

ECSITE-UK COMMITTEE MEETING

19 October 2004, Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, 11.00-15.00

Present: Tristram Besterman, Linda Conlon, John Durant, Sally Hall, Paul Jennings, Heather Mayfield, Stuart Monro, Sally Montgomery, Gillian Pearson, Melanie Quin, Peter Trevitt.

1 Apologies and Thanks

Apologies received from Gail Bromley and Roland Jackson.
Thanks to Stuart for hosting us and – in anticipation – for lunch.

2 Minutes of meeting held on 29 July 2004, and AGM

Both sets of Minutes were approved.

3 Matters arising

The 10th anniversary of the national lottery will be 6th November, a date on which both John and Melanie will be at the ECSITE conference in Barcelona.

Actions:

MQ/JD to produce and circulate a press release from the ECSITE-UK office, celebrating the SDCs

Ctee Members to supply text for one or more bullet points championing their our lottery-funded projects.

4 Treasurer's report

Paul reported that the finances are in good order. He advised that, as project activity and budgets increase, the Committee should see the financial detail.

Action:

MQ/John Gagg to add project budget lines to the quarterly accounts.
Also to add a forecast out-turn to end 2005.

5 Advocacy

5i Country updates

England – following the very modest settlement for five SDCs, OST and DfES officials are now considering ways in which longer-term funding might be made available, to established as well as millennium centres.

Scotland – the landscape is evolving. The official involved at a strategic level has been replaced by a secondee from Scottish Enterprise (Isabelle Bruce) as 'director of the Scottish SCs programme'. She is an operator with both short- and long-term vision. A long-term revenue-support budget seems likely to be identified within Education, at the £3.5 million level. The current settlement (for two financial years) comprises: transitional funding to address visitor-flow issues (at GSC and Sensation), and ReDiscover match funding (at Satrosphere, and ODE); revenue-funding; on-going capital support; extra support for joint collaborative activities up to 31 March 2005.

Action:

Scottish colleagues to supply details of the Scottish settlement to MQ for Westminster lobbying, to make the case for parity across the UK. Stuart advises doing so through independent advisers. The Council for Science and Technology is the obvious body.

Wales – Techniquest is in receipt of £1.05m from the Welsh Assembly Government for the year beginning 1 April '04, and a similar figure is in the indicative budgets for the two forward years. No structured PIs currently exist, and Techniquest intends to propose PIs to the Welsh Assembly, to build the current healthy relationship into the future.

Northern Ireland – W5 has a 5-year arrangement with DCAL, ending March 2006. The review process to inform the next period is still not complete, and the situation remains unresolved. The Northern Ireland Assembly is in suspension, so ECSITE-UK lobbying in Westminster must include mention of Northern Ireland.

5ii Prospects for long-term Government support of the sector

In light of the Government's new regionalisation initiative in England: ECSITE-UK should offer its independent science centre members as hubs for the emerging regional structures that will attempt to coordinate science learning provision (SETpoints, SLCs, ASE, the BA) and RDAs; museums however sit within the regional cultural consortia. Different patterns are likely to emerge in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

5iii Collaboration on IT-linked regional and local dialogue events

Further to the meeting of the ECSITE-UK Task Group on Public Engagement, and the 15 October meeting called by NMSI, a national strategy is to be devised to bring coherence to the work of the sci-comm sector (ECSITE-UK, the BA, national museums, SETNET, et al); accompanied by carefully costed bids for high-quality engagement programmes, delivered across the whole of the UK, to make measurable and tangible differences. The aim is to achieve national impact through concerted action: a national programme with regional delivery mechanisms, that a variety of deliverers can buy into.

This will need considerable funding, above the £1.2 million available through the Sciencewise scheme. RCUK's discretionary budget is a potential pot, particularly if the sci-comm sector makes strategic alliances with Universities (that have a requirement to spend on public engagement, and are facing falling numbers of applicants for science/engineering courses); other funding sources are end-of-year spend at OST, DTI, ESRC; and major trusts.

Actions:

Heather to complete notes from the NMSI meeting of 15 October at which this was discussed, for circulation to the Ctee.

Discussion to be taken forward by the **ECSITE-UK Task Group on Public Engagement** at a meeting in Barcelona (lunchtime, Thursday 4 November), to develop the 'hub and satellite' model devised by the BA/NMSI/ECSITE-UK for the failed Treasury bid.

5iv Visitor data; issues of benchmarking

The report on research conducted for ECSITE-UK by Tim Caulton is encouraging in content, but is frustrating in the patchiness of its data set. The problem is simple: different SDCs collect data in different ways for different purposes. The Ctee concluded that data the required and collected (for business planning, for PI measures, and for ECSITE research) must be standardised, and SDCs informed of the categories in advance of the research period. September would be best time for research.

Actions:

MQ to circulate draft data categories to the Ctee for refinement and approval (to include users, visitors, outreach; cost per visitor; visitors per staff member; exhibition space; percentage government support, with reference to Research Report and Annex).

JD/MQ to seek funding from, eg, Gatsby, Nuffield, to support the next Visitor Research exercise, combined with a PEST analysis, to inform how and when data is collected, analysed, interpreted, shared and used.

6 Sustainability of ECSITE-UK

OST Operation and Delivery functions are moving to RCUK/Swindon, so formally there is no guarantee that annual core funding will continue, even at the current <50% level.

Two Copus-funded projects are due to complete Spring 2005. A 'Society' bid has been submitted to the Wellcome Trust to build from existing project activity.

Committee Members reported that their dealings with the Millennium Commission are becoming increasingly pedantic, and even inconsistent. The ECSITE-UK led ReDiscover Round-3 consortium project has been funded, but contract negotiations have yet to be completed.

Actions:

In future negotiations with OST, **MQ/JD** to make the case that ECSITE-UK activity costs are increasing, and so the relative OST contribution is decreasing and therefore justifiable

MQ/JD to express the SDCs' concern that ReDiscover Round-3 and Round-4 projects will not complete by end 2005 if subjected to the current level of Millennium Commission bureaucracy, contract administration, and lack of partnership spirit.

7 Impact of Disability Discrimination Act

Life has done considerable work on staff awareness and is happy to share experience.

W5 has examined evacuation procedure, and amended signage following an incident that demonstrated its short-comings. Sally recommends the National Museums of Scotland's useful publication on designing galleries for disabled access.

All Scottish SDCs will receive an audit. A problem exists with the GSC tower, which does not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

8 The next generation of senior managers

Actions:

MQ/JD to approach the Clore Duffield leadership programme to investigate what support it might give for training/CPD for senior management in the SDC sector. (Tristram advises that Nicola Johnson, Sainsbury Centre, UEA, chair of the programme board, is worth approaching (as well as Chris Smith, programme director): Tristram mentors Dr Nick Merriman, archaeologist, on the programme.)

MQ/JD/Gillian to explore with Saïde business school, Oxford, the possibility of setting up a voluntary-sector/business MBA/MSc to train the next generation of senior managers for SDCs.

9 AOB

Life after ReDiscover

MQ/JD to meet Stephen Dunmore, head of the Big Lottery Fund to advise replicating the model of ReDiscover.

'Inquiry into A-level standards'

Mike Tomlinson's report will presumably go to consultation: the **next Committee Meeting** to discuss a joint response by ECSITE-UK and the BA.

Next chair

Successor to JD to be discussed at **next Committee Meeting**

10 Date and location of meetings

February 9, At-Bristol, 10.00-14.30

(with a meeting of the ReDiscover consortium project team the previous afternoon, 8 Feb)

May 17, London (Dana Centre), 11.00-15.30

September 8, Dublin (BA Festival), AGM 10.00 thru lunch; Ctee Mtg 14.30-17.00

A further date to be fixed for late Autumn 2005