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HISTORY

In 1994, the 10 separate UK and Irish conservation professional bodies came together officially to form a single umbrella body, the Conservation Forum. During the period 1994-1999, with the ongoing support of the then Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC), the Forum established the principle of working together on all matters of common concern and, most notably, on a common framework for assessing and monitoring professional standards. The commitment of the many professionals concerned led finally to the introduction in 1999 of the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) scheme, jointly administered for their members by three of the Forum member organisations (IPC, SoA, UKIC). In 1999, the Conservation Forum was reconstituted with extended responsibilities as the National Council for Conservation-Restoration (NCCR). It retained ownership of the PACR scheme and, with UKIC and Historic Scotland, took shared responsibility for the Conservation Register.

RECENT CHANGES

During 2001, there was serious debate about the future of NCCR and its ability to achieve its aims effectively. This has resulted in a re-appraisal of the role and function of the organisation which, since February 2002 at the invitation of NCCR's Council, is now being led by Carole Milner.

At its meeting on 25 March 2002, NCCR set aside all sectoral and individual interests to make a critical examination of its values and ways of working, the issues currently faced within the sector, the lessons to be learnt from the past, and the realistic options for ways forward, with or without a body such as NCCR.

It was acknowledged from the outset that the rationale behind all thinking, actions and decisions was that the good of the profession, conservation and the heritage was paramount above any factional interests. It was agreed that the spirit of future enquiry and exploration should be one of frank, generous and responsible collaboration between all Council members and the organisations they represent. In order to maintain coherence and unity, realistic goals would be agreed and responsibilities defined and delegated.

In what was a watershed move, this discussion culminated in agreement amongst all Council members on a **new shared purpose** ... *to explore the possibility of dissolving all existing structures and creating a new single body representing the*

whole of the conservation profession. It was stressed that the ultimate rationale for doing this must be the good of the cultural heritage.

Such exploration is at its most tentative and preliminary stages but already it has become clear that (i) the concept is one that will be more than warmly welcomed by other professional groups, agencies and organisations working alongside the conservation profession and that (ii) pooled resources and energies would create a substantially more powerful, responsive and effective professional body.

STATEMENT OF ACCORD

At its meeting of 15 May, NCCR Council confirmed and expanded its March statement as follows:

In the overall interests of conservation, the profession and the cultural heritage, the members of NCCR have agreed:

- *to explore the possibility of dissolving all existing structures and creating a new single body representing the whole of the conservation profession;*
- *to inform and fully involve its members in this process;*
- *to carry out all those activities which will sustain the member organisations and NCCR in the interim period;*
- *to carry out all those activities which will facilitate this process, enlisting the support and advice of a wide range of partners and stakeholders.*

To these ends, NCCR has identified the following short- and medium-term priorities:

- mapping out the collective resources and profile of NCCR members (status, assets, liabilities and membership services) so that both individual and aggregated information is readily available;
- researching practical ideas and models of organisational structures that are forward-looking, cost-effective, streamlined and as responsive as possible to individual group needs (by discipline, geography, special interest and personal circumstances);
- establishing a strong collective framework for accreditation in the UK and Ireland that can be promoted, marketed and championed with confidence across both public and private sectors;

- ensuring that a collective professional presence is maintained at the strategic discussions currently taking place in organisations such as *Re:source* and the Heritage Lottery Fund (regarding the stewardship, care and management of objects and collections; professional standards and advice; advocacy for all these activities), establishing our role and credentials.

The next immediate step is for the councils and committees of our member organisations to discuss these ideas in more depth and to tell us what they would like to see. Our next meeting will take place in July. We plan to follow this on 12 November with wider discussion sessions, preceding the 2002 Conservation Awards ceremony at the British Library.

NCCR Council: Chair, Carole Milner; Vice Chair, Bob Entwistle *Natural Sciences Conservation Group*; Treasurer, Mike Barrington *British Antique Furniture Restorers Association*; Kate Collieran *Institute of Paper Conservation*; Maighread McParland *Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland*; John Kelly *ICHAWI*; Ian Moor *Photographic Materials Conservation Group*; Nick Berkeley *Society of Archivists*; Ylva Player-Dahnsjö *Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration*; Zoe Reid *Irish Professional Conservators' and Restorers' Association*; Stuart Sanderson *British Association of Painting Conservator-Restorers*; Chris Woods *United Kingdom Institute for Conservation*; Simon Moore *Professional Standards Board*; David Leigh *UKIC*.

Postscript

NCCR has extremely limited resources but, despite this, since March we have made some tangible advances. For this I want to thank all NCCR Council members who give up their time to do this, on top of their day jobs and the work they already do voluntarily within their own organisations. I would also like to acknowledge the generous help we have already received from Stan Lester and Diana O'Sullivan in developing our ideas on accreditation and collective resources respectively.

What we are doing is for all of us and you can help too, whether you are a student with some research time or a retired professional with advice to offer, from within your professional bodies or outside them. Please think about doing so. Contact us if you're interested (clare@conservationstudio.com) and thank you in advance.

Carole Milner
16 May 2002

BCG/NSCG Merger Meeting

NHM Entomology Seminar Room, 1pm, Wednesday 24th July 2002

As instructed by the AGM at Norwich, here below is a report of the business conducted at the first BCG/NSCG merger meeting.

Paul A. Brown [acting secretary for the merger committee], pab@nhm.ac.uk

- **Attending:**
NSCG: Simon Moore (Chair), Kate Andrew, Paul Brown & Donna Young.
BCG: David Carter, Nick Gordon, Howard Mendel & Steve Thompson.
 - **Chair of the committee**
Simon Moore agreed to chair the series of merger meetings and that the post of chair will revolve amongst the committee if he was unable to attend.
 - **Committee confirmed understanding of the remit given to them by BCG & NSCG AGM's "to write a constitution for the combined organisation and recommend the mechanism for merging".**
 - **The Structure of the new group**
It was decided that the new organisation should have a central Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will have the power to form subcommittees, as the need arises, to cover 1. Conferences & Meetings, 2. Publications, 3. Membership & Publicity, 4. Collections Management & 5. Conservation.
- It was noted that the structure and constitution of the new group should be established so as to allow GCG to merge into the new group at a later date, should they so wish.
- **Charitable status**
The Charity Commission was approached and based on their communications, four options were put to committee:
 1. For BCG to gain charitable status and then merge with NSCG charity. BCG is already considered to be a charitable organisation but is not registered as such.
 2. For BCG to be subsumed into the NSCG Charity with change in NSCG constitution to accommodate BCG.
 3. For NSCG to close and move into the BCG with change in BCG constitution.
 4. For both NSCG and BCG to wind up at next year's AGMs and for both to