

RSA Fellowship

21st century enlightenment

Fellowship Council
3rd Meeting Summary
Tuesday, 23 March 2010
RSA
8 John Adam Street London WC2N 6EZ
13.00-16.30

Chair-persons:

Tessy Britton
Paul Buchannan

Present:

David Archer
Mark Ball
Dave Biggs
Kevin Cahill
Irene Campbell
Andrew Chidgey
Dave Clarke
Stephen Coleman
Sybil Crouch
Gerard Darby
David Dickinson
John Elliott
Jemima Gibbons
Andy Gibson
Zena Martin
Charles Millar
Ann Packard
Lopa Patel
Bob Porrer
Charmian Love
Graham Sprigg
Helen Westropp
David Young

Apologies:

Gerry Acher
Avril Baigent
John Bale
Stephen Elliott-Hunter
Rosie Ferguson
Jackie Elliman
Frances Gallagher
Emma Harrison
Susan Jones
Emma Jones
Katie Moore
John McMullan
Alpesh Patel
David Turner

RSA Staff:

Stephen Barton, Head of Fellowship Services
Laura Billings, Fellowship Research & Strategy Manager
Jocelyn Cunningham, Director of Creative Learning
Michael Devlin, Head of Fellowship Networks
Steve King, Director of Operations
Belinda Lester, Director of Fellowship
Vivs Long-Ferguson, Senior Networks Manager
Olivia Rainford, Networks Manager
Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive

Live-Blog of 3rd Council session available <http://www.interactiveknowhow.com>

Overview of Activity – strategy, working methods, progress and resources

Tessy Britton, Chair runs through the agenda for the 3rd session. (*Presentation available*)

Tessy outlined overview of current activity, working methods, resources, progress with a focus on the “accelerators”; high levels of energy and enthusiasm are developing. Groups that benefit from both FCM convenor and staff member have been effective, those without FCM have had less impact, impressed with collaborative partnership between Fellows and staff.

The various working groups continue to review activity and debate emerging ideas, this approach remains flexible but critical. Some working groups are stronger than others e.g. Gender and Regions and new ones have developed e.g. Digital engagement.

[Fellowship Council online](#) has grown with increased usage and activity (83% increase since early Jan 2010). The site is now premium and is open to all Fellows (286 have joined). The space is emergent, unpredictable, multifaceted but Fellow-led.

Timeline: for groups began in January 2010 with a realistic, diplomatic approach, contrast between light/heavy levels of engagement where required. Impact is slower than hoped but the review process requires realistic goals. The activity is emergent and experiment so the review process needs to reflect what is actually happening and be realistic.

Challenges: Geography of the Fellowship and time constraints remains the major issues, these will remain ongoing issues and we will continue explore online tools and innovative ways of working.

Activity Levels: Engagement from FCM remains at 75% active but some not involved in working groups, working within their regional areas. We need to ensure tolerance and understanding in what we do balance against what we expect from individuals. Participation is not only about attendance at meetings. Commitment may vary and it is a mutual responsibility to find a way of contributing.

Comments

Tipping point as FC develops that we shift being exciting to inertia settling in. What advice/support is available for working groups that have not started?

It helps if more than one person drives a group forward.

What are the questions that each group is trying to answer? Examples of more complex areas?

Response

- The project framework and regional review are deeply challenging and composite.

Experimental at present and we want to encourage as many Fellows and FCM to be involved. We need to manage the dynamics and recognise individual capacity.

Action items:

- Minutes of second meeting accepted.
- Monitor participation levels of FCM

FC Review of the “Regions”

Bob Porrer - Key points from working paper (previously circulated) and feedback on plans *(presentation available)*

Bob provides a “whistle stop” tour of the FC Review of the “Regions”. The task for this group was to review the future regional framework and regional representation in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (but not the International Chapters, which would be considered separately). The group is seeking a more effective relationship between the Society and its Fellowship; in the past low levels of engagement, a poor relationship between the centre and regions and little sub-regional activity formed the background to the review. More recently, the Society’s new strategy and new forms of support (such as the appointment of Network Managers), had been matched by successful developmental work by some Regional Committees, but overall the picture was very patchy.

The changing context of devolution in the UK and, to a lesser degree, the trend towards localisation of government across England needed to be addressed. We needed to ensure we derive maximum benefit from geographically based structures and support and combine the energy and commitment of unpaid volunteers and RSA staff.

The group is looking at what is needed and wanted before deciding on structures and will be evaluating what has worked well and what has been less successful.

Primary focus:

- Transforming the Fellowship
- more equity - geographically
- How should resources be administered?
- the role of the Fellowship Council
- How to ensure democratic input from Fellows in regions and responsiveness to local, regional and national needs
- Need for flexibility and change while meeting Charity regulations

Outcomes so far:

- confirmed aims and objectives
- agreed timescales (a report to the FC meeting on 29 June so that a final report can be provided to the Trustee Board for RSA AGM in October 2010)
- collecting evidence - already the group has met with Network Managers, will be seeking comments/ideas from Fellowship (through questionnaire, meetings - including a number of “Road show” Meetings, and eventually Ning) and from current Regional Committees. The views of FC members are invited at any stage (please email Bob)
- Establishing some underlying principles, including
 - Starting from what is to be achieved and delivered
 - Ensuring Fellows’ needs area addressed and we are enabling them to shape their own environment
 - Enabling new and existing Fellows to see an easy way to involvement
 - Whatever organisation is adopted, any Regional Committees, Local Groups and Network Managers must have clear objectives (consistent with the RSA’s aims) and be measured against their expected outcomes
 - Conforming with Charity Regulations and accountability for the use of RSA funds
 - Any regulations/guidelines should be straightforward, permissive and flexible, to allow different modes of operation

- Democracy must underpin any new structures and the role of “regions” as a base for electing representatives (whether for the Fellowship Council, or, if they exist, National or Regional Committees) must be considered
- There will be a need for a variety of support mechanisms and structures and possibly a different balance of resourcing between the centre and the regions
- In all this we need to recognise the true value of the contribution made by Fellows in facilitating developments and consider how this can be complemented by the work of RSA staff.

In sum, Bob stressed that the following phrases should characterise the outcomes of the group deliberations:

- permissive and flexible framework
- light touch
- one size does not fit all
- bottom up, not top down

Comments

One size does not fit all supported; strategy will need to vary from region to region.

Bottom-up doesn't always work perhaps a more “customer centric” approach?
Understand the demand and reflect accordingly.

A structure that is open, accountable and transparent is needed.

Regions can create an impenetrable layer, projects can provide transparency.

Each regional group must have clear objectives and justify its existence and complement other RSA activities, working with and not against other groups.

It is inevitable that organisations such as the RSA should be constantly re-organising themselves and trying to find ways to fit criteria such as flexibility and openness. If we manage this for the RSA we will be an example to others and in the vanguard of thinking for member organisations.

There is a need for more flexibility across regions so information on both regional and central activities is shared and available to Fellows, many of whom live and work in different regions.

Action Items:

- Regions Questionnaire: if FCM have particular theme/question please feed through to [Ann Packard](#) ref: RSA:F/C regions questionnaire
- Refer [The Future of Membership Project](#) with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO); addressing contemporary issues for membership organisations.

Project Framework

David Dickinson & Jocelyn Cunningham: Emergent thinking from Workshop

(presentation available)

David outlined factors for consideration for developing a project framework for the RSA and Fellowship:

Differentiation – what is the nature of an RSA project

Adjudication – what are the criteria by which a request for RSA resources might be judged?

Equivalence – should the same criteria be used to evaluate all projects?

USP; what makes an RSA project from for example an Arts Council, *encouragement* provides a clue, so we may finance projects that are already funded.

Criteria developing; RSA alignment, quality assurance, unique contribution, managed risk (e.g. impact on RSA brand) feasibility, replicability, scalability, dissemination, visibility, time-bounded. *All projects should be assessed using the same criteria.*

Jocelyn outlined the scoping the objectives. How can we make this process easy, ensure the “light touch”, minimise bureaucracy. Ensure transparency, no preferential treatment or fast-tracking, clarity and feedback on the positives and negatives.

Next stage is to develop the input on ideas, tools and resources; what tools do we need; what already exists? Road test the ideas and work through some emerging projects. Develop Support surgeries, support the projects that need money but other types of support e.g. validation.

Comment:

Minimum size of projects, differences between activity and projects, process to support delivery and project management. Partnerships are key for smaller scale projects, RSA can help.

Fellowship Charter – which is still an ongoing process, provides a good starting point for emerging projects.

Projects should benefit a wider audience, should stop if considered weak, should attempt to take risks.

Manage disparity between replicability and scalability, again one size does not fit all.

Ensure we avoid very simple ideas being passed through a very simple system.

Action Item:

- Projects scoping: FCM to contribute and engage with the next stage of the process.

Seed Fund

Vivs Long-Ferguson: Presentation of Catalyst Fund and strategy for launch

The Trustee Board requested implementation of a central Fund for Fellows' to support emerging projects, this commission followed the development of regional venture funds (Australia & NZ, Scotland, North West, South Central) and build on previous and existing Funds for project development e.g. CoffeehouseChallenge.

The Fund will launch in several stages over the coming months and will remain flexible responding to Fellows ongoing engagement and participation. £60,000 has been allocated initially for the initial period to March 2011; £40,000 for catalyst fund, and £20,000 for growth funding. To coincide with this initiative we will also launch the revised Fellowship Directory with improved functionality to encourage Fellows to update their details and register for a Support Fund, a Fellows' "skills bank" to offer their expertise in specific areas; demonstrating that there are other ways for Fellows to contribute, receive help and support and nurture activity.

Early **April 2010** the [Catalyst Fund](#) launches via the RSA website. Catalyst Fund provides seed funding (£500 to £2000) available monthly (excluding January and August) until March 2010 when the Fund will be reviewed and evaluated. Catalyst is open to Fellows who wish to achieve success with a "social focus" and alignment to mission of the RSA. All Fellows will be informed through various online channels, through RSA Journal as well as face to face meetings and events.

During June 2010 Growth Fund will launch, this Fund follows the principles of the RSA Premiums with a maximum of £5000 awarded quarterly to later stage projects requiring investment. Criteria for this Fund will require alignment to RSA Projects and the Projects Framework as they develop over the next few months.

All initiatives are open to Fellows worldwide and will have been developed and shaped with Fellows, initial consultation with the Fund Working Group and staff.

By March 2011 we aim to have spent the allocated funds, have at 3 growth projects underway, 15 Fellows' projects that have benefited from both funds, and created an online collaborative, active hub, a central space for this initiative and other support mechanisms.

Comment:

Fund and Projects framework are being developed in parallel but will overlap as both complex initiatives are tested and shaped following Fellows ongoing participation.

Clarification of social focus – what does this mean and further information on alignment to projects as this development.

Evaluation; ensure projects that benefit from funds feedback and respond how projects progress.

CoffeehouseChallenge – key learnings are too limit the barriers, big ideals and small funding still enable impressive projects.

Action item: FCM are encouraged to assist with awareness of the Funds and Directory.

Matthew Taylor – RSA Update and Open Q&A

Impressed with the work undertaken so far and the commentary provided Matthew outlined the current status of the RSA rebranding process working under the banner of 21st Century Enlightenment (2ICE) and the work across his blog; an extended essay on this issue.

House: speaking to the values of the RSA; small symbols of branding and key messages; introduction of coffee station on ground floor; provision of the all open areas of the house as a meeting place.

External Affairs: Journal, Lecture programme; RSA Vision, RSA Comment and Animate; a menu of debate and discussion.

Projects; production of regular and high quality outputs; speaking to our objectives, recent publications include Prison Report, Peterborough Project and 20:20.

Fellowship: increase in activities and an ethos in keeping with RSA traditional values. Now we want to take this further and test and develop the tools and techniques and discover what really works.

Q&A:

Brand of 2Ice; what do you see happening?

Interested in how enlightenment is a metaphor, science should be blocked by suspicion, arbitrary authority. What kind of progress do we want, sustainability and well-being, people's inequalities, constraints of individualism, progress for progress sake.

How do we engage in this debate? The role of Council in developing this?

Council has a critical role to help develop ideas, how useful are they? What's missing? Take the concept out and have input from other intellectuals? The need to combine ideas, resources, commitments and values so that you can see the streams of energy coming together?

Language, use of the original Fellowship Charter?

Language is archaic, first 100 years dominated by prizes, second 100 year learned lectures, and the RSA continues to reinvent itself.

FCM can continue to contribute to the [2ICE](#) debate on [MT's blog](#) as he develops the ideas further.

Action item: MT and Nina Bolognesi to explore the re-brand work further with Council

Gender

Laura Billings, Strategy & Progress

Laura provided an update on the Gender Working Group on behalf of Katie Moore and others. Women currently make up 22% of Fellowship, although in recent years proportion of women has increased. A series of events addressing Gender are planned for the next few months including:

- Thursday 30 March; Gender event with 150 women coming, including 75 non-Fellows
- Further events planned for Bristol (Katie Moore) and Milton Keynes (Olivia Rainford)
- Archive exhibition viewable online; impact across time
- Promoting Ada Lovelace Day (24 March) encouraging people to blog about women Fellows outstanding in science and technology

Katie Moore developing links to other organisations and other networks e.g. Women in the City, tapping into other business and enterprise women groups.

Nominations Committee & Terms of Reference

Zena Martin & Irene Campbell

(Paper distributed at meeting and will be available)

Zena provided an update on Terms of Reference including additions on project working groups, disciplinary procedures. FCM are asked to read through the paper and forward all comments to Irene Campbell.

Terms of Reference are required for any charitable organisation to ensure mutual accountability and ensure looking internally and externally. Need to ensure consistency of language and approach of all governance bodies for the RSA.

Comment:

Wording appears outdated references to mental disorder, could this be perceived as discrimination

Trustee Feedback

David Archer & Zena Martin

David reported on Trustee meeting. David and Zena are the two FCM who have been co-opted to the Trustee Board; a space remains available for a third FCM. Key points at this Trustee meeting included Finance, endorsement of Seed fund plans, alignment of projects, re-branding, further investment in Council activities and mapping of Fellowship.

The Fellowship Council is an important piece of new governance and the aims to embed with the existing governance. Zena and David attended the first meeting and were welcomed, before each session the representatives meet with Council Chair and Deputy Chair to agree points that FC would like to raise and discuss at Trustee meetings.

Comments:

Can have FCM have sight of Trustee papers and Agenda before meetings, ensure alignment of agendas for both governance sectors, how we capture Trustee feedback and reduce the communication gap.

Trustee meetings contain confidential items and the aim of the FCM representatives is a key element of improving communication. Remember FC has an advisory role

Action Items:

- Nominations Panel update: third vacancy for Panel to be actioned by Stephen King once skill set agreed.
- FCM should raise any issues and comments directly with Chair and Deputy Chair.
- Feedback on Terms of Reference to Irene Campbell

Education Network

Tessy Britton & John Elliott; scope and plans (*Presentation available*)

Tessy and John set the scene by confirming 20% of Fellows work within education. A network is a way to find ways for them to connect and work together, its hard to find a starting point in a broad area. Plans include:

Taking the conversation about education to parents and young people:

- create a Forum to affect policy
- Fellowship distributes ideas and projects unique ideas
- Fellows get involved in a 'light way' link to 2Ice
- Distributed debates connected across the country
- Potential applied to other opportunities
- Matched to a toolkit
- Deconstruct the fund and framework; integrate the ideas
- Conversation Forum

Tessy suggested focusing on key areas and take action.

Road Show

Michael Devlin (*Presentation available*)

Michael presented on behalf of Fellowship Team and opened up the discussion to FCM; looking for ideas, involvement and support from members.

Plans are to deliver a programme of events:

Programme of roadshows showcasing:

- new opportunities and new messages
- encouraging engagement
- increase retention and boost recruitment
- Strengthen existing networks
- reinforce the offline presence
- challenge preconceptions e.g. London-centric
- raise awareness of RSA and Fellowship
- provide future models for meetings and AGMs

Content include:

Events likely to take place over afternoon into early evenings with a menu of activity and engagement. Fellows will be able to select part of the events to attend, stay for the duration or dip into key talks and discussions. Fellows will register via the Fellowship Directory, an updated version launches in April 2010 with the seed fund.

Comment:

What timescale and how many has been decided to organise?

Budget has been ringfenced and planning will start very soon, depending on Council views, you are the first step of consultation?

There is a real need for events like this “intellectual rock shows” we welcome this in Yorkshire; there is a hunger for this approach.

Link to [2ICE](#) theme

General discussion over the benefits of big-scale vs. small-scale approach for the events concluding with FCM vote on Roadshow format:

Big-scale: 8 votes

Small-scale: 1 vote

Both approaches: everyone else

Action item:

- FCM to commit to helping with Roadshow events in their region.

Closing Comments

- Feedback regarding Council Newsletter forward to Jemima Gibbons
- Interest in Digital Engagement working group contact Vivs Long-Ferguson or join the [Group online](#)

Close of Meeting

Dates of Meetings:
29 June and 5 October (RSA AGM).