



Minutes of a meeting of the Steering Committee held on 25th January 2020 at 11 Bedford Square, London (Royal Holloway)

1. Apologies were received from Charlotte Alston, Sarah Hackett, Adrian Howkins.

2. Welcome

3. Introductions

Members of the steering committee who were present introduced themselves and explained what they hoped to get out of their department's membership of History UK. These included:

- the chance to talk to colleagues from other institutions, to get a sense of sector developments, and the differences between practices across institutions
- how we put forward a positive message that can be sold – this is relevant and important
- futures of history – why history matters
- thinking about issues as they affect us across the four nations (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)
- opportunities to challenge discourse around the usefulness (or not) of History and Humanities
- the chance to discuss issues around recruitment and employability
- advancing discussions about race and gender issues, the lack of BME representation within faculty and the student body, and decolonizing / diversifying the discipline
- the chance to get involved in advocacy and lobbying work, and to deal with challenges faced by and within our sector
- working to improve relationships between History UK, the Historical Association, the Institute for Historical Research, and the Royal Historical Society
- making links to the archive sector, and addressing issues around access to archives.

There was also a discussion of what we could do to make History UK's identity and contribution clearer. As an organization we are involved in a lot of initiatives, with the archives sector; through collaboration with the RHS; support for early career scholars; provision of grants; campaigning and advocacy on behalf of our discipline.

4. co-convenors' report

a. timing of AGM Historically we have run the combined AGM/Plenary event in November. Last year we tried moving it earlier in the timetable to October. There was a worry this had made it less attractive because it clashed with open days. The SC discussed the timing and nature of the event, and agreed it was useful; the element of historical perspective offered was good; and that it was surprisingly non-institutional. Some felt there may not be an issue with the date, but that people are so busy that any date may face problems of one sort or another.

b. Topic for next AGM- decolonising the curriculum

The SC discussed possible topics for the next AGM, including:

- the challenges of selling History as a discipline, when we have declining numbers of students taking the subject; there is a 12 percent overall dip
- relatedly, futures of history – why history matters

- decolonising and diversifying the curriculum: if there are good ideas for speakers who could discuss initiatives they are involved with that would be helpful
- could a policy document be produced at the end of the event? Some research would be needed to do this, so volunteers would be essential.

Action: – please get in touch with Jamie if you have any ideas or are interested in contributing to the event

c. IHR and University of London outsourcing

- There is presently no resolution in sight to the dispute over University of London outsourcing of staff, or the boycott of Senate House. We need to think about using alternative spaces.
- We previously used a room at London South Bank University, and could try that again

Action: Inge Dornan suggested she could look into rooms at Brunel.

d. Job boot camp

The following issues around timing and location were discussed:

- This year it may not be possible to attach the Job boot camp to the SC meeting in May because of timings. (The first Saturday in May is the 2nd May).
- could we run it elsewhere, even possibly in June? The SC felt that May would be better
- could we run a satellite event – for example at Exeter or Cardiff?
- room issues – it could be on a Saturday but if we have satellite events then we'd have to be more flexible
- could we run it within ARHC DTPs, and with universities acting as a hub?
- how do we make sure the event is fully accessible to all (London is beneficial in that regard)

Action: subsequently, Simon Peplow agreed to take charge of this year's boot camp and try to identify a London venue so that it can run alongside our SC meeting in May.

e. report on funders' event (LMJ)

- Lucie had attended the annual funders' event, organised by the Economic History Society, earlier in January. See the documents that Lucie circulated (along with her notes) in advance of the SC for more information.
- The funding councils are running a survey which Lucie will circulate to the SC for comment. It is an opportunity for academics to shape where the funding goes. Lucie and Jamie will collate any SC feedback and submit it on behalf of History UK.

Action: Lucie to circulate survey to SC; JW and LMJ to collate responses

- Some key points that arose from discussion at the even were as follows.

f. TNA/ archive partnership

- There is a possibility to do something more regularly around collaboration with the National Archives – creating policy or best practice – proactively building on existing collaboration.
- Richard Hawkins and Karin Dannehl attended the event at Birmingham in Spring 2019 – very well supported by archivists, but less well attended by academics; what they wanted was to have more engagement with academics

g. Disability in History workshop

- This event will take place at LJMU over two days. It aims to create a manifesto about being a disabled academic (in the form of a zine)
- It will also focus on teaching and learning, including assessment of work of students who have severe dyslexia – how do we move beyond privilege of written word rather than communication more generally
- The first day will feature a range of speakers, with second day being a hands-on breakout day

- There will also be student initiatives – in order to be responsive around questions of how we work within the context of able-ist institutions
- The dates are not yet fixed – probably during the first two weeks in September

h. vacant positions on the executive

- Jamie and Lucie explained that the Media Officer and the Research Officer positions are currently vacant and we're looking to fill them (either from within the SC or externally)
- expressions of interest were invited from the SC
- **Action:** role descriptors will be circulated with the minutes of this meeting

5. Education officer report

- The Education Officer [Sarah Holland] reported on the teaching and learning event that will take place at Nottingham on 16th May. It will cover assessment, including: different kinds of assessment; assessment for learning; diversity of assessment; inclusivity; wider issues about gender/ decolonization; and feedback. There will be an interactive workshop alongside papers + panels.
- Peter D'Sena reported that the RHS is organising a curriculum day on 23rd April at UCL. This will include
 - Reprs. from A-level exam boards
 - Transitions
 - Decolonising the curriculum
 - The RHS is hoping to launch its education portal in November – there will be a link to the Historical Association; a section on careers; and models of interesting practice.

6. Treasurer's report

- Richard reported that History UK is currently in credit.
- new institutional finance policies may make paying the subscriptions more difficult
- funding scheme to be advertised soon, including the joint scheme supporting BME history.

7. ECR representative's report

- Simon commented that it would be a massive shame to lose the job boot camp as it has been very successful and is a major thing that we do to support ECRs. It's possible that the event could lose some identity if we send it out into the regions.
- He reported that History Lab+ are organizing a 'life after the PhD' event – this is aimed at finishing PhD students and will take place in Warwick on 26th March. HUK is providing some funding to support the event. A provisional programme is being developed. The event will cover:
 - Publishing
 - Careers
 - Wellbeing/ mental health
 - Meetings between PhDs + ECRs

8. Reports from 4 nations

- Northern Ireland
 - It was noted that the decrease in numbers of History students in Northern Ireland is substantial – it is conversions that are lower rather than applications
 - Digitisation of the curriculum - lecture recording – killing the purpose of attending lectures at all?
 - Relation to the strike
 - Broader financial difficulties in the HE sector in NI
- Scotland
 - No representative

- Wales
 - School curriculum being reformed
 - History being abolished as a separate subject up to GCSE
 - History will be part of Humanities
 - Plaid Cymru – push to define what's taught but government has pushed back against that – uncertain what that will mean for History take-up
 - Expectation is that GCSEs will be abolished within Wales
 - There have been opportunities for historians to join in that discussion
 - Push towards studying local 'habitat' – raises lots of questions about how to do it – teachers can interpret it as they see fit (very open)
 - Final announcement is Tuesday 28th January
 - Dropping student numbers in History, but increasing nos. in terms of PGT and part-time recruitment

Overall: decline in teaching modern languages hits teaching of modern European history; medieval/early modern etc.

9. Any Other Business

- Sunderland
 - The recent closure of the History degree at Sunderland was discussed, as was the statement by politics subject associations. A document outlining these statements was circulated to the SC.
 - It was agreed that HUK would put out a statement in response to the situation at Sunderland
 - **Action:** JW to lead on drafting statement; Liz Tingle, Karin Dannehl and David Stack volunteered to help putting it together
- TNA policy on no. of documents to be accessed
 - The change in TNA policy was discussed; there was agreement that this would limit the number of documents that some researchers would be able to access, but probably not significantly.
 - **Action:** JW and LMJ to approach contacts at TNA to find out more.

David Ingledeu gave an interesting paper on the transition from school to HE in History. This generated a good deal of discussion. Lucie is writing up notes for a blog post. David Ingledeu had provided his slides and some links which will be included in the blog post.