



Strategic plan  
2013 - 2018

## Introduction

- 1 The first strategic planning session took place on 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 and involved Council Members and young scientists. This session produced a set of strategic aims and objectives which were later refined and finally agreed by the Council at its meeting on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at the Society Annual Main Meeting in Salzburg. On 7<sup>th</sup> August 2012 SEB staff met to look at the implications of the agreed aims and objectives, to identify resource implications and to prioritise activity given the needs of members and external factors. The strategic plan was agreed by the Council at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012.
- 2 It would be comforting to think that the Society for Experimental Biology (SEB) acts in vacuum unaffected by the changes in academia and in Society in general. However SEB exists to support the science of experimental biology and practitioners of that science so any strategic plan has to look not only at the sort of support required by the science and scientists but also the context in which the science is delivered and scientists practice.
- 3 SEB also has to look towards the future. The trustees (Council Members) of SEB have to take a long term view to ensure SEB continues to deliver public benefit long after current members have retired from science and in a world where the science of experimental biology could be very different from today. However, in moving forward the Society is aiming for organic growth rather than sudden change so this strategic plan builds on the services the Society provides already but takes a look at the near future and attempts to respond to the needs of members and to science in general taking account of external influences.
- 4 Over the period covered by this plan the key issues affecting income are:
  - 4.1 Changes to the publishing model – at present the Society’s three journals are all subscription based. The recent publication of the *Finch Report*<sup>1</sup> indicates that UK research Councils will require that work funded by the tax payer must be published in open access (author pays) journals. At present RCUK funded work constitutes a small proportion of the science published in the Society’s journals but the *Finch Report* indicates a trend which is likely to be taken up by RCUK equivalents in the US and Europe. The author pays model will not generate as much income as the present subscription model so the SEB will need to adapt to a significant drop in journal income.
  - 4.2 The world economy is just showing signs of recovery from a deep recession. At present, returns on SEB equity investments are low and interest rates are providing a return on cash invested of about 3%. Even the most optimistic forecasts suggest this situation is unlikely to change in the next year or two.
  - 4.3 Changes to the UK science budget are beginning to affect the ability of UK scientists to travel to conferences. So far the SEB has not been significantly affected by this change as attendees from the UK have been replaced by other attendees, usually from outside the UK and Europe. However, scientists from the UK remain the largest group of attendees and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Finch-Group-report-executive-summary-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

any the impact on income of a future fall in attendance among UK scientists needs to be considered.

- 5 At present the SEB has reserves that can help offset the effects of reducing income from journals. However, what is clear is that income from other activities needs to increase because of the reducing subsidy provided by journal income.

## SEB Finances

- 6 In the 16 months to 31 December 2011 the SEB generated a surplus of £606,881 and had reserves worth £3,000,444 although some of those reserves are held in property and investments. Expenditure on Meetings and Symposia was £385,568 and £945,589 was spent on journals and other publications. The largest source of income was from journals which, in the period, generated £1,966,394. The full Annual Report and Accounts for the period to 31 December 2011 are available from the Charity Commission website<sup>2</sup>.
- 7 Figure 1 on page 4 shows the relative proportion of income and expenditure on SEB core business and the difference of income to expenditure for each activity. The data for the charts is taken from the Annual Report and Accounts to 31 December 2011. Not surprisingly the areas of SEB activity subsidised most by journal income are the core charitable activities: Meetings & Symposia and Education & Public Affairs, these being the activities which promote the science of experimental biology and provide support to practitioners.
- 8 The following pages provide details of the strategic objectives agreed by the Council which set out how the SEB will develop its charitable activities in the context of a changing financial environment.

## Strategy into operation

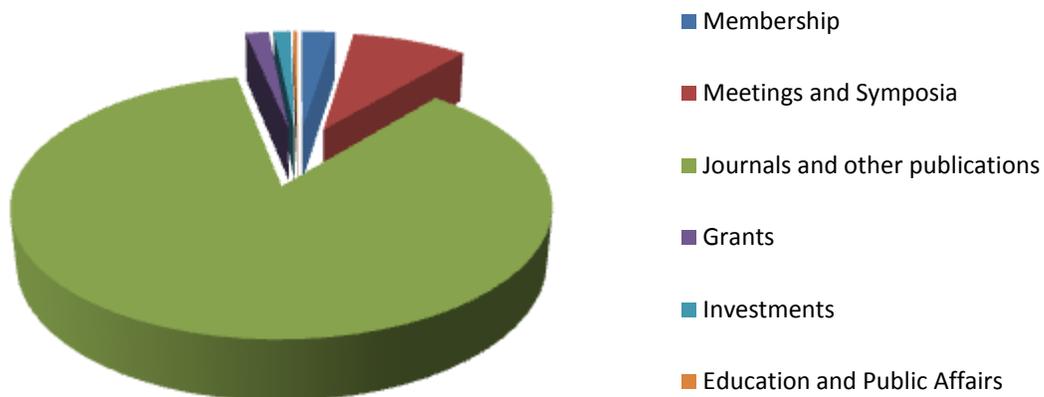
- 9 The strategic objectives form the developmental part of the work of the SEB. Core business activity will continue and be revised according to priorities agreed by the Council. Those priorities will be developed into a costed annual operations plan which will be agreed by the Council in December each year.

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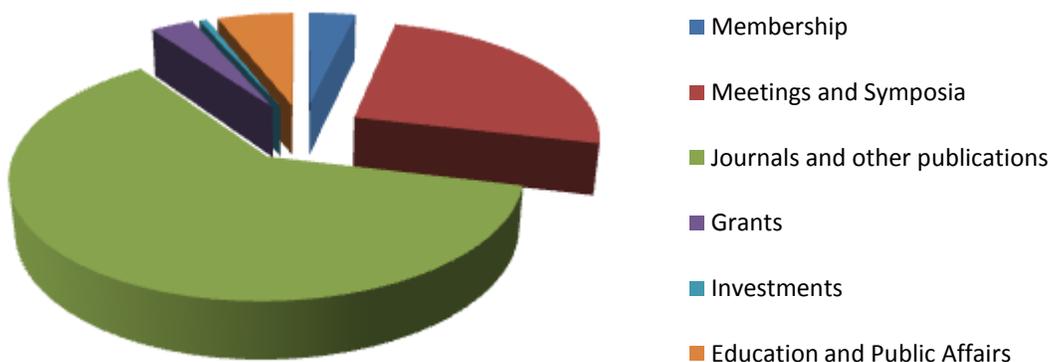
<sup>2</sup> [http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends95/0000273795\\_ac\\_20111231\\_e\\_c.pdf](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends95/0000273795_ac_20111231_e_c.pdf)

Figure 1 – income, expenditure and contribution to expenditure

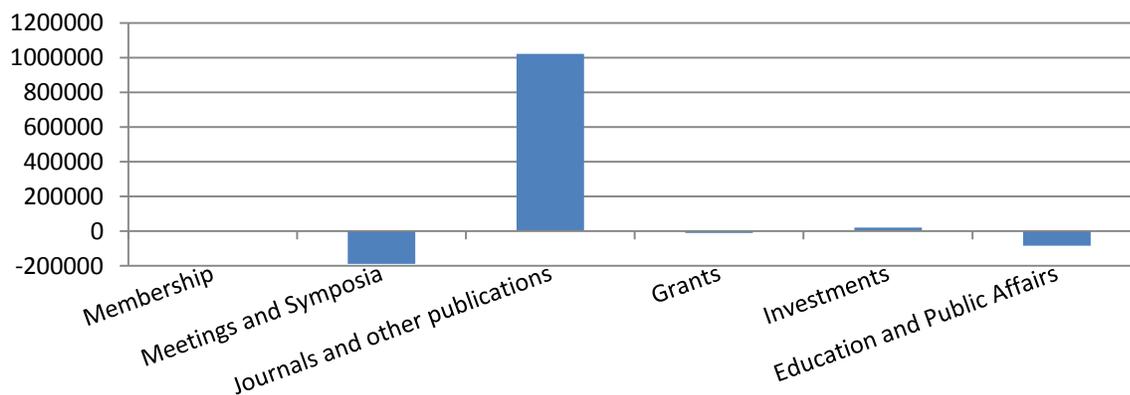
### Income from activities



### Expenditure on activities



### Difference of income to expenditure



## Strategic themes, aims and objectives

- 10 The Council approved a number of strategic aims at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Those aims and associated objectives are:
- 10.1 *Create new communication and network opportunities within the society and externally*
- Carry out a review of the requirements of a range of subgroups and develop a targeted communication plan to use a variety of channels to engage actively with members and others.
  - Redevelop the web site as a cornerstone of this – member directory, other resources, social media, YouTube etc
- 10.2 *Increase attendance at the Annual Meeting and consolidate its position as THE meeting to attend*
- Establish why people do or do not attend.
  - Review the structure of the meeting: animal/plant/cell, general vs specialist sessions
  - Improve diversity and quality of speakers
  - Increase career and communication sessions to appeal to students etc
  - Ensure promotion and communication are targeted, including increased use of social media before/during/after
- 10.3 *Maintain a steady income stream for SEB from journals*
- Keep abreast of developments and discuss regularly at Council
  - Model a range of scenarios to ensure Council area aware of the implications of a range of possible futures and have outline plans to enable them to act quickly when needed.
  - Investigate other income streams.
- 10.4 *Support undergraduates in the transition to PhD*
- Provide assistance to students in choosing a lab, making applications etc
  - Investigate undergraduate bursaries?
- 10.5 *Support postgraduates in establishing their reputations and profiles*
- Develop a plan to use a range of facilities, including main meeting and web member directory, to assist PGs with getting established and networking.
- 10.6 *Engage and support those with a background or interest in biology who are not in an academic career environment*
- Develop and implement a plan, which will probably involve implementing the membership category (Friends of the SEB) with clearly defined benefits (eg access to resources, events with famous speakers, field trips, career support where appropriate) “Your membership doesn’t end when you leave biology”.
- 10.7 *Ensure membership of the SEB is attractive to all experimental biologists*
- Streamline and automate joining and renewal processes
  - Develop flexible Payment arrangements
  - Duration and categories of membership appropriate to practice

- Membership benefits tailored for each category and focused on retention as well as acquisition
- Membership cost effective for members and at least break even for the Society

10.8 *Review the SEB grants portfolio*

- Develop grants offered by the SEB in consultation with members

10.9 *Review organisational structure*

- Develop organisational plan to streamline decision making and ensure cost effective resource to meet business plan commitments

10.10 *Give recognition and support to researchers who take on teaching roles*

- Supporting teachers and others, eg through CPD

10.11 *Outreach to Asia and South America*

- Develop a plan for outreach to Asia and South America

11 Grouping the aims together according to the themes within of the Society’s charitable objectives and good business practice results in the following table:

Theme	Aim	Objectives
<b>Engagement</b>	<i>Create new communication and network opportunities within the society and externally</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out a review of the requirements of a range of subgroups and develop a targeted communication plan to use a variety of channels to engage actively with members and others.</li> <li>• Redevelop the web site as a cornerstone of this – member directory, other resources, social media, YouTube etc</li> </ul>
	<i>Increase attendance at the Annual Meeting and consolidate its position as THE meeting to attend</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish why people do or do not attend.</li> <li>• Review the structure of the meeting: animal/plant/cell, general vs specialist sessions</li> <li>• Improve diversity and quality of speakers</li> <li>• Increase career and communication sessions to appeal to students etc</li> <li>• Ensure promotion and communication are targeted, including increased use of social media before/during/after</li> </ul>
	<i>Engage and support those with a background or interest in biology who are not in an academic career environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a plan, which will probably involve implementing the membership category (Friends of the SEB) with clearly defined benefits (eg access to resources, events with famous speakers, field trips, career support where appropriate) “Your membership doesn’t end when you leave biology”.</li> </ul>

<b>Support</b>	<i>Support undergraduates in the transition to PhD</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assistance to students in choosing a lab, making applications etc</li> <li>• Investigate undergraduate bursaries</li> </ul>
	<i>Support postgraduates in establishing their reputations and profiles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan to use a range of facilities, including main meeting and web member directory, to assist PGs with getting established and networking.</li> </ul>
	<i>Give recognition and support to researchers who take on teaching roles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting teachers and others, eg through CPD</li> </ul>
<b>Outreach</b>	<i>Ensure membership of the SEB is attractive to all experimental biologists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamline and automate joining and renewal processes</li> <li>• Develop flexible Payment arrangements</li> <li>• Duration and categories of membership appropriate to practice</li> <li>• Membership benefits tailored for each category and focused on retention as well as acquisition</li> <li>• Membership cost effective for members and at least breakeven for the Society</li> </ul>
	<i>Outreach to Asia and South America</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan for outreach to Asia and South America</li> </ul>
<b>Fitness for Purpose</b>	<i>Maintain a steady income stream for SEB from journals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep abreast of developments and discuss regularly at Council</li> <li>• Model a range of scenarios to ensure Council area aware of the implications of a range of possible futures and have outline plans to enable them to act quickly when needed.</li> <li>• Investigate other income streams.</li> </ul>
	<i>Review the SEB grants portfolio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop grants offered by the SEB in consultation with members</li> </ul>
	<i>Review organisational structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop organisational plan to streamline decision making and ensure cost effective resource to meet business plan commitments</li> </ul>