

# The Society's Charter and Bye Laws

## The Charter

THE ROYAL CHARTER OF INCORPORATION VICTORIA, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting.

WHEREAS Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, Knight, and others of our loving subjects did, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty establish a Society, by the name of The Royal Geographical Society, for the advancement of Geographical Science, and of which Society we have become the Patron:

AND WHEREAS it has been represented to us that the same Society has since its establishment sedulously pursued such its proposed object, by collecting, registering, digesting, and, from time to time, publishing an annual Journal of Transactions, which have contributed to the progress of geographical knowledge; by carrying out, at its own expense, various important Expeditions in every quarter of the Globe, and by assisting other Expeditions with grants of money and otherwise; and whereas, distinguished individuals in foreign countries, as well as British subjects, have availed themselves of the facilities offered by the same Society for communicating important discoveries, greatly extending geographical knowledge:

AND WHEREAS the same Society has, in aid of its objects, collected a large and valuable Library of Scientific Works, Atlases, Maps, Charts, Plans, Views, Instruments, to which fresh accessions are constantly being made; and the said Society has hitherto been supported by Donations, and annual and other Subscriptions and Contributions to its Funds.

AND WHEREAS, in order to secure the property of the said Society, to extend its operations, and to give it a more permanent establishment among the scientific Institutions of our Kingdom, we have been besought to grant to the said Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, Knight, and to those who now are, or shall hereafter become, members of the said Society, our Royal Charter of Incorporation for the purposes aforesaid.

NOW KNOW YE, that We, being desirous of encouraging a design so laudable and salutary, of our especial Grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, have willed, granted and declared, and Do, by these Presents for us, our heirs, and successors, will, grant and declare, that the said Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, Knight, and such other of our loving subjects as now are Members of the said Society, or shall from time to time be elected Fellows thereof, according to such Regulations, or Bye Laws, as shall be hereafter framed or enacted, and their successors, shall for ever hereafter be, by virtue of these Presents, one body politic and corporate, by the name of "The Royal Geographical Society;" and for the purposes aforesaid, and by name aforesaid, shall have perpetual succession and a Common Seal, with full power and authority to alter, vary, break, and renew the same at their discretion, and by the same name, to sue and besue, implead and be impleaded, answer and be answered unto, in every court of us, our heirs, and successors, and be for ever able and capable in the law, to purchase,

receive, possess, hold and enjoy, to them and their successors, any goods and chattels whatsoever; and also to be able and capable in the law (notwithstanding the Statutes of Mortmain), to take, purchase, hold and enjoy, to them and their successors, a Hall or House, and any such messuages, lands, tenements, or hereditaments whatsoever, as may be necessary for carrying out the purposes of the Society, the yearly value of which, including the site of the said Hall or House, shall not exceed in the whole the sum of eight thousand pounds, computing the same respectively at the rack rent which might have been had or gotten for the same respectively at the time of the purchase or acquisition thereof; and to act in all the concerns of the said body politic and corporate, as effectually, to all intents and purposes, as any other of our liege subjects, or any other body politic or corporate, in our said Kingdom, not being under any disability, might do in their respective concerns.

AND we do hereby grant our especial licence and authority, unto all and every person and persons, bodies politic and corporate, otherwise competent to grant, sell, alien, and convey in Mortmain, unto and to the use of the said body politic and corporate, and their successors, any messuages, lands, tenements, or hereditaments, not exceeding, such annual value as aforesaid.

AND our will and pleasure is, and we further grant and declare, that there shall be a General Meeting, or General Meetings of the Fellows of the said Society, to be held from time to time as hereinafter mentioned; and that there shall be a Council to direct and manage the concerns of the said body politic and corporate, and that the General Meetings and the Council shall have the entire direction and management of the same in the manner and subject to the regulations hereafter mentioned.

AND we do hereby also will, grant and declare, that there shall be a President, Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, and Secretaries of the said body political and corporate; and that the Council shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Trustees, Secretaries, and not more than twenty-one, nor less than twelve, other Fellows of the said Society.

AND we do hereby further will and declare, that the said Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, Knight, shall be the first President of the said body politic and corporate; and the other persons now being the Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Trustees, Secretaries, together with twenty-one Members of the Council, shall be the first Members of the Council, and shall continue such until the election of Officers shall be made in pursuance of these presents.

AND we do hereby further will and declare, that it shall be lawful for the Fellows of the said body political and corporate hereby established, to hold a General Meeting once in the year, or oftener, for the purposes hereinafter mentioned, namely, that the President, Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the Secretaries, and other members of the Council, shall be chosen at such General Meeting, and that the General Meetings shall from time to time make and establish such Bye Laws, and vary and alter, or revoke the same, as they shall deem to be useful and necessary for the regulation of the said body politic and corporate, for the admission of Fellows and of Honorary and Foreign Members, and for the fixing of the number of the Presidents, Officers, and for the management of the proceedings, and the estates, goods, and business of the said body politic and corporate, so that such Bye Laws be not repugnant to these presents, or to the Laws and Statutes of this our realm, and shall and may also enter into any resolution and make any regulation respecting the affairs of the said body politic and corporate that may be necessary and proper.

AND we do further will and declare that the General Meetings shall take place at such time as may be fixed by the said Council, and that the present regulations of the said Society, so far as they are not inconsistent with these presents, shall continue in force until the same shall be altered by a General Meeting.

AND we further will, grant and declare, that the Council shall have the sole management of the income and funds of the said body politic and corporate, and the appointment of Secretary, Librarian, Curator, and such other officers, attendants, and servants, as the Council shall think necessary or useful, as also the entire management and superintendence of all the other affairs of the said Society, and shall and may, but not inconsistently with or contrary to the provisions of this our Charter, or any existing Bye Law, or Laws and Statutes of this our realm, do all such acts and deeds as shall appear to them necessary for carrying into effect the objects and views of the said body politic and corporate.

PROVIDED always, and we do will and declare that the Council shall from time to time render to a General Meeting a full account of their proceedings, and that every Fellow of the Society may, at all reasonable times, to be fixed by the said Council, see and examine the accounts of the receipts and payments of the said body politic and corporate.

AND we further will, grant and declare, that the whole property of the said body politic and corporate shall be vested, and we do hereby vest the same solely and absolutely in the Fellow thereof, and that they shall have full power and authority to sell, alienate, charge, and otherwise dispose of the same as they shall think proper; but that no sale, mortgage, incumbrance, or other disposition of any messuages, lands, tenements, or hereditaments belonging to the said body politic and corporate shall be made, except with the approbation and concurrence of a General Meeting.

AND we lastly declare it to be our Royal Will and Pleasure, that no Resolution or Bye Law shall on any account or pretence whatsoever be made by the said body politic and corporate in opposition to the general scope, true intent, and meaning of this our Charter, or the Laws or Statutes of our realm, and that if any such Rule or Bye Law shall be made, the same shall be absolutely null and void to all intents, effects, constructions, and purposes whatsoever.

IN witness whereof we have caused these our Letters to be made Patent. WITNESS  
Ourselves, at our Palace at Westminster, this eighth day of February in the twenty-second year of our reign.

By Her Majesty's command.  
EDMUNDS.



## The Bye Laws

As revised at the Special General Meetings held on 7 June 1976, 8 June 1981, 4 June 1990, 13 June 1994, 5 June 1995, 3 June 1996, 4 June 2001, 10 June 2002, 2 June 2003 and 6 September 2021.

### Chapter 1 Objects and Membership

1. THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY is instituted for the Advancement of Geographical Science. The Society's legal name, as set out in our Charter, is 'The Royal Geographical Society'. It is also known as 'The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)' and 'The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)'.
2. There shall be three categories of membership, each of which may have one or more sub-categories for which Council shall lay down regulations regarding eligibility criteria, benefits, rate of subscription and other fees payable. This information is publicly available in the 'Membership applications and benefits by category' document.
  - Fellows
  - Members
  - Organisational Members
3. References to "the membership" and "members of the Society" shall include all categories of membership set out in Clause 2 above unless the context otherwise requires.

### Chapter 2 Constitution

1. A Council shall be elected from the Fellows to conduct the affairs of the Society. The Council shall consist of a President, the immediate Past President, an Honorary Treasurer, the Chair of the Annual Conference and Vice President, three other Vice Presidents one in each division, three Honorary Secretaries, Regions Representative, nine other Fellows; and up to four further Fellows co-opted by the Council, one of whom shall represent postgraduate student interests.
2. The President, Vice Presidents, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Secretaries and other Councillors shall be elected by the Fellowship for a term of three years. The Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretaries may stand for re-election for a further three years. The Chair of the Annual Conference shall be elected for one year. In relation to all such elections, years of service are measured between Annual General Meetings of the Society.
3. In the case of the death, sustained absence or resignation of the President or other Officer in the course of a year of service, the Council shall have the power to appoint one of its number to perform the duties of the relevant office until the next Annual General Meeting.
4. A retiring President, Chair of Annual Conference, Honorary Treasurer or Honorary Secretary shall not thereafter be eligible for election to the same office. A retiring Vice President shall not be eligible for election as a Vice President or as a Councillor until

two years have expired since their retirement as Vice President. A retiring Councillor shall not be eligible for election as a Councillor until one year has elapsed since their retirement as Councillor.

5. There will be three thematic divisions to reflect and safeguard the interests that exist within the membership: Education; Research and Higher Education; and Expeditions and Fieldwork. Each thematic division shall be represented on the Council by a Vice President, an Honorary Secretary and up to three Councillors.
6. All elected members of Council should have significant and relevant experience related to the position for which they are elected. In the case of the Research and Higher Education Division these representatives must hold a position in research or in higher or further educational institutions or be persons of similar standing.
7. Any Fellow may stand for election to the Council or as an Officer. Subject to Bye Law 6, above, a candidate for election must be proposed by five or more Fellows whose names will be recorded on the ballot paper.
8. The Council shall appoint a Director and Secretary to manage the affairs of the Society under the guidance of the Council. The Director and Secretary is ex-officio a member of Council.
9. The Council shall ensure that all elements of the Society's policies and processes are without unlawful discrimination.

### **Chapter 3 Publications and Collections**

1. The Society shall publish or licence to be published, in any form, such periodical publications as may be required.
2. A member of the Society is entitled to receive publications in accordance with their membership category and subscription level. Subject to this Bye Law, the Council may make decisions from time to time concerning the receipt of publications.
3. The Society shall maintain a Library and a collection of Maps, Charts, Photographs, and Archival materials connected with Geographical Science to which members of the Society shall have access and borrowing entitlements, under such restrictions as may appear advisable to the Council and made known to the members.

### **Chapter 4 Fellows**

1. A person wishing to become a Fellow of the Society must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council:
  - (a) a sufficient involvement in geography or an allied subject through study, training, profession, research, publications or other work of a similar nature, or
  - (b) not less than five years continuous commitment to the Society as a Member, at the discretion of Council.
2. The specifics of the application process shall be outlined in the publicly available document 'Membership applications and benefits by category' and reviewed by



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2. From time-to-time Council may appoint Honorary Members to mark outstanding services to public life and to international affairs that merit recognition by the Society.
  3. Honorary Fellows and Members shall enjoy such privileges as the Council may from time to time determine, and shall not as such be liable to make any subscription payments.

## **Chapter 7 Members**

1. Any individual who declares a genuine interest in geography in a broad sense, such as through travel, may apply to join the Society as a Member in one of the sub-categories prescribed by Council.
2. Members are entitled to participate in consultations. They are also entitled to attend Annual General Meetings and Special General Meetings. They shall have no right to vote at any meeting of the Society, or on the election of Officers and Councillors, and shall not be eligible to be elected to the Council of the Society.
3. The specifics of the application process shall be outlined in publicly available document 'Membership applications and benefits by category', and reviewed by Council periodically.
4. Members may apply for Fellowship in the normal way at any time during their membership if they meet the criteria, but they may automatically be considered for Fellowship of the Society after five years continuous commitment if they wish.
5. Members may receive benefits and services from the Society according to their sub-category of membership, upon such terms and conditions and in such manner and to such extent as may be determined by the Council from time to time and outlined in the publicly available document 'Membership applications and benefits by category'.
6. The Council reserves the right not to approve an application for Membership if, for any reason that it shall not be bound to disclose, it believes the application is not appropriate.
7. A Member should not use any style after their name to indicate membership of the Society.

## **Chapter 8 Organisational Members**

1. There may be Organisational Members of the Society.
2. Organisational Members may be any of the following who in the opinion of the Council are interested directly or indirectly in the science of geography, including any government department or government institution or any educational, expeditionary, fieldwork, commercial, industrial or professional organisation or body.
3. The specifics of the application process shall be outlined in publicly available document 'Membership applications and benefits by category' that is reviewed by Council periodically.

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4. Organisational Members may receive benefits and services from the Society according to their sub-category of membership, upon such terms and conditions and in such manner and to such extent as may be determined by the Council from time to time and outlined in publicly available document 'Membership applications and benefits by category' that is reviewed by Council periodically.
  5. Organisational Members are entitled to participate in consultations. They are also entitled to attend Annual General Meetings and Special General Meetings. They shall have no right to vote at any meeting of the Society, or on the election of Officers and Councillors, and shall not be eligible to be elected to the Council of the Society.

### **Chapter 9 Honorary Vice Presidents**

1. The Council may select one or more Fellows of the Society to be Honorary Vice Presidents, who shall enjoy such rights as the Council may from time to time determine.
2. The names of Honorary Vice Presidents so selected shall be announced at the next Annual General Meeting.
3. Every Past President of the Society other than the Immediate Past President shall ipso facto be an Honorary Vice President.
4. Every Honorary Vice President after appointment shall remain as such so long as they continue to be a Fellow.

### **Chapter 10 Withdrawal and Removal of Fellows and Members**

1. Any member of the Society may withdraw from the Society by signifying their wish to do so, in writing addressed to the Director and Secretary.
2. Any member may be removed from the Society for failure to pay the annual subscription or other debt to the Society.
3. The Council may remove any member from membership of the Society if they breach the Code of Conduct.

### **Chapter 11 Annual General Meetings**

1. The Annual General Meeting of the members of the Society shall be held on a Monday in the month of June subsequent to the last Ordinary Meeting of the Session, or on such other date as the Council may determine.
2. Notice of this Meeting shall be sent out to every member, whose postal or email address is known, at least three weeks before the day of Meeting.
3. The following items shall form the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting:
  - (a) When circumstances allow, the presentation of the Medals and other awards of the Society.
  - (b) The President's Address.



working days prior to the SGM. No resolution shall be adopted unless supported by at least two-thirds of the votes so received or cast at the meeting.

5. The chair at a Special General Meeting shall be taken and the chair appointed in like manner as at an Annual General Meeting.

### **Chapter 13 Ordinary Meetings of the Society**

1. Ordinary Meetings shall be held on Monday evenings during spring, summer and autumn terms; or otherwise as judged expedient by the Council.
2. Fellows and Members of the Society will normally be admitted to Meetings, on showing their membership card which will be sent to all those whose subscriptions are not in arrears.
3. Members may bring one guest to those lectures that are indicated in the programme of meetings as being open to guests. Guests may also be admitted by invitation from the Council.
4. At the Ordinary Meetings of the Society nothing relating to its regulations or management shall be brought forward.

### **Chapter 14 Subscriptions**

1. (a) All members of the Society shall be required to pay on joining and subsequently on the anniversary of their joining each year an Annual Subscription, except as otherwise provided.  
(b) No Fellow shall be entitled to vote, nor shall any member be entitled to enjoy any privilege of the Society once their membership has lapsed.  
(c) Fellows except as otherwise provided may compound for their Annual Subscriptions on joining or at any subsequent time by payment of the sum appropriate to their age. Life compounding fees shall be calculated by an actuary, revised periodically and subject to approval by the Council. The Table of Fees will be available from the Society.
2. Any Fellow or Member who has completed a total of forty (40) years of membership of either the Society and/or of The Institute of British Geographers may choose to pay such reduced rate of subscription as may be decided by Council.

### **Chapter 15 Conferences, Seminars and other Functions**

1. There shall be an Annual Conference, open to all members on payment of appropriate fees.
2. The Society may organise such other meetings as it deems appropriate and charge accordingly.
3. No resolutions relating to the regulations or management of the Society shall be brought forward at any Conference, Seminar or other such Meeting.
4. Any group of Fellows with shared geographical interests may apply to the Council for permission to form a research, working or professional practice group of the Society. All approved groups will be governed by such regulations as the Council may from

time-to-time issue and as are set out in the documentation related to the Society's research and professional groups.

## **Chapter 16 The Society's Premises**

1. The membership of the Society may use the facilities and amenities of the Society upon such terms and conditions and in such manner and to such extent as the Council may from time to time determine and as are set out in the 'Membership applications and benefits by category' document and the Code of Conduct.
2. To avoid overcrowding at lectures or other functions, the Council may from time-to-time institute such measures as they think fit to control the number of persons seeking to attend them.

## **Chapter 17 Council**

1. The governance of the Society, and the management of all its concerns, are entrusted to the Council, subject to the provisions of the Charter and the Bye Laws of the Society.
2. The President, any one of the Vice Presidents, or any three other members of the Council, may at any time cause a Meeting of the Council to be called; and when such a Meeting is to be held, every member of the Council must be notified with three weeks' notice.
3. In all Meetings of the Council, five shall be a quorum (not including ex officio and co-opted members); and all questions shall be decided by vote, unless a ballot be demanded. Any determination of the Council, whether by vote or ballot, shall, at the desire of any two members present, be deferred to the succeeding Meeting; but no question shall be more than once so deferred.
4. Minutes of the Proceedings of every Meeting of the Council shall be taken by the Director and Secretary or their deputy or, if both are absent, by some member of Council whom the President or Chair shall appoint for the occasion. The Minutes shall be circulated before the next Meeting of the Council, and at such meetings shall be approved by the President or Chair.
5. The Accounts of the Society shall be audited and approved by the Council each year; and at the Annual General Meeting the Council shall present a complete statement thereof, together with a Report on the general affairs of the Society during the preceding year.
6. There shall also be permanent working Committees of Council. The number, designation, and purposes of such Committees shall be arranged by the Council as, from time-to-time, may seem necessary. Committees should not normally have more than twelve (12) members, such members to serve on them for not more than two consecutive three-year terms. The three thematic divisional Committees shall each contain the Vice President, Honorary Secretary and up to three other Councillors elected for that division, as well as members proposed by the Council or co-opted by the Committee itself. The Research and Higher Education Committee shall contain three members elected by the Society's Research Groups, the Chair of the Conference for that year, and a postgraduate student representative.

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7. The Executive Committee is one of the working committees designated by the Council, and it shall be made up of the President, the three Vice Presidents, the Honorary Treasurer and the Director. It will be governed by the terms of reference agreed by Council. The purpose and authority of the Executive Committee shall be: to take decisions on behalf of the Council between Council meetings; and to provide on-going support to the Director and Senior Management of the Society.
  8. The Council empowers the Director and Secretary, with the approval of the Finance Committee, to appoint staff to carry out the business of the Society and to decide their job descriptions, conditions of service, and remuneration, subject to any Agreement with any Staff Association currently in force.
  9. The Council may invest the funds of the Society in the name of the Society (or in the name of any trust corporation or bank or company as nominee) according to the investment objectives and Responsible Investment Policy determined by Council.
  10. The Society shall not make or distribute any dividend, division, or bonus in money, unto or between its Fellows.

## **Chapter 18 Officers of the Society**

### Section 1. – President

1. The President when present is Chair of the Council.
2. They shall execute, and cause to be executed, the Bye Laws of the Society; shall see that all the Officers of the Society perform the duties assigned to them; shall call for Reports and Accounts from Committees and persons; shall cause of their own authority Special Meetings of the Council and of Committees to be summoned; and shall propose, from time-to-time, to the Council such measures as shall appear to them conducive to the welfare of the Society.
3. When prevented from being present at the meetings of the Fellows or Council, or from otherwise attending to the current business of the Society, the President shall give timely notice thereof to one of the Vice Presidents, or, in their absence, to some other member of the Council, who shall exercise their authority during their absence.
4. In all Meetings of the Society and Council, except in the cases otherwise provided for, the decision of a majority of the Fellows voting shall be considered as the decision of the Meeting, the President or Chair having only a casting vote.

### Section 2. – Vice Presidents

1. One of the Vice Presidents to be nominated by the President shall exercise the authority of the President when absent.

### Section 3. - Honorary Treasurer

1. The Honorary Treasurer shall advise the Council upon all questions affecting the Finances of the Society and shall, by virtue of their office, be Chair of the Finance Committee of the Council.
2. The Accounts of the Society shall be audited annually by a Chartered or Incorporated Accountant, and an Annual Statement and Balance Sheet shall be prepared for

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submission to the Council.

3. Chairs of thematic divisional Committees shall be ex officio members of the Finance Committee.

#### Section 4. - Honorary Secretaries

1. The Honorary Secretaries shall assist the President in the performance of their duties, and shall exercise such other powers as the Council shall delegate to them from time to time. The Honorary Secretaries, by virtue of their office, shall be members of the relevant permanent Working Committees of the Council.

#### Section 5. - Director and Secretary

1. The Director and Secretary shall be a salaried Officer, appointed by the Council following public advertisement, and responsible for the management of the affairs of the Society under the guidance of Council.