

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
THE FIFTY-THIRD ORDINARY MEETING OF CONVOCATION

held on Saturday 19 June 2010, at 3pm
in the Curtis Auditorium, Herschel Building.

Present: Mr AE Jones (in the chair), Ms AJ Armour, Professor J Anderson, Dr M Anderson, Dr JB Ball, Dr CRB Bamford, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor C Brink, Dr AM Brown, Mrs C Butterfield, Dr RJ Butterfield, Mr P Byrne, Mr MSE Charles, Ms M Chow, Mrs PM Chrisp, Mr GEJ Cockram, Mrs MA Corr-Jack, Dr HM Coyne, Dr P Coyne, Mr P Coxson, Dr PMJJ Dee, Dr CJ Deighton, Dr S Errington, Mr IH Forster, Mr B Grant, Dr GH Greatrex, Dr M Heather, Mrs E Hood, Mr PBF Hood, Lady S Irvine, Sir DH Irvine, Mr F Ives, Dr RM Jameson, Mr J Jeffery CBE, Dr J Loftus, Mrs J Lister, Dr RW McCrae, Mr WG Oliver, Mr HRC Owen, Mrs M Owen, Professor DG Parker, Mr JDRB Percy, Mrs PAM Percy, Mr J Penn, Mrs MD Penn, Dr WA Pollard, Mr AF Quinn, Dr BAO Randall, Mrs E Randall, Miss JV Redhead, Mr H Regnart, Mr NP Richardson, Mrs L Rozner, Mr MJ Scott, Mr M Scrimshaw, Mr K Sehat, Emeritus Professor DA Shaw, Dr RS Shiel, Mr IJ Smith, Dr JM Tarnoky, Mrs MD Taylor, Mr RM Theaker, Professor AJ Walton, Mr FT Walton, The Rt Hon Lord Walton of Detchant, Dr MA Wynne.

In attendance: Miss T Angelopoulos, Mrs A Burton, Miss F Clarke, Mrs J Clubley, Miss S Davies, Mr SD Garratt, Mrs M Grant OBE, Mrs M Haworth, Dr JV Hogan, Mr JA Johnston, Miss U Rafiq, Mrs T Readshaw, Professor E Ritchie, Miss L Taylor.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Convocation held on Saturday 20 June 2009 were approved as an accurate record. **DOCUMENT A**

2. MATTERS ARISING

Future appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair of Convocation

Considered:

A paper on the appointment of future Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Convocation. **DOCUMENT B**

Noted that:

Mr Mark Scrimshaw proposed that it was unnecessary to have two chairs (one for Convocation and one for the Alumni Consultative Group) and suggested moving towards one role to represent all alumni. Dr John Hogan welcomed this suggestion and it was accepted by a show of hands. It was agreed that the University would work toward this in the next few years.

3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT 2009-2010

Received:

The Vice-Chancellor's Report to Convocation, 19th June 2010.

Noted that:

- a) The general economic environment would create difficulties for higher education. It was possible that the ongoing Independent Review of Higher Education and Student Finance, chaired by Lord Browne, could recommend that tuition fees should increase. No increase in home fees could be introduced before 2013. The next three or four years would be difficult but the University would start from a good position. In the past, the University had been prudent in terms of its borrowings; when the Vice-Chancellor had joined the University he had been informed by his peers that the University was under-borrowed. The University expected to complete its current capital programme without debt.
- b) Newcastle University had a strong surplus and healthy cash balances much of which it had reinvested in the student experience. Significant investment had been made in the development of the campus and this was set to continue.
- c) The societal challenge theme of Ageing and Health was led by the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Sustainability theme was led by the Faculty of Science Agriculture and Engineering. By the end of the year the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences would have developed its theme, probably related to engagement and civil society.

The Science City initiative would tackle three issues in three places: ageing and health carried out at the Campus of Ageing and Vitality, stem cells and regenerative medicine at the Centre for Life, and sustainability at Science Central.

- d) The new student and administrative services building, King's Gate, had been completed. The £35m complex provided a much better student experience and a 'front door' for the University facing the city.
- e) The Great North Museum had been officially opened by the Queen on 6 November 2009 and had received 800,000 visitors since it opened in May 2009, far exceeding the business plan requirement of 300,000.
- f) £8million pounds would be spent on renovating the Union Society.
- g) The new Medical Sciences building was now called the Baddiley-Clarke Building.
- h) The new Business School would open in September 2011.
- i) The Malaysian campus for Medicine and the Singapore initiative for Marine Sciences were continuing to progress well.
- j) The University's performance in relation to the grants it had received from the research councils had been especially strong. In 2008/09 Newcastle had been placed eighth in the UK in terms of the amount of income received and second in terms of the income received per full-time equivalent (FTE) member of staff.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of Convocation for their support.

Questions:

- (a) Ian Forster (BA Geography 1955) asked the Vice-Chancellor what the plans were for Park Terrace and Kensington Terrace now that the majority of the support services had relocated to King's Gate.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that Park Terrace would be demolished and replaced by new-build student accommodation and Kensington Terrace would be redeveloped into student accommodation. Devonshire House, at the end of Kensington Terrace, would be converted into accommodation for visitors.

- (b) David Parker (BSc Hons Chemistry 1971, PhD Chemistry 1974) thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his interesting report. Professor Parker asked if the University had the capacity to increase international student numbers without affecting the experience of home students.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that if the University recruited too few or too many home students it would be penalised. The number of international students was not controlled in this way.

- (c) John Percy (BSc Mining Engineering 1962) congratulated the University on the variety of initiatives it was currently pursuing. Mr Percy asked for details of what was done to ensure that the local population could interact with the University and whether there were any plans to open a visitors' centre on campus.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the city and University met in a number of ways. The City Council was a partner in Science City. Discussions had commenced between the University, the Council and Northumbria University about the space between Newcastle University, Northumbria University and the Civic Centre, including a consideration of traffic flows, pedestrian routes and the Haymarket space.

The University had always envisaged that its front door would be King's Gate. There was a small visitors' centre on the ground floor and the possibility of establishing a centre next to the Arches, following the demolition of the Museum of Antiquities, was being considered.

- (d) Submitted question by Kathryn Ludlow (BA Hons Music 1972) read out by the Chairman:

'What steps is the University taking to counterbalance the appalling image of the University given in the Sunday Times Colour Supplement article of 28 February "It's grand up north in Newcastle" and also online? Having read it, I was ashamed to be an Alumna.'

Professor Ella Ritchie, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, responded to the question on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. Professor Ritchie summarised the article for the benefit of the audience and explained that the article was about upper-class students who were just here to have fun and did not take their studies seriously. This touched on three things; the image of the University, its intake and how the University handled publicity. The University worked very hard to promote a positive picture of itself, but it could not control the press; the same article could have been written about many Universities. A few months earlier the same paper had praised the University for having an enviable mix of students. The University's Partners Programme was intended to encourage students who are able but who would not expect to come to a university such as Newcastle.

The University had worked with the Union Society to develop and promote a sensible drinking policy on campus. There were many international students who do not drink, and work was planned to improve the Union Society to make it more welcoming for non-drinkers.

The article was just one individual's perspective of a small section of the student body. The University's best PR was through word of mouth and its alumni had an important role to play here.

- (e) Nick Richardson (BSc Hons Zoology 1977) raised the issue of the facilities provided to the Newcastle University Boat Club, which were considered to be inadequate, and asked if the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Board could review the current plans for the Newburn boat house refurbishment.

The Vice-Chancellor said that the University was placed in the top ten for student sport. The Boat Club had the commitment of the University and was to receive approximately £400,000 for the refurbishment of the boat house facilities. This was a lot of money to give to one particular area given the number of societies which existed. Nevertheless Executive Board would review the proposals carefully in the light of the point that had been made.

4. THE DEFINITION OF ALUMNI

Received:

An oral report from Antony Jones, Chair of Convocation. Reconfirmation of the resolution from 46th meeting of Convocation (2003).

That alumni of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne be defined as: -

- (i) Individuals holding a degree or other award from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, the Newcastle Division of the University of Durham before 1963 or are holders of other academic awards conferred by the University of Durham who, during their courses, were matriculated students at Sunderland Technical College.
- (ii) Individuals who completed a course of study of no less than one term

at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, or the Newcastle Division of the University of Durham before 1963, but did not take an award.

- (iii) Members and retired members of academic and academic-related staff of the University
- (iv) Holders of Honorary Degrees and Honorary Fellowships of the University.
- (v) Life Members of the Union Society.
- (vi) Other co-opted individuals.

Agreed:

Convocation unanimously agreed and accepted the definition.

5. AMENDMENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY STATUTES

Received:

- (i) A progress report note on the proposed changes. **DOCUMENT C**
- (ii) A summary of the the major proposed changes to the Statutes since last reported to Convocation. **DOCUMENT D**

Oral report:

Dr John Hogan gave a summary of the changes, and discussed a recent meeting of Senate where it was reported that the Union Society wished to change its name to the Students' Union.

No questions or comments were received.

6. UNIVERSITY'S FINANCIAL POSITION

Received:

An oral report from John Hogan, Registrar.

- (a) The University was on course to achieve a good surplus.
- (b) Cuts of c.6% in government funds were expected year on year for four years.
- (c) The University depended heavily on income from students, and was also dependent on controlling staff costs. Staff costs accounted for over half of the University's expenditure.

(d)The University was meeting its strategic targets and was in a good position to face the difficult economic climate.

No questions or comments were received.

7. HONORARY DEGREES 2009-2010

The Chair of Convocation reported:

Honorary degrees were conferred on the following individuals at the Honorary Degree Ceremony held on 7 December 2009:

- DCL** **Ms Karen Davis**, President of the Commonwealth Fund.
- MD** **Lord Darzi**, academic surgeon and a former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health.
- DCL** **Mr Fergus Walsh**, the BBC's senior medical correspondent.
- DCL** **Mr Alan Shearer OBE**, former Newcastle United and England footballer.

Honorary degrees were conferred on the following individuals at the Honorary Degree Ceremony held on 16 April 2010:

- DCL** **Professor Andrew Hamnett**, former Pro-Vice-Chancellor from 1993–2000 and Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde, 2000 - 2009.
- DLitt** **Anne Stevenson**, internationally renowned poet.
- DMus** **Dame Emma Kirkby**, internationally renowned singer of early music.

8. HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS 2009-2010

The Chair of Convocation reported:

Honorary fellowships were conferred on the following individuals at a ceremony held on 7 December 2009.

Professor Tessa Hedley-Whyte, Director of Neuropathology at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School and a 'Scholar in Academy' at the Harvard Medical School.

Air Commodore Ian H Forster, the Secretary of the Northumbrian Universities Military Education Committee. Former Director of the Careers Advisory Service from 1 November 1987 and then Director of the Centre for Continuing Education (1989-2000).

Professor Barrie Scuffham OBE, Visiting Professor attached to the Hydrochemical Engineering Research and Outreach (HERO) Group. Former Director of Research for Davy Process Technology.

9. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Reported:

The report was tabled at the meeting and the Chair of the Alumni Association, Mr Mark Scrimshaw gave an oral report. **DOCUMENT E**

- (a) Mr Scrimshaw thanked Professor Paul Younger and Cathryn Harvey for helping and supporting the Alumni Consultative Group. He also thanked the other members of the ACG for travelling and giving up their free time.
- (b) The publications had improved and the electronic copy of AlumNews was also an interesting read. Mr Scrimshaw thanked Dan Howarth the Publications Officer.
- (c) The University should be proud of the drive and enthusiasm of the students who participated in the Ncl+ scheme.
- (d) Mark thanked Jane Clubley, Mary Haworth, Ben Wilson and Tania Angelopoulos in DARO for their support.

No comments or questions were received

10. DEATHS AND OBITUARIES

Listed online at:

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/involved/strategic/convocation/obituaries/2009.htm>

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Reported:

The provisional date for the Fifty-Fourth Ordinary Meeting of Convocation in 2011 was Saturday 18 June.

DARO
June 2010