



## **Royal Economic Society**

### **Secretary-General's Report 2016**

There are at least two reasons why it was daunting to become Secretary-General of The Royal Economic Society in July last year. Firstly, the RES is one of the oldest and most prestigious economic societies in the world, and it is a humbling experience to become only the eleventh Secretary-General in its 125 year history. Secondly, I am following John Beath in the role. During his seven years as Secretary-General, the Society became much more outward-looking and proactive in supporting and promoting UK Economics, with these developments largely due to John and those who worked with him. He will be a hard act to follow!

It is appropriate to begin this report by discussing the change to the term of President of the Society, agreed by Council at its meeting in November 2015 and to be discussed at this AGM. In order to both take advantage of the talent at senior levels of UK Economics and also to spread the duties the President is asked to undertake, the RES Council agreed that in future the President should serve for one year, but alongside both a President-Elect and a Past-President. Consequently, this year's AGM is being asked to ratify both this decision and two names of presidents: Andrew Chesher for President 2016-2017 and Peter Neary as President-Elect 2016-2017 and President for 2017-2018. John Hardman Moore becomes Past-President immediately after the AGM and will serve in that role for the coming year. I would like to thank John personally and on behalf of the Society for the enthusiasm he has put into the role of President during his term. He has particularly focused on how we might further assist the development of the impressive pool of Economics PhD students studying in the UK, a topic to which I will return later. Meanwhile, the Society looks forward to working with both Andrew and Peter.

At this point, I would also like to mention four further notable retirees from RES posts. Firstly, Mark Robson will step down as Honorary Treasurer in the summer, after eight years of wonderful service to the Society. Mark has particularly helped to guide the Society through the substantial task of applying to the Privy Council to change our Bye-Laws and hence bring the Society's governance up-to-date. In financial matters, he has always kept the Society's best long-term interests at the forefront, while being a great source of sound common sense. Subject to ratification later in this meeting, I am delighted to announce that Sue Holloway will take over as Honorary Treasurer from 1 July. Sue has extensive administrative experience in both the civil service and in the charity sector as Director of Pro Bono Economics.

Secondly, after seven years in the role, Karen Mumford hands over as chair of the RES Women's Committee after the AGM. Karen was a founding member of the committee twenty years ago, in 1996, when women were relatively scarce in UK academic Economics. Karen authored the report of the first Women's Committee survey, a survey which has taken place every two years since. As chair, she has initiated residential mentoring meetings for junior women and much else, some of which you can read

about on the website or through the articles regularly published by the Women's Committee in the RES Newsletter. Silvana Tenreyro will take over from Karen. We welcome both Sue and Silvana in their new roles with the Society.

The third notable retiree is Donald Winch, who steps down as the Society's Publications officer at the end of March after for a truly remarkable 45 years. Donald is a distinguished scholar and was a member of staff here at the University of Sussex for almost half a century. His main task for the Society in recent years has been concerned with the legacy of John Maynard Keynes and the thirty volume edition of his collected writings, now published for the Society by Cambridge University Press. On behalf of the Society, I would like to thank Donald for all his work over the decades, which has kept everyone aware of the contributions of UK economists to the historical development of our discipline.

Finally, Sir Charlie Bean completes his presidential term after this AGM, having served a total four years, including two as President (2013-2015). Charlie has continued to be active for the Society over the last year as Past President, and we have all greatly benefited from his wise counsel. I speak for everyone in thanking him for his work on behalf of the Society.

Many people devote time and effort to helping the Society in its work. Governance is the responsibility of Council and, through its committees and working groups, its members are increasingly involved in operational aspects of the Society. At this meeting we say farewell to six Council members who have served since 2011, namely Paul Collier, Joe Grice, Jonathan Haskel, Gilat Levy, Gerard Lyons and Andrea Prat. I would like to thank them all for their work on behalf of the Society, with Jonathan particularly involved as a member also of the Executive Committee. Subject to ratification at this meeting, Christian Dustmann, Amelia Fletcher, Rafaella Giacomini, Beata Javorik, Paola Manzini and Tim Worall join Council until 2021

### The Society

The year on which I am reflecting, 2015, was a notable one for the Society, as we celebrated the 125th anniversary of both the Society itself (founded as the British Economic Association) and, associated with this, *The Economic Journal*. The Special Sessions at the 2015 Annual Conference, in particular, were largely organised around some of the many path-breaking papers published in the *EJ*. To coincide with this, a special 125th anniversary issue of the *EJ* was also published, in which leading economists of today reflected on the impacts of selected papers published in our journal over its history. The Society has made the articles in this special issue available to all through open access. At this point, I would like to thank the *EJ* editors - Martin Cripps, Andrea Galeotti, Rachel Griffith, Morten Ravn, Kjell Salvanes and Frederic Vermeulen - who put much work into this special issue and also the associated events at the 2015 Annual Conference. Thanks also to James Banks who, as last year's programme chair, worked closely with the *EJ* editors in designing a great conference. There will be more later about both the 2015 conference and the *EJ*.

According to a range of measures, the Society continues to be in good health. The number of individual members stood at just over 3,500 at the end of October 2015, of whom approximately 60 percent are based outside the UK. The total is a slight decrease on the number at the end of 2014, but this reflects the data being collected at the end of October rather than December. The Society continues to offer a range of membership options, including a three-year online membership available to registered students for just £17. The proportion of Ordinary Members taking the online option (with no print copy of the *EJ*) has increased each year since first offered in 2012, reaching 70% in 2015. Since last year, an online option has also been available to Retired Members.

The financial health of the Society is also very sound, as the Honorary Treasurer will report. Much of our income continues to come through publishing *The Economic Journal* and *The Econometrics Journal*, with this income being quite steady despite the on-going threats of non-renewal of library

subscriptions due to institutional budgets being squeezed and the rise of open access publishing. At the end of 2014, there were nearly 1,700 institutional subscribers to our journals, all except 144 from overseas. In terms of income and expenditure, the Society had a net deficit of approximately £150,000 in 2015. This was a little larger than in recent years, but the additional expenditure was planned in order to finance the 125th anniversary activities. The deficit is financed through the sale of investment assets, but the Society's total assets nevertheless remain at around £5.5 million.

### The Journals and Annual Conference

The principal aim of the RES is "to promote the study of economic science". At least in financial terms, the two most important vehicles the Society uses to promote Economics and disseminate research are through its journal publications and the Annual Conference. *The Economic Journal* is not only one of the oldest Economics journals in the world, but it continues to be one of the internationally leading journals of the discipline. A notable statistic is that the *EJ* was accessed almost 350,000 times through Wiley Online, a rise of 14% on 2014. This figure excludes access through third parties such as JSTOR and EBSCO. A total of 1121 regular paper submissions were received during 2014/15, an increase of 7% on the previous year and 16% over 2012/13. The international nature of the journal is evidenced by the fact that only 18% of the 2014/15 submissions were from the UK, with 26% from the US/Canada, 39% from Europe (excluding UK) and 18% from the rest of the world.

*The Econometrics Journal* continues to be one of the most highly respected journals within Econometrics. The five-year impact factor of the journal reached its highest level ever in 2014/15 and, in order to further raise its international profile, the editorial board has been refreshed, specifically recruiting additional associate editors based in the USA. *The Econometrics Journal* is even more highly international in terms of submissions, with only 10% of 2014-2015 submissions being from UK-based authors. Interestingly, an increasing number of submissions over recent years have been from China.

The Society is grateful to the editors of both journals, for the hard and highly professional work they continue to perform on our behalf. The Society would not be able to continue its activities without their efforts. Both journals award prizes each year: the *EJ* awards the Royal Economic Society Prize and the Austin Robinson Prize, while *The Econometrics Journal* awards the Denis Sargan Prize; the Robinson and Sargan Prizes are for the best unsolicited papers by a person within five years of their doctorate, while the RES Prize is awarded for the best unsolicited paper without restriction. The latest prizes will be awarded during the conference and full details can be found in the conference programme.

It is also appropriate to say a little more about last year's conference, which has already been mentioned in the context of the 125th anniversary celebrations. It was the second successive year that the conference was held in Manchester; attendance was again strong and 88% of 177 participants in a post-conference survey rated the quality of sessions as excellent or good. Indeed 94% recorded that they would attend the RES conference again and 91% that they would recommend it to a colleague or friend. In addition to Programme Chair James Banks, thanks go also to Ralf Becker for the excellent job he did as local organiser. A grand total of 549 paying delegates attended the conference, which was effectively identical to the number in 2014. The Hahn Lecture was presented by Pierre-André Chiappori, the Sargan Lecture by Michael Keane and the *Economic Journal* Lecture by Philippe Aghion. In addition, Sir Charles Bean presented his Presidential Address at the end of his two year term as President. As in 2014, the first evening of the conference was marked by a reception open to all delegates. Despite awful weather, many took advantage of visiting the Museum of Science and Industry for the event, while the conference dinner was held at the Old Trafford home of the Lancashire Cricket Club. Because of the special nature of the 125th Anniversary Conference and the particularly high profile of speakers, all Special Sessions as well as Keynote Lectures were recorded live and are available for viewing on the RES website.

After last year's anniversary events, we expected the 2016 conference to be a quieter affair. Little did we know that a record number of 1400 papers would be submitted and, attracted by a fantastic line-up of keynote speakers, Plenary Sessions on topical and important economic issues, an array of Special Sessions, plus the best of the contributed papers, this year's conference will break all attendance records. The unexpected increase in both submissions and registrations has raised logistical issues, which have been tackled with efficiency and good humour. The Society is indebted to the hard-working organising teams, led by Richard Dickens on the programme and Dimitra Petropoulou on local logistics, while Neil Rickman continues to provide advice to the organisers as the Society's Conference Secretary.

Last year the Society had a dedicated part-time Events Assistant, Alice Beckett, who very ably assisted in many aspects of the organisation of the conference and other RES events. Alice has now moved on to a post within the Government Economic Service, and we wish her well in her career. After a period without anyone in post, we are delighted to welcome Jo McWhirter as our new Events Assistant. Jo is here at the conference and will be based at the Economics Network offices in Bristol.

### Communication and Engagement

Particularly since a strategic review undertaken in 2013, the Society has devoted substantial effort to the promotion of Economics through communication and non-academic engagement. Led by the Second Secretary and my deputy, Robin Naylor, together with our hard-working office manager, Amanda Wilman, the Society's website has been transformed. Data indicate that this is paying off, with total traffic to the website measured in 2015 at 615,000, a 14.5% increase on the previous year. Since 2013, a library of webcasts from the Annual Conference, the Annual Public Lecture and Policy Lecture has been integrated into the website, while an RES YouTube Channel with short clips promoting RES events is also embedded. Our media consultant, Romesh Vaitilingam, has also been instrumental in promoting our discipline, especially through facilitating the publication in the national press of items about papers presented at the Annual Conference or published in the *EJ*.

The Annual Public Lecture also plays a key role in the Society's communication strategy. The 2015 lecture was presented in London and Manchester by Rachel Griffith on the topic of "Does Starbucks Pay Enough Tax?". The Annual Lecture is aimed primarily at sixth form students and was very well received by the audience. The London lecture at the Royal Institution was substantially oversubscribed, but both school groups and individuals could register to watch the lecture live by remote interactive link. In what must be a first for one of the Society's Public Lectures, Rachel's presentation was broadcast earlier this month by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

In addition to the Public Lecture, the Society also aims to hold a Policy Lecture each year, to provide an opportunity for interaction between economists and policymakers on important economic policy issues of the day. In January last year the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, presented the most recent such lecture, speaking about the economic policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government. That event was also over-subscribed and streamed live online. As already mentioned, both the Policy Lectures and Annual Public Lectures can be viewed on the RES website.

Another way in which the Society promotes the study of Economics is through the annual Young Economist of the Year essay competition for A/IB-level students, run by the Society in conjunction with Tutor2U. The 2015 competition attracted 2100 entries, up from 1400 in 2014 and 1150 in 2013. An increase of nearly 100% in two years is simply staggering and indicates a deep interest in economic issues among the younger generation. The final judging for the 2015 competition was undertaken by Sir Charlie Bean, Stephanie Flanders and Jonathan Haskel, who found the standard once again to be high. The overall winner was Lok Yin Cheng of Westminster School, London, writing on "Does the economic case favour a new airport runway at Heathrow, Gatwick or elsewhere?". The awards were

marked by afternoon tea for the four prizewinners and an award presentation at the RES Annual Public Lecture.

In the context of communication, I would also like to mention the work done by Peter Howells as the Editor of the RES Newsletter. Each quarter Peter ensures the Newsletter contains interesting articles, as well correspondence, obituaries and general information. Our thanks go to him for performing this on-going task so well.

### PhD Student Support

Over recent years the Society has increased the support offered to Economics PhD students. The RES PhD Meeting and Job Market is held in London in early January each year. In addition to a programme of paper presentations and posters, this event provides a forum where recruiters and job market candidates can meet. After two years at UCL, the 2016 meeting was held at Westminster Business School, where feedback indicates that the facilities were excellent. This year 23 recruiting organisations attended, while 100 students presented papers or posters and a total of 309 students attended. A second plenary session was added to the programme, so that students were offered advice on getting a job and on publishing. The Society is grateful to the Bank of England for sponsoring the evening reception and especially to Franz Buscha as local organiser and to RES Council member Sarah Smith who co-ordinates the event on behalf of the RES.

Last year saw the inaugural RES Symposium of Junior Researchers, held in Manchester on the day after the RES conference ended. This initiative was led by RES Council member Kim Scharf, but organised primarily by PhD students for PhD students with financial support from the Society. The event included presentations of 45 papers and 15 posters, together with a keynote address by Sir Richard Blundell and an award for Best Paper. Although organised at relatively short notice, the Symposium was judged to be a huge success, and provided PhD students in Economics at all stages of their research with an opportunity to network with their peers. The second RES Symposium of Junior Researchers will take place at the University of Sussex immediately following this year's conference and promises to be an equally successful event.

The Society has for many years encouraged participation of PhD students in the Annual Conference by providing financial support that covers the registration fee, accommodation expenses and a substantial contribution towards travel expenses for those who have their papers accepted and presented at the conference. For 2015 support was extended to allow all PhD students registered in UK Economics departments to attend the Annual Conference, including social events, for a nominal £10 fee. Despite a few teething problems, a total of 67 students attended under this scheme and it is being repeated for the 2016 conference.

Two further RES mechanisms to assist the development of early career researchers in Economics are the RES Easter School and the RES Junior Fellowships. The 2015 Easter School was on the topic of Behavioural Economics, with lectures given by Vincent Crawford and Colin Camerer, and held at Brasenose College, Oxford. This was attended by 25 scholars, primarily advanced PhD students, from 17 UK universities, with 5 participants from the Government Economic Service and 3 from the Bank of England. Feedback from participants was, as usual, very positive. After many years organising these, the 2015 Easter School was the final one organised by Peter Sinclair on behalf of the Society. We remain very grateful to Peter as the founding director and driving force behind these superb training events.

This year the Easter School moves to the University of Essex and is being directed by Eric Smith. It will be held on 10-13 April on the topic of Perspectives on Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy, with lectures by Charles Manski and Kenneth Wolpin. The organisation is well in hand and it promises to be another high quality training event.

Last year the Junior Fellowship award scheme received 40 applications from 17 universities, compared with 33 applications from 12 universities in 2014. Applications have just closed for 2016, and the number has risen again to 47. The scheme provides a highly valued bridge between the PhD and an academic career, especially as the ESRC no longer provides formal postdoctoral awards. Council members Bhaskar, Sarah Brown, Martin Browning, Gilat Levy and Peter Sinclair assessed and graded the applications in 2015, with co-ordination by John Beath as Secretary-General; thanks go to all for their work on this important scheme. Although it was planned to offer 10 awards, this was increased to 12 in the light of the high quality of the applications. Details of the awards can be found on the RES website and papers are being presented by some at this year's Junior Fellows Session on Wednesday.

### Other Support

During the year, the Society continued to support research and scholarship through a range of other schemes, including Special Projects Grants, Visiting Lecturer, Conference Grants and Small Academic Expenditure Schemes. The last two of these have been administered by Anton Muscatelli for the last eleven years, despite him now being Principal of the University of Glasgow. The active support he provides to the Society and the profession in this way is greatly appreciated. Total expenditure on these four schemes was over £68,000 in 2015.

Earlier I mentioned work done by Karen Mumford and the RES Women's Committee. Indeed, 2015 was a particularly active one for that committee. The second triennial mentoring meeting for young women academics was held at the University of Warwick, the 10th survey of the gender balance of academic Economics in the UK was completed and written up, a study of the gender gap in REF submissions was initiated, a list of female professors of Economics, their research areas and email addresses was compiled, the webpages were overhauled and regular contributions made to the RES Newsletter. In recent years, the Committee has also organised a popular Special Session at the Annual Conference, with senior women presenting in a panel format. This year the session will take place at lunchtime on the last day of the conference

CHUDE, the Conference of Heads of University Departments of Economics, is funded by the Society and provides a key link to those who lecture and research in Economics "at the coal-face". Under the chairmanship of Eric Pentecost and supported by Daniel Zizzo as secretary, CHUDE has discussed a range of matters during 2015 and on a number of occasions taken the lead for the Society in providing feedback on official consultations. Indeed, a current review, headed by Nicholas Stern, is being undertaken of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and CHUDE is leading on a joint RES-CHUDE response. Both the CHUDE chair and the Society's Second Secretary, Robin Naylor, are members of the management board of the Economics Network, which actively works to enhance the quality of learning and teaching of Economics throughout UK higher education. The RES, the Scottish Economic Society and more than 50 individual University Economics Departments financially support the Economics Network, which (among other activities) provides workshops for early career academic teachers. An independent panel of experts has now been established to recommend whether the RES should endorse the Economics network's New Lecturer and GTA training workshops as appropriate and meeting the needs of the discipline in the UK. Robin Naylor has taken the lead for the Society in this matter.

### Finally

I would like to end this report by registering my sincere thanks to those who have helped me through my first year as RES Secretary-General. In particular, John Moore, Mark Robson, Charlie Bean and, last but certainly not least, Robin Naylor have provided great support and answered the many queries I have had. Others have also helped the Society in a range of ways over the last year, including members of the RES Executive Committee and Council not explicitly mentioned above. Special thanks,

however, go to the Society's small backroom staff of Amanda Wilman as Office Manager and Cheryl Dochard as our part-time Administrative Assistant at the University of St Andrews. Without the efficient work of Amanda and Cheryl, the Society simply would not have functioned over the last year. They have met every challenge in sometimes difficult circumstances, for which I am immensely grateful.

Denise Osborn  
Secretary-General

March 2016