

Minutes of the 13th meeting of the UK Computing Research Committee's Executive Committee held on 2nd of August 2006 at the RSA building, London.

Present:

Steve Furber	Chair
Samson Abramsky	
Muffy Calder	
Tony Cohn	
Wendy Hall	
Morris Sloman	
Iain Stewart	
Martyn Thomas	
Graham Paterson	IET
Ben Brierley	IET Secretary
Silvia Martins Dias	BCS Secretary
Helen Farr	IET
Darren Gladwin	IET Web Support

Apologies:

Mike Rodd	BCS
Jim Woodcock	
Anne De Roeck	CPHC
Ian Watson	Membership Panel Chair

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed the Executive Committee members and apologies for absence were received.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2006 (UKCRCEC/24-03-06) were approved.

3. Matters Arising

All matters from the previous minutes had been dealt with or were covered under other agenda items, with the exception of:

Action	On	Status
Anne De Roeck to propose to the CPHC Executive Committee that they should nominate a person to be the CPHC link to UKCRC consultation on RAE metrics.	ADR	Unknown
Noted the need to actively promote communication channels and pro-activeness within UKCRC, as well as to raise public awareness of UKCRC's single voice to external parties.	All	Ongoing
ADR suggested a stronger liaison between JW (responsible for communications within UKCRC) and the CPHC Head of Information Group (to be appointed soon).	JW	Unknown

4. Convenor's Report

Steve Furber gave his report.

He noted that the working group for the RAE Metrics programme has been convened with Tom Rodden in the Chair. The group's other members are Chris Taylor, David Duce and Nigel Shadbolt.

It was noted that the deadline for the submission was October 13th. With this in mind and given the level of interest anticipated, the Secretariat was asked to contact the panel members and check progress.

Action: Secretariat to contact Tom Rodden regarding progress and milestones.

SF noted that Brian Collins has been appointed Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department For Transport. As a member of the computer research community, and the UKCRC, this was particularly welcomed.

SF also noted that John O'Reilly would be leaving EPSRC to become Vice Chancellor of University of Cranfield.

Members of the UKCRC had been conducting a retrospective review of the impact of the 2001 International Review of Computer Science. The work was approaching completion.

UKCRC Elections

The structure of the UKCRC Executive meant that in November this year 3 positions were up for re-election, with the incumbents being Morris Sloman, Tony Cohn and Steve Furber.

It was noted that Steve's confirmation as Chair of the UKCRC Executive meant that his position was not up for re-election. Both of the other candidates were eligible to stand for re-election.

Action: SF will track ACUK developments and, if appropriate, SMD will organize an election for November and circulate details to the whole UKCRC membership.

It was also agreed that the election of the Chair of the Executive would take place at the November Executive meeting.

5. Consultations & Submissions

Martyn Thomas tabled a written report (appendix I)

Activity had been strong since the last meeting and included a number of high profile opportunities, including giving oral evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee.

6. Membership Panel

Ian Watson sent in a written report which was delivered by the Chair:

There were three applications for membership in the period from April to June 2006, these were all approved. It was agreed by the panel that the cases were straightforward and they were therefore approved using the web based system and no formal meeting was held.

A number of members are due to retire from the panel in the next six months and it will be necessary to decide how to proceed with the appointment of replacements. With the possible formation of the learned society in the near future, it may be sensible to consider a short extension of the existing terms.

The panel is due to meet again at the end of September.

It was noted that a number of the Membership Panel's terms of office were expiring. IW had suggested that these terms might be extended considering the possible changes UKCRC was about to go through.

Action: It was agreed that the terms of office for the Membership panel members would be extended through to July 2007.

7. Communications Group

No report was received from the Jim Woodcock or the communications group. It was noted that this was an area that UKCRC had had difficulty engaging in, and the Executive had not received a report for a number of meetings.

A number of suggestions were discussed on how to raise the profile and engage more effectively, specifically with the media. However, it was agreed that any changes or alterations run the risk of being overtaken by events.

Darren Galdwin did highlight that despite the lack of formal media communications or publicity, the UKCRC website was proving extremely popular, with over 7,000 hits per month. The most popular pages were the Grand Challenges pages and the resources section – which includes submissions to Government.

8. Proposal for a learned society

Wendy Hall reported back for the working party. Following on from the Grand Challenges meeting in March, IET, BCS and the working party had met a number of times.

A new paper, drafted by Mike Rodd with input from Graham Paterson had suggested a way forward. The proposal was for an "Association of UK Computing" and the paper addresses a number of issues, including:

- Reporting lines: will report to BCS Trustee board.
- Funding: BCS have offered to fund the secretariat for 5 years.
- BCS and IET (and others) will provide a grant based pro-rata on the number of ACUK members who are also members of these institutions.
- Corporate membership will be offered for organizations, i.e. BCS and IET
- Membership will be free to IET or BCS members and there will be a "ACUK" only membership offered in addition.

It was important to note that the Association would not award post-nominals nor would have

requirements for membership.

Whilst no time line had been agreed, an ideal one would be:

September / October 2006 – “Town hall meetings” for computer science community to discuss
November 2006 – UKCRC Executive to discuss meetings / concerns / agree next steps
January 2007 – Launch of Association of Computing UK (ACUK)

Whilst the mood was positive, there were a number of concerns raised with the wording of elements of the proposal. An alternative wording for the introduction / mission had been proposed by Samson Abramsky. It was agreed that the mission element was not clear enough, and SA and Iain Sommerville agreed to reword based on the discussion around the need for a clearer interpretation of the mission.

Action: SA and IS to reword section 2.1 of proposal.

In a round-table discussion, a number of other concerns were raised:

- The need for different membership grades
- Who needs to agree for this to be taken forward
- The lack of “worst case” planning – i.e. what if numbers joining are lower than expected?
- Transition for current UKCRC members
- Access to the current pool of expertise offered by UKCRC for handling consultations, etc.
- The need to continue to engage leading researchers in ACUK activities

It was agreed though that the Executive were overall very positive about the proposal, and the Executive committed to support it.

Next steps

- Vision and front cover to document need to be completed in August (must be punchy and straight to the point).
- Town hall meetings for UKCRC members and CS community (hosted by BCS / IET)

Action: Working party to organise and book “town hall” meetings.

9. International Review of ICT

Muffy Calder reported that the UKCRC input to the review was progressing well. The categories have been selected and the list has been circulated. The input is around 50% complete.

Graham Paterson reported that the review was still on course and the selection of the review board is nearing completion. GP highlighted that the EPSRC categories, which should be publicly available, would be a useful starting point to map onto the document MC is preparing.

It was agreed that whilst a re-formatting with new headings would not be possible, an opportunity to make the document more relevant for EPSRC as input should not be missed.

10. BCS / Computing 50th Anniversary Celebration

Silvia Dias reported that planning for the 50th anniversary was well underway, with four main topic

areas being looked at, all under the general theme of public engagement:

- Security – personal
- Internet
- Leisure computing
- Computer and computational science

Claire Davenport (BCS 50th Anniversary Manager) will contact a number of Universities who are also celebrating the 50th Anniversary of purchase of their first computer. There will also be a major event in May.

11. UKCRC Website

Darren Gladwin reported previously that the website was proving an effective means of reaching the broader community and beyond.

There was some concern expressed over the transfer and retention of this content for the next stage of UKCRC and it was agreed this would have to be carefully looked at.

12. Any Other Business

CRA computing conference – there was concern that UKCRC would not be represented without making a case / putting itself forward.

Action: Wendy Hall agreed to speak to organisers.

Grand Challenges 2007 & 2008 – the main Grand Challenges is biennial but a scaled down version will be held in 2007. At the moment the UKCRC only needs to continue to host the website.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next UKCRC Executive meeting will be hosted by BCS at their London offices. It was agreed the meeting would again start at 10am and finish with lunch. Date TBA (end of November).

Appendix I

Report on Consultations for the EXEC meeting, August 2006

This report covers consultation responses and similar activities.

1. Security

Brian Collins submitted a response to the European Future and Emerging Technologies programme in March.

2 Scientific advice, risk and evidence

I gave oral evidence on behalf of UKCRC and the IET to the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee in May. Their report will be published on Friday.

3 EPSRC 2006 Strategic Plan

Tony Hoare drafted a response to EPSRC's call for comments, which I submitted in July.

4 Lords Inquiry into Personal Internet Security

I shall probably submit a response to this in October, as Aaron Sloman and Tony Hoare have already provided input.

5 Reform of Research Assessment and Funding

Tom Rodden is leading a response, for submission in October. He will draft it for review by Exec, in view of the political sensitivity.

6 The future

I am concerned that the growth in membership that will follow the formation of ACUK will make the consultation process unmanageable in its current form. Neither the BCS nor the IET actively consults all members about draft submissions, and ACUK will need a new protocol.

In the current draft, the BCS offers to take over coordinating consultation submissions, yet in most instances that interest UKCRC, the UKCRC contribution to the submission has been the greatest part of the BCS submission. This leads me to believe that it will continue to be necessary to have a member of the ACUK Executive who is actively seeking consultations relevant to the issues that ACUK wishes to pursue and managing ACUK's responses to them.

At present, we get extremely authoritative contributions, because UKCRC members are world leaders in their fields. In my opinion, we cannot expect to maintain this standard if we attempt to accommodate opinions expressed potentially by any corporate member of the BCS, IET, CPHC, LMS and other corporate members of ACUK. Indeed, the motivation of the leaders to contribute may fall in these circumstances, as the signal to noise ratio worsens.

Martyn Thomas
August 2006