

## Three Year Strategy 2019 – 2021

### Mission

The Biochemical Society exists for the advancement of the molecular and cellular biosciences, both as an academic discipline and to promote its impact on areas of science including biotechnology, agriculture, and medicine. Biochemistry helps to play a key role in tackling global issues such as improving lifelong health, treatment of disease, biotechnology and food security. We achieve our mission through our publications and journals, scientific meetings, educational activities, policy work, awards and grants to scientists and students. The Biochemical Society is the largest UK single discipline learned society in the biosciences.

### Developing our strategy

This three-year strategy has been developed in partnership between Biochemical Society Trustees, committee members and staff and follows the previous strategies covering the period from 2013 to mid-2019. The strategy covers both Biochemical Society activities and those of our wholly-owned publishing subsidiary, Portland Press Ltd. During what continues to be a period of considerable change in both the political and publishing landscapes, our goal has been to embed the progress made over the past six years, while broadening our reach in a way that will ensure we can continue to fulfil our mission in a rapidly changing world.

### Core objectives

#### Bring together molecular bioscientists:

- Expand our offerings for early-career bioscientists, including those entering molecular bioscience through both academic and vocational pathways, building engagement with these audiences to understand their needs.
- Continue to increase industry involvement across our activities, providing a platform for collaboration, facilitating innovation and supporting links between academia and industry.
- Expand our international links and networks, supporting scientists to share their work on a global scale as well as increasing access to and awareness of our events, activities, publications and resources.
- Continue to foster diversity and equal opportunity for entry and progression in our discipline through our grants and bursaries, ensuring equality of opportunity in our activities and by increasing diversity and inclusivity on committees and editorial boards.

#### Support career development and lifelong learning:

- Provide learning and networking opportunities for students and those working across the breadth of molecular bioscience roles in academia and industry, through face to face and online training, attendance at scientific meetings, interactions with our journals and participation in other Society events.
- Support teachers at all levels to develop their skills and knowledge and facilitate encounters with industry and academia for teachers and students.

- Support the future pipeline of molecular bioscientists by providing careers support and information for students and at all stages of people's careers. Promote the opportunities offered by biochemistry and molecular biology both within and beyond scientific research.
- Continue to offer grants and bursaries to support members in accessing continuing professional development and recognize their achievements through awards and professional registration.

### Encourage wider dialogue and work collaboratively across and beyond our community

- Support students and researchers to communicate their work to policy-makers and the public and promote wider engagement with social and ethical issues relating to the biosciences.
- Continue to engage our members with key policy issues relating to science and science education, channeling their views into our policy activities as well as those of other organizations, such as the Royal Society of Biology and Campaign for Science and Engineering.
- Deliver and implement plans for a sustainable transition to open access and open scholarship, in collaboration with researchers, higher education, other learned societies and research funders.
- Ensure a strong future for the molecular biosciences, maximizing opportunities for impact, engagement and innovation through working in strategic collaboration with sister societies and other organizations across and beyond STEM, reflecting the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of our community.
- Give a voice to our community to influence the changing culture of science.

### Promote and share knowledge

- Develop the Portland Press portfolio to offer a home for every paper published within the molecular biosciences, growing to encompass the broader life sciences.
- Support and serve our publishing communities of authors, reviewers, readers and subscribers, facilitating the dissemination of and access to quality, vetted and curated information, and providing global reach while addressing local challenges.
- Continue to evaluate the positioning of the Society's scientific meetings and training programme, ensuring broad coverage across fundamental, clinical and translational research, to offer greatest value to the community and greatest contribution to the advancement of science.
- Continue to create online content to support the teaching and understanding of biochemistry (from age 15 upwards).

### Promote the importance of our discipline and through this, the broader life sciences

- Raise the profile of molecular biosciences, the Society and Portland Press Ltd through our marketing, communications, publishing and policy activities.
- Emphasise the value of our publishing independence: by scientists for scientists.
- Champion the needs of life scientists through all our activities.

### Continue to ensure sustainable support for the advancement of science

- Ensure operational excellence across the organization through effective use of governance, business technology, finance and human resources.
- Continue to build our reputation as a knowledge hub for the life sciences, as well as a friendly and inclusive place to work.
- Continue to review IT infrastructure to make best use of systems and technology, enabling staff to work ‘on any device anywhere’.
- Commence a financially sustainable transition to open scholarship that responds to the changing needs of researchers everywhere.
- Consider commercial opportunities that align with the Society’s Mission, activities, ethos and skill set.
- Build resilience by using the Society’s reserves policy and a proportion of funding from the planned sale of the Society’s share of Charles Darwin House 1 and 2, to pump-prime Biochemical Society and Portland Press activities to the level of £500,000 over the period 2019-2021, enabling us to innovate and adapt to key changes in the environment,
- Continue to embed and foster a culture of evidence-based decision-making and community focus.
- Review reserves policy in line with changing sector environmental challenges to ensure sufficient buffer against adverse risks. Explore possibilities for investment and provision for pension fund deficits.
- Work collaboratively with the Society’s pension schemes to ensure sustainability.

### Key activities

In order to deliver these objectives, we will carry out the following activities:

**Expand our offering to align more closely with the broader community** – as one of the largest subject-specific learned societies in the biosciences, it is vital to ensure we are relevant across the breadth of our community. Over the next three years we will:

- grow paid membership to 7,000 members;
- continue to scan the membership landscape, reviewing and adding member categories and products, benefits and activities to support members at all career stages and across academia and industry;
- use our new membership system to inform member benefits and activities as well as to facilitate member networks, events and communities;
- continue to grow and nurture the Society’s Ambassador networks (academic, industry, international and student schemes);
- utilise the new Early Career Advisory Panel to inform our activities and explore opportunities to develop specialist panels for other groups such as Postgraduate members;
- introduce professional registration as an option for Society members, working in partnership with the Royal Society of Biology and the Science Council;
- review and develop the Society’s current grants and bursary portfolio in line with the Society’s strategic objectives and diversity policies;
- continue to review the Society’s current Awards programme to ensure it offers an Award for each career stage and for a diversity of career paths;
- increase the reach of our Award lectures, for example through live streaming.

**Expand the reach of our scientific events portfolio** – including live streamed scientific meetings and online training as well as face-to-face events. This will allow us to develop a blended offering and enable us to reach audiences who are not able to attend in person, for example because of time, financial resource or caring commitments outside work. Over the next three years we will:

- continue to run at least 18 face-to-face events each year, across the UK and internationally, covering a broad range of molecular bioscience subject areas;
- continue to support relevant independently organized scientific meetings in the UK and internationally;
- offer at least 8 new online courses;
- further develop our live streamed offering for scientific meetings.

**Continue to focus on supporting industry and academic placements for undergraduates, teachers and post-16 students.** These schemes provide valuable support and an inspirational experience for those taking part, which can have a significant influence on their future careers as well as those of others. Over the next three years we will:

- continue to offer our popular Summer Vacation Studentships, providing grants to support undergraduate students in carrying out a summer lab placement;
- continue to work with members and other strategic partners in industry and academia to offer placement opportunities for post-16 students and teachers.

**Broaden our careers offering to younger (pre-16) and older (postgraduate and early career) audiences,** recognizing that different support is required for different age groups. Over the next three years we will:

- develop new resources to support Key Stage 3 teachers by embedding careers information into school curricula;
- explore new ways to support post-graduates and early career molecular bioscientists with careers-related activities and promote opportunities through our Jobs Board.

**Continue to expand our public engagement offering,** supporting our members and wider community to deliver activities through grants, downloadable kits and training. Over the next three years we will:

- continue to run public engagement activities and to host public debates at festivals and events across the UK;
- offer online and face to face public engagement training opportunities and continue to add to our portfolio of downloadable public engagement resources;
- continue to offer grant funding to support activities that communicate the excitement of molecular bioscience to young people and the community;
- launch a new art and science initiative, providing opportunities for members to work in partnership with their local community.

**Increase our policy and public affairs activity** – we are committed to engaging our community with key policy issues relating to molecular biosciences and to representing their views in order to influence science and education policy. Over the next three years we will:

- feed into relevant consultations and respond to news stories, maximising our influence by working with strategic partners such as the Royal Society of Biology and Campaign for Science and Engineering. In order to inform these activities, we will continue to grow and engage our Policy Network, increase input into our policy activities from across the devolved nations and provide new opportunities to support members in how to engage with policy.

**Provide sustainable, community-centred services for the advancement of the molecular biosciences** through our focus on community, advocacy, collaboration and sustainability. Over the next three years we will:

- increase the quality, number and breadth of articles published across the portfolio (achieving >2,200 (TBC) articles per by 2021); innovate with formats and outputs and focus on content strategies for each journal, continuing to maximise financial returns to the Society in a changing landscape;
- engage with institutions, funders and other societies to assess commercially viable offerings to facilitate a sustainable transition to Open Access;
- implement a revised data policy for research journals in support of open scholarship;
- publish standardized and structured tagging information at the article level to express funder, data-availability and author contributions;
- review end to end publishing processes, workflows and technology for efficiencies, and ensure meaningful peer-review underpins overall submission to publication timelines of 8 to 10 weeks [not counting time for author revisions];
- achieve PubMed listing of newer journals *Emerging Topics in Life Sciences* and *Neuronal Signalling*;
- explore opportunities to collaborate and partner with other life-science societies;
- migrate to a new publishing platform that serves the emerging needs of researchers and institutions;
- actively engage with our researcher community to explore new ways for Portland Press to add value;
- diversify revenues away from subscriptions and beyond open access; actively scope new technology and data, capitalizing on opportunities to develop new offerings and services with a community focus;
- continue to increase geographic and gender diversity on editorial boards across the portfolio and implement an inclusivity plan extending to involvement of early-career researchers in peer review and the wider publications process.

**Strengthen our marketing and communications activity** to support the delivery of our strategic objectives and widen our reach. Over the next three years we will:

- launch a new website that is developed in consultation with key stakeholders: this will be mobile-responsive, fully accessible and integrated with other digital activity;
- continue to develop consistent messaging across all our activities, increase our profile and brand awareness of the Group and tell our story in an engaging way;
- identify key influencers and additional strategic bodies to collaborate with: this will involve developing a relationship tracker to ensure all relevant staff members are aware of such activities to make the most of these opportunities;
- implement a new email marketing system to deliver segmented communications, improving the relevance to recipients and providing thorough analytics on activity;
- develop our digital activity, particularly regarding social media and *The Biochemist blog*, to ensure we remain relevant and up-to-date on the latest trends;
- drive article submissions, usage and citations to the journal portfolio.

**Ensure operational excellence across our activities** – effective governance, business technology, finance and human resources underpin all our activities, providing the foundation to support our charitable and commercial objectives. Over the next three years we will:

- leave the Charles Darwin House (CDH) Consortium and relocate to new premises, considering the ongoing value to the Society of property investment;
- review Society reserves policy in line with sector challenges as addressed by the group strategy and PPL Business Plan;
- continue to reduce dependency on centralised and CDH-based infrastructure so that staff are enabled to work ‘on any device anywhere’ in line with data security and confidentiality best practice;
- continue to source suppliers to enable further reduction of reliance on in-house resource for maintenance. Transition to ‘Software as a Service’ and continue to unify Service Level Agreements and implement regular reviews of value for money;
- implement the Society’s Business Technology continuous improvement strategy ensuring the value and efficacy of key systems and processes, adapting as necessary to sector environmental factors;
- continue to review the Society’s current equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) activities and practices to incorporate EDI across our policies, procedures and activities;
- develop and implement a Biochemical Society Environmental Sustainability strategy across the activities of the Society and Portland Press, based upon the outcome of a sustainability audit following the Society’s departure from the Charles Darwin House consortium.