
THE LUNAR SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & REVIEW OF THE YEAR

2009

The Lunar Society is a unique society, which interfaces with many aspects of Birmingham's diverse culture and ethos. We are recognized as a neutral forum to facilitate discussion and debate on many leading edge issues and concerns relevant to the city and the wider region.

At the beginning of my term as Chairman two years ago, I had a number of objectives: to focus on issues pertinent to Birmingham and the region; to increase the membership; involve members more actively, and to streamline the administration of the Society. I particularly wished to develop opportunities for sponsorship in order to provide better value for money for members.

In this, my last report, I would like to reflect on how much the Executive Committee have achieved during this time.

We held a Strategic Review last October to review the progress since the previous strategy day in 2006, to identify new issues of relevance and to agree the priorities for the next 2-5 years. One of the key outcomes of the session was to clarify the views and expectations of you, our members, of the Society. This led to the Membership Survey which many of you responded to. The results will focus the Executive on the next steps for the Society, so thank you for taking part. The details will be presented at the AGM by Michael Overduin and published on the members' area of the website.

Thank you for continuing to support the Strategic Groups throughout the year. Your input has been much appreciated. We have expanded these to six groups with a new Heritage sub Committee chaired by Marion Roberts and the Arts and Culture sub Committee chaired by Mario Minichiello. There will be a brief report on the progress made by these groups at the AGM.

We received much support from Birmingham City Council for many different events and for hosting our committee meetings. I would like to thank Councillor Chauhdry Rashid, the outgoing Lord Mayor for his hospitality during the year and particularly to welcome our new Lord Mayor Councillor Michael Wilkes as an Honorary Life Member.

Apart from the membership involvement in the subcommittees, we are delighted that so many of you took part in the membership survey which has provided so much important feedback for the next Executive Committee to take forward.

Tracey Lucas, our new Membership Secretary has been working hard to involve you more and make it more rewarding for you to become members, as detailed in her report.

This is the second year that we have had elections in the Society for the Executive Committee and the first time there has been a contest for the Chairmanship. All good signs of an active and interested membership!

We have ambitious plans to make the governance of the Society more transparent by introducing the possibility of postal votes for the Executive Committee so that more members can vote, as we realize that in this busy world, not everyone can get to the AGM. This amendment to the Constitution is circulated with these papers and will be voted on during the AGM.

The Executive Committee is also considering setting up a Nominations Committee (which will include members) to encourage members to consider serving on the Executive Committee... watch this space!

We have focused on a number of key issues over the year. Highlights include the Climate Change Debate in October 2008 this was one of our highest profile events, held in the Town Hall and attended by over 700 members, guests and the public. The panel included Sir Michael Lyons as Chairman; Professor Kevin Anderson, Professor Jacqueline McGlade and Michael Meacher MP gave arguments for urgent action in response to climate change. Their arguments were challenged by Lord Lawson, Julian Morris and Professor David Henderson who made the case for a more measured approach. Whatever your opinion on the topic, it was a lively event, which attracted much media attention.

We also welcomed Sir David Arculus, adviser to successive Governments on regulation as our Annual Dinner Speaker in November 2008.



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His latest report on regulation, at the request of David Cameron, makes interesting reading in the current political and economic situation.

The Society's Sixth Annual Lecture was co-sponsored by Warwick University and given by Professor Ian Stewart on Modern Day theories on evolution post Darwin. It was most fitting in this Darwin Anniversary year and extremely well attended with a lively Q&A.

We were also privileged to hear from the Rev David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham on his reflections on his time in Birmingham, which was the theme of our Boulton and Watt Commemoration Lecture in May 2008.

Finally to make sure your consciences are up to speed, we held an interactive ethics workshop in January 2009 dealing with difficult issues such as Organ Donation and Pandemic Flu - very pertinent to today's Swine Flu epidemic.

During the last two years we have been privileged to develop strong links with a number of key sponsors and I would like to publicly thank them for their invaluable support to the Society. It has been wonderful to co-sponsor the Annual Lectures with the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick and to have such generous help from Thinktank and Ebury Publishing.

We are grateful to Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Airport, Martineau, Anglian Water and Midland Heart for their contributions to the Climate Change Debate and its organization.

Many thanks also to Mills and Reeve who hosted the interactive Ethics event and Matthew Boulton and the Art of Making Money: and Shakespeare Putsman for sponsoring the Library of Birmingham talk by Brian Gambles.

The last two years have definitely been a time of transition for the Society with three changes of administration during my term. It has been a challenge to manage the handovers to ensure continuity and make sure that the Society operated smoothly. I am grateful to Amanda Cadman, Kate Cooper and Dipali Chandra for their perseverance and dedication during this time. As a result of all their efforts, we now have an

efficient system to communicate with you, to highlight our achievements and raise our profile in Birmingham.

Looking to the future, there is much more to do, but let's start with what's in store for next year. In the Autumn, we are delighted that Julia King, Vice Chancellor of Aston University has agreed to give the 2009 Boulton and Watt Commemoration Lecture, on the topic of *Technologies for Sustainable Transport in Automotive and Aerospace*, of particular importance in today's world. Marc Reeve, Editor of the Birmingham Post will host a visit to their new Dunlop plant so that we can experience the age of digital media and hear about the implications for traditional names like the Birmingham Post and Mail.

Ed Miliband MP will be our Guest Speaker at the 2009 Annual Dinner. In view of the current political turmoil, it should be an interesting evening, so make your reservations early!

Building on the success of the Climate Change Debate, Jonathan Porritt has accepted our invitation to give the Seventh Annual Lecture next year, which should be an interesting contrast to the Debate.

We have achieved a great deal in the last two years, and I know the next Executive Committee will build on what's been done, continuing to involve members, be receptive to your expectations and opening up the Society to new opportunities and ideas.

For my part, it has been a great privilege for me to be your Chairman, I have found it both challenging and rewarding. It has been a unique opportunity to learn more about our City and to get to know many of you better. I have much appreciated your support and encouragement.

I would like to thank the members of the Executive Committee, Amanda Cadman, Kate Cooper and Dipali Chandra for all their support over my two years of office and wish them and the Society a busy and successful future.

Deirdre Kelly
Chair of the Society
June 2009

