students and early career researchers, collaborative work by geographers and artists, meet-the-author sessions, and lectures sponsored by some of the leading geography academic journals. Media coverage of conference papers was again significant, building on links made with journalists during the previous year’s conference (see section 4 for details).

The Society’s Research Groups are at the heart of the success of the Annual Conference, with the majority of sessions organised or supported by the Groups. In 2016, the Digital Geographies Working Group was set up, bringing the total number of specialist groups to 30. During the year, the Research Groups organised over 25 events across the UK, as well as publishing books and journals and awarding publishing prizes, as part of their work to support the research community.

The 2016 Young Geographer of the Year competition gave pupils the opportunity to engage with contemporary geographical issues as they answered the question ‘How is Britain changing?’. Over 1,500 entries from pupils aged 8-19 were received for final judging. Alongside the competition for pupils, the Society also presented the Rex Walford Award to Richard Sutton, a new teacher, for the resources he developed linked to the competition question.

The Society’s online resources for schools, now fully integrated into the Society’s website, continued to be in high demand with the schools pages being viewed 1.85m times over the course of the year. Alongside written case studies and expert interviews, short podcasts and videos of geographers discussing a range of contemporary issues were introduced during 2016 and they have proved a popular way of exploring the issues.

In addition, new A Level topic overviews, written by leading academic geographers, were produced to provide an introduction to some of the key content, concepts and geographical theories within the new courses. They received a Geographical Association Publishers’ Award in recognition of the high quality support they provide teachers.

A new initiative to facilitate links between schools and universities got underway mid-year with an event in Oxford. The initiative is developing local programmes of subject update lectures for A Level pupils alongside subject knowledge and CPD events for teachers.

The Discovering Antarctica website, produced jointly with the British Antarctic Survey, British Antarctic Territories and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was redeveloped and relaunched in 2016. The improved site, which is now mobile friendly and has greater interactivity, received a commendation from the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers and was shortlisted for awards from the Educational Resources Association and BETT.
2.3 Reaching new audiences
The Society’s work to engage and support diaspora and community groups on projects linked to the Society’s Collections was taken forward during 2016 with the production in June of ‘Working with the Society’s Collections’. This is an accessible guide for community groups wanting to work with the Society on heritage projects. A workshop linked to the launch of the guide generated four new project proposals including ones that will explore the heritage of Gujaratis in the UK, and reinterpret the role of women in the abolition of the eastern slave trade.

The workshop was repeated at the end of October at the request of the Black Heritage Group and both workshops received excellent feedback.

The Society’s Learning and Leading programme drew to a close in 2016 after eight years of support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and teachers who faced challenging circumstances. Between 2008 and 2016, more than 255 young geographers and 158 teachers benefited from fieldwork summer schools for Year 12 students, support for school leavers to organise a meaningful overseas gap year, fieldwork masterclass weekends for geography teachers, and support to enable first year university undergraduates to take part in overseas field research projects. The evaluation report and project review to be published in 2017 will describe the project’s impact on raising aspiration and achievement.

As part of the discussions to inform the 2017-21 strategy, the Society is reviewing the opportunities to continue work to inspire those from less advantaged backgrounds and to contribute to social mobility through geography and fieldwork.
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.

As the UK’s professional body for geography, the Society helps to maintain standards in the discipline by providing training, accreditation and professional networking for a wide range of audiences including geographers in business, the public sector, higher education, schools and those undertaking independent fieldwork and expeditions.

In particular
- The Society’s support for field researchers and independent travellers was celebrated with the 40th anniversary of Explore.
- The Society began accrediting undergraduate geography programmes, providing independent recognition that quality standards, in line with the subject benchmark, are being met.
- The Chartered Geographer scheme continued to grow, bolstered by relationships with employers across a range of sectors employing geographers, including transport, insurance and consultancy.
- More than 1,600 teachers attended continuing professional development (CPD) events organised by the Society.

3.1 Developing a full programme of professional support and accreditation
As part of the Society’s work to support geography in higher education institutions, course accreditation was introduced during 2016. In the first round of the new scheme, 139 undergraduate and integrated master’s geography programmes were accredited. Society accreditation is one of the ways for a university to receive independent recognition that the knowledge, skills and other attributes expected of high quality geography graduates are being delivered.

The Society also offers accreditation of individuals through the Chartered Geographer scheme. During 2016, the range of events offered to Chartered Geographers and those interested in applying to the scheme increased in response to demand. New online resources were also launched in the second half of the year to better promote the benefits of accreditation and support the application process. By the end of 2016, there were 673 Chartered Geographers.
3.2 Sustaining a strong training function

The Society’s annual expedition and field research planning weekend, Explore, celebrated its 40th anniversary in November by bringing together many of those who have supported the event with their time and expertise over the decades. The Peter Smith lecture, held on the Friday evening, was on the future of exploration. Over 450 delegates, speakers and guests attended the weekend, taking part in lectures, workshops and informal networking. By the end of the weekend, many more expeditions and field research projects were being planned and many delegates have since gone on to apply for Society grants.

Explore is just one of the activities organised by Geography Outdoors, the Society’s centre for supporting field research, exploration and outdoor learning. It also provides expert advice online, and one-on-one advice for Fellows and members planning scientific expeditions or travel with a purpose. During 2016, Geography Outdoors ran 25 training courses spanning Land Rover Training, Off-Site Safety Management and using GIS in the field, which were attended by over 500 people.

The Society is a leading provider of CPD for teachers of geography at the secondary level. In total, more than 1,600 teachers attended CPD events organised by the Society during 2016.

CPD provision was enhanced during the year with the successful roll out of the Data Skills in Geography project. This project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, meets an identified need to enhance the understanding and confidence of both teachers and students in the collection, analysis and use of data.

In the CPD strand of the project, around 300 teachers during 2016 attended a wide range of regionally-based events that were delivered in partnership with universities, exam boards and field studies organisations. In addition, the project established a team of 15 regional ‘Data Skills Champions’ to provide encouragement to teachers and schools locally.

The Society also increased its CPD offer in 2016 as a result of the Greater London Authority supporting the Geography: A Subject Hub for London project, which delivered a programme of support for teachers across 15 London boroughs.

3.3 Consolidating, sharing and promoting best practice

In an important new initiative, the Society put in place support for the teaching and learning of geography in higher education. This was in response to the reduction in subject focused work by the Higher Education Academy and the growth in numbers of students studying geography at university. Largely externally funded, the work during 2016 included the introduction of course accreditation (see above); a number of training events including a ‘new to teaching’ event in November that was fully subscribed with 22 delegates; and a new section of the Society’s website that brings together subject-specific resources on teaching and learning.

The Society also hosted two meetings, in March and September, for university geography departments to discuss issues of equality and diversity in relation to the Athena SWAN Charter Mark and the Race Equality Charter Mark managed by the Equality Challenges Unit.
2016 at a glance

Research and Higher Education

• Nearly 2,000 geographers attended the Society’s Annual International Conference.

• 139 undergraduate geography programmes in 24 departments were accredited.

Fieldwork and Expeditions

• Migrants on the margins got underway with research partners from five countries meeting in Colombo.

• 40 years of Explore and 60 years of Expeditions and Geographical Fieldwork Grants were celebrated.
Over £170,000 was awarded for field research projects and expeditions across the world.

- Geography Outdoors ran 25 workshops attended by over 500 people.

- The Society started recruiting 80 scholars for the Geography Teacher Training Scholarship scheme.

- 1,600 teachers attended Society-run CPD events across the UK.

- 400 teachers and young people facing challenging circumstances benefited during the eight years of the Learning and Leading project.

Geography remains in an excellent position.
2016 saw: the number of students studying GCSE *increasing for a fifth consecutive year*, a *16%* increase in A Level

**Policy, Governance and Fundraising**

- The Society and the AGI formed a strategic alliance, ERM became a Corporate Benefactor, Esri UK and Trailfinders renewed their support.
- In total, **£1.9m** was raised during the year in support of the Society’s work in 2016 and beyond.
- HRH The Princess Royal became the Society’s Patron.
- **£813k** was raised for the grants programme, funding new grants in perpetuity.

**Public Engagement**

- Over **1.5 million** people saw Britain *from the Air* while it was on display in London, Birmingham and Nottingham.
More than 350 proactive pieces of press coverage were generated during the year.

350 PRESS COVERAGE

- The Society’s website was visited by over 1.2 million people.

138 FILMS

- 138 films were digitised to make the Society’s moving film archive publicly accessible.

£200k

- Platinum print sales of images from the Endurance expedition generated gross income of over £200,000.

- Enterprise activity generated net income of nearly £1m, including £719,000 from venue hire.
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 of 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’s reputation as one of the most active and innovative learned societies was reinforced during 2016 by continuing to increase media coverage of the breadth of its work and proactively collaborating with partners to increase the scope and impact of activities.

**In particular**

- The media profile of both the Society and geography was kept high owing to good relationships with key journalists and producers being developed and maintained.
- The international partners for the Society’s Field Research Project, *Migrants on the margins*, were announced.
- The Society’s journals continued to perform very well, providing a valuable resource for the academic community across the world.

4.1 **Developing and consolidating bilateral relationships**

Discussions with the College of Teaching continued during 2016, focussing on membership and the parity of chartered accreditation for teachers across the subject specific and generic teaching realms. The Society also continued to liaise productively with the Field Studies Council, the Geographical Association, Ordnance Survey, the examination boards offering GCSE and A Level courses, and the Council of British Geography (COBRIG). The Society remains the UK representative body for the International Geographical Union.

The Society maintained close liaison and engagement with the British Academy and the Academy of Social Sciences, through representation as a trustee, on committees and via the geography Fellows of both academies. In addition, the Society participated in the Strategic Forum for Social Science, which brings together leading institutions under the chair of Lord Stern.

The Society was invited to share its experiences in strategic development with trustees of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) and the Director was honoured to receive the Gold Medal of the RSGS, its highest accolade.

4.2 **Enhancing communication and liaison**

To enable more effective and consistent communications with key audiences, including Fellows and members, in early 2016 the Society moved to the MailChimp email platform and introduced standardised templates based on the Society’s visual identity. The clear calls to action now included in each email have increased click
through rates, meaning greater numbers are finding out more about the Society's activities.

During 2016, the Society’s website was visited by almost 1.2 million individual users who looked at over 3.5 million pages. As part of a coherent strategy for the Society’s digital presence as a whole, the scoping of a new website was underway by the end of the year. The new website will be live by the end of 2017.

Media coverage of the Society and its activities remained high throughout 2016, building on progress made during 2015 in developing relationships with key journalists to profile geography as a vibrant discipline and promote significant aspects of the Society’s work. The press launch of Discovering Britain in May resulted in features in the Sunday Telegraph and the Guardian as well as the Director appearing on the BBC Breakfast sofa. Also in May, the Britain from the Air exhibition opening at the Society was covered by photo stories in the Evening Standard and the Times. When the exhibition opened in Birmingham in September, new images of the city in the exhibition also featured in local newspapers. The opening of the Enduring Eye exhibition in Manchester generated two BBC News Online pieces as well as local press coverage.

The Annual International Conference, held at the end of August, provided the basis for strong national media coverage of geographical research and key geographical issues including by BBC News, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 4 Today, Sunday Times, Guardian, Metro, Daily Mirror, Daily Express, Independent, City AM, Spectator, and Evening Standard. In total over 350 pieces of coverage were generated.

4.3 Extending the international dimension of current activities
As the leading scholarly geographical society in the world, the Society’s reach and reputation are global. The Society’s international journals (Area, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, The Geographical Journal, WIREs Climate Change and Geo) and book series continue to disseminate new geographical research, sustaining their reach and stature during 2016. 4,200 institutions worldwide subscribe to Society journals and 5,416 institutions in the developing world receive free philanthropic access. The Geographical Journal rose to fifth in the geography citation rankings during 2016. Five new books were published in 2016, and two published the previous year received prestigious international awards.

The international research partners for the Society’s collaborative Field Research Project, Migrants on the margins, were announced during 2016 as: the Centre for Migration Research and Development in Sri Lanka, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh, the Development Governance Institute in Zimbabwe, and the Organisation for Conflict and Violence Prevention in Somaliland.

Establishing a sustainable international exhibition presence, starting with the Enduring Eye exhibition, has proved challenging. However, discussions towards the end of the year with senior trustees at the Bowers Museum in Los Angeles look likely to yield a US venue and potentially a US tour of the exhibition.

The Hong Kong branch of the Society continued to have a lively programme of events, with over 68 organised during 2016. A programme of events also took place in Singapore during the year.
5 Enhancing our membership

An important source of expertise, funding and enthusiasm

**Objective** Reach and engage new supporters and retain the enthusiasm and expertise of existing Fellows and members, across the UK and beyond, ensuring a strong and growing membership of both professionals and enthusiasts who support our activities.

**Context** The Society draws heavily on its Fellows and members for their knowledge, advice, enthusiasm and contacts, and for their subscriptions which provide around a quarter of the Society’s income – the single largest source. The Society especially values its many loyal Fellows and members who have provided long term support. If the Society is to continue to develop in a sustainable way then membership needs to continue to increase year on year, while being mindful of not adding too much additional pressure on London events and facilities.

The Society is a vibrant community of geographers and those with an interest in informed travel and understanding our changing world. Every Fellow and member helps to strengthen the Society’s influence and each subscription supports the Society’s charitable work in championing geography, inspiring the next generation and sharing geographical knowledge.

**In particular**

- The total number of Society Fellows and members was successfully sustained and is stable at 16,000.
- More than 2,800 Fellows, members and volunteers gave their time and expertise to support the Society’s work during 2016.
- The role of Fellows and members in extending the reach of the Society and encouraging new joiners is invaluable and greatly appreciated.
- In 2016, the Society had Fellows and members in over 104 countries worldwide including most countries in Europe.

5.1 **Improving communication with members**

As part of the ongoing commitment to communicate more effectively with Fellows and members, a review of all membership literature (including application forms, welcome packs, renewal letters and exit surveys) was completed over the summer of 2016. This, along with a closer working relationship between the membership and communications teams, has improved the consistency of messaging across all membership communications.

Work also took place during the year to keep the In the Field pages of the Society’s website...
updated with information about the fieldwork supported by the Society so that Fellows and members could follow the progress of the expeditions.

The Society news pages of the website remained a source of timely information about the Society’s activities. In 2016, resource was prioritised to ensure that at least two, and more often three, articles were published each week to enable the breadth of work being done by the Society to be profiled. All the articles were also shared on social media to extend their reach.

Geographical magazine, produced under licence by Syon Publishing for the Society, featured stories on sustainable tourism, fashion and food, the plight of refugees and endangered animals, among many others. Each issue also contained an article about Society activities and initiatives. Geographical is available as both print and digital editions.

5.2 Enhancing recruitment and retention of Fellows and members
There was modest growth in the number of Fellows during 2016, with the total number of members across all grades stable.

Rates of retention, at c 94% for Fellows and c 62% for members, were in line with previous annual levels.

Throughout 2016, there was a focus on improving membership administration processes and reporting. This produced better management information, enabling an improved service for new and existing members.

An ongoing, regular series of low cost activities continued to result in recruitment across all membership groups. One of the most productive, and highly valued, ways of reaching new Fellows and members remains through existing Fellows and members.

The number of School Members was at a steady state at the end of 2016, consolidating the modest growth achieved in 2015. The offer to School Members now includes free, termly lectures by leading academics for A Level students – over 800 pupils attended the 2016 lectures.

The number of Young Geographers grew in 2016, largely due to gift memberships and better articulation of the benefits of becoming a Young Geographer.

5.3 Support from volunteers
The Society thanks its highly committed regional committees for organising events for members and the public during 2016. The volunteers who make up the regional committees are just a proportion of the 2,800 people who gave their time and expertise during the year to support the aims and objectives of the Society. In total, an estimated 1,500 days of direct volunteer support was given, including speakers at events, Geography Ambassadors, expert advisors, editors and editorial board members, peer reviewers, grant reviewers and committee members – this is equivalent to roughly six full time staff.

The modest pilot of new regional activities that took place between 2014 and 2016 was completed. The pilot assessed different mechanisms for attracting individuals to serve on regional committees; facilitating members meeting on a more local basis; and trialling activity in city centres. The learning from the activities has been shared among the regional committees and has stimulated some new activities.

“From my first time at Explore to receiving the Land Rover Bursary ten years later, the Society has supported and guided my work in countless invaluable ways.”
Tom Allen FRGS
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’s work in 2016 benefited from a clear strategy, sound governance, committed membership, volunteer support and enthusiastic staff. The Society exceeded its income targets for 2016 and maintained expenditure within budget, to end the year with an operating surplus on the General Fund of £309,000, on a total income of £6.52m (2015: £5.41m). Increased income in the year was generated from donations and grants, operating activities and Enterprise company gross revenues, while membership income remained similar to 2015. The Society’s income growth over the five year period from 2012–2016 was consistent with the high level scenario in the business plan.

The financial review (pages 24/25) sets out how the Society generated and spent its income in support of its charitable activities. In 2016 the Society sustained, again, higher gross income in Enterprise activities at £1.77m (2015: £1.49m), of which £1.09m came from venue hire; net Enterprises income was £0.97m (2015: £0.9m). The Hurley platinum print sales were also very successful.

In January 2016, the new post of Facilities Manager was filled. A planned programme of major works and repairs in 2016 included a new fire alarm system and new lighting in the Ondaatje Theatre.

The Society sustained strong relationships with its donors, and received substantial new support in addition to funds given in previous years for work in 2016. Overall, £1.9m in new funding (2015: £2.0m) was given or committed in 2016 for Society-led and partnered activities: boosting the grants programme, supporting new projects, and for capital replacements. Esri UK renewed its corporate support for the Ambassador programme, Trailfinders renewed its support for learning through travel; and Environmental Resources Management (ERM) agreed to become a new Corporate Benefactor from 2017, supporting professional development.

£813,000 was donated to the grants programme for research and scientific expeditions, increasing the undergraduate, postgraduate and early career awards the Society offers. This includes £500,000 endowment from the Walters Kundert Charitable Trust to support field research in Arctic and high mountain environments.

£300,000 was raised by the Migrants on the margins team, from The Global Challenges Research Fund, to support the field research, and will be administered through the University of Sussex.
We thank everyone who has kindly donated in support of our work; those supporting activities in 2016 are listed below.

**Corporate Benefactors in 2016**
All are warmly thanked for their support over many years.

**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 Partners**

**Craghoppers** corporate support for the Society’s acclaimed *Britain from the Air* exhibition helped enable exhibitions in 2015/16 in Leeds, London, Birmingham and Nottingham. **The Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust** kindly provided complementary charitable support.

**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 the Society thanks you all warmly as every donation matters. We also thank staff and others who have provided fundraising guidance and assistance.

**Education**

Arts and Humanities Research Council
British Antarctic Survey
British Antarctic Territory
Department for Education
Department for International Development
Economic and Social Research Council
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Greater London Authority
Polar Regions Department
The Nuffield Foundation
University of Exeter
University of Nottingham

**Fieldwork and expeditions**

Arts and Humanities Research Council
Department for International Development
Economic and Social Research Council
Land Rover Experience
Learning and Leading project supporter

**Grants**

Albert Reckitt Trust
John and Anne Alexander
Deutsche Post Foundation
Dudley Stamp Memorial Fund
Geographical Club

Gumby Award
Henrietta Hutton Memorial Fund
HM Qaboos, Sultan of Oman
Hong Kong Branch
John Pilkington and the BBC
Land Rover
Neville Shulman
Paul and Mary Slawson
Ralph Brown Memorial Fund

**Information services and resources**

NADFAS

**Legacies received**

Estate of Fay Elspeth Langford
Estate of Mr Charles O’Brien
Estate of Mr Rupert Hughes

**Lowther Lodge**

Sir Christopher Ondaatje

**Membership services**

Cotswold Outdoor
Philip’s Publishing
Stanfords Maps and Books

**Public engagement**

21st Century Challenges project supporter
British Antarctic Territory
Discovering Britain project supporter
Government of South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands
Heritage Lottery Fund
Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851
The Clothworkers’ Company
UK Antarctic Heritage Trust
Walter Scott Ltd

**Research and higher education**

Arts and Humanities Research Council
Higher Education Academy
Financial review

The summarised financial statements for 2016 on the following page provide an overview of the Society's balance sheet assets, liabilities and funds, together with its sources of both income and expenditure by activity.

In 2016, the Society's annual operating result on the General Fund, after transfers between funds, but before investment and pension valuations gains/losses was a surplus of £309,000 (2015: £270,000). This was on the total General Fund income of £4.67m (2015: £4.37m), and was ahead of the prudently cast budget for the year. The total Society income was up 21% at £6.52m (2015: up 17% to £5.41m) largely owing to donations and legacy income being higher in 2016 (£1.31m) than in 2015 (£0.74m). The expenditure on charitable activities increased to £4.58m (2015: £4.35m), which equates to 82% of total expenditure.

The broad patterns of other income and expenditure in the General Fund remained similar in 2016 to 2015. Gross income and expenditure in Enterprise activities was up in 2016, to £1.77m (2015: £1.49m) and £800k (2015: £587k), respectively; net income rose by £70k, after contributions to building repairs and other costs. Membership income in both 2015 and 2016 was £1.62m; which generated net £870k after costs of membership services in 2016. Income from charitable activities rose by £242k to £1.34m. Proportional income is summarised in the first pie chart.

General Fund expenditure as a whole increased in 2016 by 10%, half of the difference being the increase in expenditure on Enterprise activities noted above. 2016 total costs, at £5.58m, were up 8.3% on 2015 (£5.15m). The Society’s expenditure on charitable activities rose in 2016 by £228k, up 5.2% on 2015, to a high of £4.58m. Of the total, 23% was from restricted (donated project and grants) funds, with almost all the remainder from the General Fund. Expenditure across the main areas of charitable activity showed some year on year variations, resulting largely from varying levels of conference and project activity, with spend on Research and Higher Education, Policy, and Public Engagement up, the latter owing to the 21st Century Challenges policy forum and public discussions and Discovering Britain project funding. Expenditure on education fell slightly compared with 2015. The second pie chart shows total resources expended by activity (with the effects of depreciation removed); the proportional values, in comparison with 2015, being affected by the higher enterprise costs.

The summary consolidated balance sheet shows net assets increasing by £1.65m (2015: £1.56m increase), excluding the change in the liability of the defined benefit pension scheme as calculated for FRS102. This liability of £1.03m (2015: £425k unrecognised asset; 2014: £839k liability) reduces the net assets movement to £613k. The Society’s actual, legal, obligation to funding the scheme is determined by the triennial actuarial valuation, the next one being at June 2017. The Society’s calculated Free Reserves at 31 December 2016 were £1.49m (2015: £2.05m).

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

Opinion

We have examined the summarised financial statements of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for the year ended 31 December 2016 set out on page 25.

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 2016.

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.

RSM UK Audit LLP
Statutory Auditor, 4 April 2017.
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 2016, which were approved by Council on 3 April 2017. 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>
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<th>DESIGNATED</th>
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<td>Investments</td>
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<td>Current assets</td>
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<td>71</td>
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<td>Net assets</td>
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### Funds Balances

**31.12.16**

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**31.12.15**

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<td>2,254</td>
<td>3,593</td>
<td>2,566</td>
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### 2016 net Funds movement

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<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 net Funds movement</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>-567</td>
<td>613</td>
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## Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities

### Incoming resources

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£’000</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership subscriptions</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations, grants, and appeals</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generated by charitable activities</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGS Enterprises turnover</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate supporters</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Resources expended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education, expeditions, fieldwork, grants</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging wider audiences</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information services &amp; resources</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy, communications, media</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, higher education, grants</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership services</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGS Enterprises costs</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, including governance</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Net investment gain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surplus before transfers</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>364</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfers between funds</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>-147</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surplus after transfers</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>-567</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actuarial loss on pension scheme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### 2016 net Funds movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
<th>£’000</th>
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<td>624</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>-567</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### £6.52m income by source (2015: £5.41m)

- 25% Membership subscriptions
- 20% Donations, grants, and appeals
- 21% Income generated by charitable activities
- 23% RGS Enterprises turnover
- 6% Investment income
- 4% Corporate supporters
- 2% Tenants
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.

Since 2014, in line with recommendations of good practice by the Charity Commission, the Council has identified the skills and expertise gaps that would be most helpful to fill in the elections to the Council each June. Fellows standing for election are encouraged to state how they meet those identified gaps. However, this approach does not preclude any Fellow standing for election to positions relevant to their background.

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 is cognisant of the value of diversity, while seeking to attract the most appropriately qualified people to guide the Society’s governance.

The Council met, as usual, three times in 2016 and attendance averaged 83% across all three meetings. In addition the Council held a special meeting to consider strategy. The Executive Committee of Council, which comprises the senior-most Trustees, met in the intervening periods as the need arose. 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 2016

**President**
Nicholas Crane

**Immediate Past President**
Professor Dame Judith Rees

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

**Honorary Treasurer**
Mark Humphreys

**Chair of Annual Conference 2016**
Professor Peter Jackson

**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
Felicity Aston MBE
Dr Jenny Balfour-Paul
Dr Vanessa Lawrence CB
Dr Emma Mawdsley
Professor Sarah Metcalfe
Dr Kathryn Monk
Professor Chris Philo
David Pyle
Maddy Thompson

The following also served as Council Members until June 2016:
Alistair Carr
Barbara Hamnett MBE
Peter Mather
Professor Joe Painter
Professor David Thomas
Greg Thomas
Professor Sarah Whatmore

The Council is advised by specialist committees for Education; Expeditions and Fieldwork; Finance; and Research and Higher Education. Attendance at these committee meetings averaged 73% 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 60. All staff members are based at the Society’s headquarters in Kensington, London.
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Looking ahead

With so many political changes in the world the Society is taking extra care to consider both external and internal risks to its operations and its income sources. We are an international organisation with a membership in 104 countries and our work is used by millions of people each year across the world. The Society is proud of, and committed to, an international profile and values its global membership – including the significant number of Fellows from the member states of the European Union. In a world of Brexit and Trump, to name but two of the many current uncertainties, organisations such as ours have an important role and responsibility to help sustain the international research effort to understand our changing world, and to share and debate those findings as widely as possible.

Our discipline, by its very nature as the spatial discipline, concerns patterns, processes and interconnections at levels from neighbourhood to global. Geography is practised worldwide, often through international collaborations. It helps to inform contemporary issues of national and international importance, from climate change to migration, community cohesion, social and spatial inequality, geopolitics, urbanisation, pollution, flooding and much more. Rarely has geography been of more importance, and happily this coincides with a time when its fortunes in the UK are high and rising.

The Society has an essential role to play in the UK as we face a level of change and disruption unprecedented in the past 40 years. We will, as we have done over the past 20 years, provide a strong, influential and stable voice for geography. Our role as an independent and respected forum for discussion provides opportunities to consider and share the latest research evidence aside from political influence. Our convening capabilities across leaders and communities of research, practice, education, policy and the public, enables different voices to be heard, new networks to be made and, hopefully, new communities to be reached.

So, as we look ahead we see heightened external risks and opportunities. Our new strategy, to be published in 2017, will seek to both manage perceived risks and respond to identified needs. Continuity will also be a vital strand reflecting the fact that the Society has grown and developed greatly in the past two decades, and that consolidation and stability, building on what has gone before, are seen as essential by the Society’s Council.

In terms of activities planned for 2017, our core work will continue: Monday night lectures, regional events, Annual Conference, publishing, support for teachers, expedition advice and Explore, grants programme, policy advocacy and a lot more besides. The first field season in the Migrants on the margins project will see thousands of migrants in four cities in Asia and Africa interviewed.

The new programmes, set up in 2016 ready for a 2017 start, as part of the new strategy, will be a significant focus for staff time and effort throughout the year. As will the many projects that continue from previous years, including the Data Skills project; Discovering Britain; Teacher Training Scholarships; the Enduring Eye and Britain from the Air tours; and the Geography Ambassadors programme. Last but not least we will be investing in a new website as a first stage in a new digital strategy.

All in all, a busy year beckons, as ever!
Recognising excellence in 2016

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) and the Victoria Medal are among the highest international accolades. The Royal Medals are awarded for ‘the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery’. The Victoria Medal is awarded for ‘excellence in research’.

In 2016 Her Majesty the Queen approved the award of the Royal Medals as follows:

**Founder’s Medal**

**Professor Michael Storper**

‘for scholarship and leadership in human and economic geography’

**Patron’s Medal**

**Bob Geldof KBE**

‘for raising global public awareness and challenging the causes of inequality in Africa’

**Victoria Medal**

**Professor Ronald Martin**

‘for research excellence in regional economic development’

**Busk Medal**

**Professor Jo Sharp**

‘for innovative field research and empowering others through fieldwork’

**Cherry Kearton Medal & Award**

**Dr Wendy Darke**

‘for cinematography of the natural world’

**Murchison Award**

**Professor Parvati Raghuram**

‘for publications contributing to the geographical understandings of mobility’

**Back Award**

**Professor Colin R. Thorne**

‘for contributions to the scientific study of rivers and the shaping of national and international policy on river and flood risk management’

**Cuthbert Peek Award**

**Professor Dom Kniveton**

‘for pioneering work on the impacts of climate change and environmental instability on human migration’

**Gill Memorial Award (two awards)**

**Dr Harriet Hawkins**

‘for outstanding early career research in creative geographies’

**Dr Joanna M. Nield**

‘for outstanding early career research in aeolian processes and arid landform development’

**Fordham Award**

**Marjo T. Nurminen and Juha Nurminen**

‘for collaborative research and writing on the cultural history of mapping’

**Ness Award**

**Andrea Wulf**

‘for popularising the histories of geography and of scientific botanical exploration’

**Ordnance Survey Awards (two awards)**

**Joanna Lee Debens**

**Kate Otto**

‘for excellence in geography education at the secondary level’

**Taylor & Francis Award**

**Dr Margaret H. Byron**

‘for excellence in the promotion and practice of diversity in the teaching of human geography’

**Alfred Steers Dissertation Prize**

**Rachel Meunier**

‘for the undergraduate geography dissertation judged to be the best in 2015’

**Area Prize**

**Sam Halvorsen**

‘for the best article in the journal by a new researcher’

**Geographical Award**

**Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team**

‘for outstanding collaborative work to foster student and wider public engagement with the Jurassic coastline’

**Honorary Fellowship**

**Mrs Hokey Bennett-Jones**

‘in recognition of outstanding commitment and contribution to the Society’

**Neville Shulman CBE**

‘in recognition of outstanding commitment and contribution to scientific exploration and the Society’

The Society further recognised excellence through the Young Geographer of the Year Awards, the Rex Walford Award to recognise newly qualified teachers, and the Excellence Awards made to pupils who achieved the highest marks in GCSE, A Level and International Baccalaureate examinations in geography.
This report summarises the Society’s charitable activities and finances in 2016 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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