**Minutes – AGM Meeting – Wednesday 5th July 2023**

**12.45-13.45**

**University of Bristol**

Attendees

18 including

Linda Clarke

Michael Gold

Paul Lewis

Ralph Darlington

Irena Grugulis

Melanie Simms

Dave Lyddon

Stephen Mustchin

Peter Turnbull

Huw Thomas

Kavya Bharadkar

Alex Wood

Giorgos Gouzoulis

Christopher Pesterfield

Tonia Novitz

Manoj Dias-Abey

Harry Pitts

Apologies for absence

Apologies from Andy Hodder, Jo Cutter and other striking colleagues from Leeds.

Minutes from last meeting

Unavailable.

Matters arising from last meeting

No matters arising from the last meeting.

Annual Report from Treasurer

The bank accounts remain in a strong positive position. As of July 3rd, the current account held £13,065.37. However, there are conference expenses that have not been paid yet. For practical reasons, the organising committee decided to create a university budget code at the University of Bristol to run internal payments more smoothly with the support of our allocated admin staff. The savings account held £103,632.47.

Between 15 June 2022 and 15 June 2023, BUIRA made a small loss of -£413.92. Given the substantial surplus we had over the previous three years due to COVID, the Executive and the Stewards decided to keep the cost of attendance for the conference low (similar to last year’s levels) and also subsidise the PhD conference and subsequent social event.

Furthermore, the Executive and the Stewards took the decision to support a limited number of PhD students who attended the doctoral workshop on research quality and productivity led by Professor Sarosh Kuruvilla (19th - 24th June 2023) and organised by the Employment Relations & HRM Group at UCD School of Business and the ERC Research Group ‘Labour Politics & the EU’s New Economic Governance regime’ at the UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy. Funding from the Association covered the cost of accommodation and subsistence. Eventually, we had one student who received support.

At the moment, the Executive and the Stewards are exploring other activities and ways to utilise the large surplus that has been accumulated over the last few years. Finally, regarding this year’s audit, all relevant statements have been sent to BUIRA’s accountants and we are waiting to get back to us.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Income & Expenditure Analysis: June 15, 2022 - June 15, 2023 | | | | |
|  | **Income** | | **Expenditures** | |
|  | Individual Subs direct into the bank account | £ 1,760.00 | Exec meeting expenses | £ 470.49 |
|  | Stripe | £ 18,819.74 | 2022 Annual Conference expenditures | £12,319.74 |
|  | Interest | £ 581.69 | 2023 Annual conference expenditures | £ 6,464.30 |
|  | Refund | £ 305.00 | Stripe fees on conference payments | £ 51.20 |
|  |  |  | 2021-22 BUIRA audit | £ 180.00 |
|  |  |  | Website hosting & Mailing List | £ 464.63 |
|  |  |  | Website development | £ 814.80 |
|  |  |  | Academy of Social Sciences subscription 2023 | £ 300.00 |
|  |  |  | BUIRA fellows 2022 | £ 310.81 |
|  |  |  | BUIRA files transfer from Leeds | £ 55.00 |
|  |  |  | UCD workshop student fees | £ 449.38 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **£ 21,466.43** |  | **£21,880.35** |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Paul Lewis pointed out that if audited accounts are March to March then next year’s accounts should enable us to see the true loss and gain.

Proposals for how to use the surplus.

In a discussion about how to use the surplus at BUIRA’s disposal, Peter Turnbull pointed out that Gregor Gall has put together a paper with proposals on how the surplus could be used. In this he stated that:

* What we should have as a standing surplus to cover any eventualities.
* It would be good to set up a working group for this to deliberate on proposals
* Spending principles should be considered – the money should develop the IR field.
* There are costs involved in spending surplus should be considered.

The suggestions in Gregor’s paper were:

* UG or PG student IR essay prize
* best paper IR prizes at the Conference (e.g., PhD, early career research, general)
* seed corn grants for new projects – see, for example, the practice of the [SSLH](https://sslh.org.uk/bursaries-grants/)
* one off seminars/conferences (i.e., more than study group activity)
* book publishing arm that does what others not doing (e.g., could be more polemical on issues like key actors in IR, building on the Hodder and Mustchin edited book plus those before)

Paul Lewis directed attention to previous proposals within previous stewardship team of buying a share of the Industrial Relations Journal in order to establish a clear BUIRA link with a journal and make some income from it. This would need to be discussed with Brian Towers. Peter Turnbull pointed out that this had been discussed at a previous Executive meeting. Alex Wood said that objections were raised due to the potential cost which could end up using reserves.

Report from Conference and Events Officer

Manoj Dias Abey suggested that a postmortem was needed on the conference. Once the forthcoming conferences have been allocated to other universities, there will be more time to focus on events organised in between.

Ralph Darlington asked how many delegates, the answer being just under 100.

Peter Turnbull reported that there has been an expression of interest from Royal Holloway to host the next conference, but need more offers. He reported that a recent Executive Meeting had discussed combining BUIRA with ILERA in Durham in September 2025. There is precedent for this in that it has happened previously.

Ralph Darlington said that the problem with 2008 was the combination was very reluctant and effectively implied the liquidation of BUIRA for the year with only one genuinely BUIRA session integrated into the programme, which was not a satisfactory arrangement. If this happens again, it has to be accepted that there is effectively no BUIRA conference that year.

Peter Turnbull - We would need input into themes in order to ensure that BUIRA has presence. If not ILERA, it is unclear who else will host the conference in 2025.

Manoj Dias Abey asked whether reticence to host the conference was a new thing. Mel Simms said that it was not.

Report from Communications Officer

Huw Thomas reported on the number of subscriptions active for the newsletter, an increase in Twitter followers, and an increase in Facebook followers too. He reminded members to please send material for the newsletter by each Thursday in order to guarantee distribution in the next installment.

Annual Report from Membership Officer

The 2019 Annual Meeting passed a motion to create a new BUIRA website. However, the integration of the old website with a range of bespoke BUIRA systems - not least the membership database – was not fully appreciated by the annual meeting or the Newcastle and Birmingham Steward teams. The creation of a new website in 2021/22 necessitated a new membership database that exists as a list of paid-up subscribers on the website’s subscription section (via a Woocommerce Wordpress plugin).

Due to data protection rules, it was not possible to transfer the direct debit status for members to the new system, and instead, we have had to rely on members re-setting up direct debit when they come to renew their membership for the first time via the new website. If people do not respond to an email promoting them to renew their membership, their membership is automatically placed on hold.

The obvious potential to lose members was confounded in early 2023 when anti-fraud requirements led to the suspension of our account on the Stripe payment system. As a result, those members who had set an automatic renewal did not have their payment processed. This went unnoticed for some months and highlights the dangers of running an association without paid staff. The only way to get the renewals to resend was by manually entering the Stripe payment data into the membership database. This consisted of many hours of work combined with several additional hours of discussion with our website support team but has now hopefully been resolved.

The result is that our membership has shrunk considerably over the past year. We currently have 124 members in good standing, compared 261 at the last annual meeting. There are 312 subscriptions that have been placed on hold due to non-payment. Some reduction in membership is likely due to this year’s conference being smaller than last year’s and people not wanting to renew their membership if attending this year’s conference (especially during a cost of living crisis), however, having spoken to several long-standing members whose membership had lapsed it seems clear that many of those who’ve been placed on hold are likely unaware of their membership lapse.

This regrettable but all we can really do now is try and communicate the need for members to check their membership status and renew if lapsed. This will be done first via the newsletter and then separately via individual emails. While this will have impacted our annual income, perhaps by around £3000 per year, we at least have sufficient reserves to easily weather this downturn in revenue while we rebuild our subscriptions via communications and annual attendance at the conference.

Irena Grugulis recalled that in the past there has been automatic sign up for BUIRA when registering online for conference.

Paul Lewis pointed out the difficulties imposed by the Stripe payment system, not just the website – EU regulations prohibit the taking of continuous payments.

Annual Report from History of Industrial Relations Study Group

The BUIRA History of IR Study Group held two meetings this year, both face-to-face at the University of Westminster.

Our first seminar, Unite the Union: The Unite History Project (8 December 2022), examined the development of Unite the Union from its origins in the Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) over the years since 1932. The presentations were based on volumes 2, 3 and 4 of the Unite History Project (published by Liverpool University Press). Roger Seifert (former Professor of Industrial Relations at Keele and Wolverhampton) spoke on No Turning Back: The Road to War and Welfare (Volume 2, 1932-1945) and Marjorie Mayo (Emeritus Professor at Goldsmiths, University of London) followed with a talk entitled Exploring Class Struggle (Volume 3, 1945-60). John Foster (Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences, University of Paisley/UWS), speaking by video link, concluded with Comments on Methods and the Use of Oral History (Volume 4 had been amplified by oral history).

Our second seminar, Changing Union Strategies in France and UK: The Examples of the French Post Office and Employment Discrimination Litigation (6 June 2023) compared and contrasted certain aspects of the industrial relations systems in France and the UK, and in particular the role of unions. Odile Join-Lambert (Professor of History and Sociology at the University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin en Yvelines) presented Trade Unions Facing Transformations of the Public Sector: The Case of the French Post Office (1931 to the Present) and then Cécile Guillaume (Reader in Work, Employment and Organisations at Surrey Business School) spoke on Mobilizing Employment Discrimination Law: Comparing Litigation Strategies of British and French Trade Unions.

The second seminar was poorly attended, despite a good number of people having signed up. We do urgently need your views on whether you prefer to continue with face-to-face seminars or to revert to on-line events through Zoom or MS Teams. Virtual events require less effort to attend and can reach a far wider potential audience, but of course they lack the informality and personal touch of traditional seminars. Which do you prefer?

We are beginning to plan for next academic year (2023/24), and would greatly welcome ideas for themes and speakers. Without themes and speakers, we can’t hold seminars – please do contact us!

Peter Turnbull said that how BUIRA reserves could support study groups was on the agenda for the next Executive meeting.

Annual Report from London Study Group

Due to pressure of work, it was only possible to organise one London BUIRA seminar this year, held at the University of Westminster on 9th May, though this proved a momentous and well-attended event. Our speakers were Professors Michael Gold and Chris Smith from Royal Holloway University of London, with Prof. Jean Jenkins of Cardiff University and Prof Damian Grimshaw of Kings College London as discussants. And the theme was also the title of Chris and Michael’s new book ‘Where’s the ‘Human’ in Human Resource Management? Managing Work in the 21st Century’, which was launched at the same time. They spoke about why they had written it, having questioned the point of Human Resource Management, as most students taking courses in business and management don’t want to become Human Resource managers. The textbooks used generally take the form of instruction manuals on how to recruit, promote and pay people fairly, with sections thrown in on ethical management, international HRM and the gig economy, and case studies that invariably reflect management perspectives towards the workforce. Instead, the book argues that we need a serious rethink about how we teach HRM, especially as, as employees, we remain subject to all the pressures and frustrations of HRM until we retire. So, the approach sees the employment relationship as structurally uneven and contested and the book reflects worker perspectives towards HRM, aiming to provide insights into our treatment at the workplace, in the context of fragmenting labour markets, migration, diversity and the development of digitalised work control methods, among much else.

On top of this, as Chris explained, most HRM textbooks do not adequately address the profound changes that work and employment are undergoing, being generally still based on a model of employment within traditional, hierarchical organisations, with formal full-time jobs considered the norm. The book recognises that HRM takes place increasingly in ‘post-bureaucratic’ settings with multiple diversities amongst workers, which it tackles head on. Today employees may work on a wide variety of contracts and through agencies where even the identity of the manager is unclear, as well as across numerous time and spatial boundaries. The book represents a coherent approach towards explaining fragmented work environments, focusing on the way labour costs, productivity and survival fundamentally shape HRM policy and practice, and including conflict and resistance, the ‘new’ unitarism, the gig economy, migration, the challenges of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data, and the key role played by trade unions – all illustrated with globally relevant examples and case studies. So the textbook is highly recommended to all those teaching in the area.

Elections

Peter Turnbull reported that roles were advertised but there were no responses. However, Jo Cutter and Emma Hughes are happy to continue in their posts. There was some ambiguity about the precise term limits. Ralph Darlington suggested that this issue should be brought to next year’s AGM. The rules suggest clear limits in order to prevent a bureaucracy ruling permanently over the association. Paul Lewis suggested that waiting until next year to resolve issue not sufficient. Dave Lyddon proposed finding an adhoc solution for next 12 months until next AGM. Paul Lewis pointed to precedent set for voting online during the pandemic.

Other business

None

Next meeting date

July 2024