



**British
Hydrological
Society**

Organising a National Meeting

1 Introduction

The organisation of successful National and Regional meetings is fundamental to both the scientific objectives and continuing prosperity of the Society. Organising such events requires a co-ordinated effort between the Main Committee and its officers, as well as the Society members and others who become involved whether as speakers, reporters or organisers. In order to spread the work of organising meetings, many different groups of members are likely to become involved.

These notes are issued for guidance to ensure that a consistently high standard of organisation is maintained. Responsibilities for different stages must be clearly allocated. There is a similar set of guidance notes for Speakers and Reporters.

2 Preliminary stage

2.1 Choice of topics

The choice of topics for meetings depends upon many factors, including an emerging or developing research topic, new legislation, completion of a piece of research or an engineering project, or the presence in the UK of a well-known personality.

The Honorary Secretary is charged with achieving a balanced programme over the course of a year, and also, whenever possible, avoiding clashes with meetings of other societies. It is therefore helpful to have potential meeting topics identified well in advance. The aim is to finalise the year's topics by April of the preceding calendar year.

Opportunities for joint meetings with other similar organisations should be encouraged; the Society aims to hold at least one such meeting each year. Recent joint meetings have taken place with CIWEM and the Royal Meteorological Society.

Once a meeting topic has been identified, and approved by the Main Committee, the Honorary Secretary is responsible for appointing an organiser. This is often the proposer of the topic. If the organiser is not on the committee, a committee member may be nominated to ensure co-ordination.

The organiser should verify the proposed date and location with the Honorary Secretary, who will need to avoid any clashes, and confirm the meeting in the rolling programme.

It is expected that each regional group promote one of their proposed meetings as a national meeting every 12 months or so.

2.2 Details of programme

The main objectives of the meeting, and ideas for presenters should be discussed and agreed at a Main Committee meeting. Ideally the committee should be presented with a draft programme for approval, but time scales may prevent this. As a minimum, the meeting organiser should consult the Honorary Secretary, who will refer to other committee members if necessary.

The programme should be planned to attract attendees from some distance: this suggests a minimum of half a day and a balanced range of speakers and topics. National meetings will usually be full day meetings. The Honorary Secretary will try to ensure a geographic spread of national meetings.

The organiser should give consideration to:

- recruiting papers from sufficient numbers of persons, qualified by expertise or experience, to do justice to the topic (this may be achieved by approaching people to speak or issuing a call for papers from the members);
- allowing speakers sufficient time to develop the themes relevant to the topic;
- allowing sufficient time for questions on individual papers and discussion of cross-cutting themes arising from sessions or the meeting as a whole;
- timing the start and finish of the meeting to allow for delegates travelling to the meeting from some distance.

Morning and afternoon sessions should normally end with a discussion period of say 15-30 minutes. As well as facilitating the type of general discussion mentioned above, this can also allow for recovery time from late-running speakers or high demand for questions on individual papers.

3 Pre-meeting Stage

The organiser issues formal invitations to speakers, together with the 'Notes for Speakers and Reporters' at national and regional meetings, and is responsible for finalising the programme and arranging the venue. Session chair persons may also be needed. Speakers' audio-visual requirements should be established and booked with the venue. The invitation must clearly indicate how long each speaker will have to speak, and how long will be available for questions. Normally, 5 minutes of question time should be available after each presentation. If possible, the use of a sound system should be booked, including use of roving microphones: remember that some members of the audience may have impaired hearing and that some speakers and discussants may tend to speak quietly.

The organiser is responsible for appointing a reporter in advance of the meeting, who should also be issued with the 'Notes for Speakers and Reporters'. The organiser must also arrange for someone to collect money on the door, to issue receipts etc. Organisers may find it valuable to identify a BHS member to act as a local host, who can handle the booking and provide support, when meetings are held at University or similar locations. The secretary will undertake this role for meetings at One Great George Street.

The organiser should arrange for the secretary to provide a batch of Application Forms and also have available and display the recruitment poster (the Honorary Secretary can provide this as a PDF file for local printing.)

For joint meetings with other Societies, the organiser must liaise with the co-organiser and

clearly identify responsibilities, in particular with regard to costs and potential losses.

3.1 Publication of the papers

Consideration should also be given to the desirability and feasibility of providing copies of the papers. This is likely to depend on such factors as availability of time, and the degree of formality of the meeting. As a minimum, attendees should have a synopsis containing the main points covered by each speaker. The organiser should consult the committee (or the Honorary Secretary) regarding the potential for producing an Occasional Paper based on a meeting. However this would need to be accounted for in the budget. Organisers should also consider encouraging authors of exceptional papers to submit to the BHS supported Hydrology Research journal. In some cases a national meeting may yield a number of papers that could lead to a special issue of Hydrology Research.

3.2 Budget for the meeting

The Society's objective is that over a year, meetings should be self-financing. A budget should be set for each meeting as a basis for fixing registration fees and a copy of this sent to the Honorary Treasurer for approval. No meeting should plan to lose money. If several meetings are making a loss it is possible that the Honorary Treasurer will ask subsequent meetings organisers to raise charges to recover the losses. Check whether VAT is payable and included in quoted costs.

Venues should be chosen to minimise costs.

The organiser should identify the costs for:

- i. Hire of rooms and audio-visual equipment
- ii. Speaker's travel expenses
- iii. Registration fee for speakers, organisers and chair persons
- iv. Lunch, tea, coffee
- v. Producing programmes/papers

The registration fee is determined by dividing the costs by the likely number of delegates, bearing in mind that students and retired members should be given a reduced rate.

A spreadsheet to help estimate meeting costs accompanies this document.

Recommended ranges for national meeting registration fees might be:

Members - £40 to £70

Non-members - £25 more than members (may join as members for remainder of year if a membership application is completed)

Students/retired - £25 less than members

Speakers, chair persons and organisers are not required to pay the registration fee.

As any meals are likely to be a significant element in the budget; publicity should make it clear that attendance must be pre-booked, to avoid potential losses by the Society.

3.3 Publicity/bookings

The organiser of the meeting should produce a flyer and arrange the mailing, which should coincide with the Circulation due about 2 months before the meeting; this should be

checked by the Honorary Secretary before being sent out. The Secretary (or Honorary Secretary) can supply the timetable and a template flyer.

Special mailings should be avoided if possible and will require approval from the Honorary Secretary in consultation with the Honorary Treasurer.

A deadline for booking should be set 10-14 days before the meeting; this is required to facilitate arrangements for the catering.

Details should also be inserted in Circulation, on the website and circulated using BHS-HYDROLOGY jiscmail (by the Honorary Secretary on request).

Bookings and enquiries should be directed to the Secretary at ICE.

4 At the meeting

The organiser should take responsibility for ensuring that chair persons and speakers are familiar with audio and visual equipment, including laser pointers and roving microphones. They should also emphasise the role of chair person in asking discussants to state their name and affiliation (for the benefit of the reporter) and to help ensure that all present can hear questions and their answers.

At the door, registrations should be checked, and any outstanding fees collected. Receipts **MUST** be issued.

BHS promotional material of future meetings and application forms for new members.

Non-members should be encouraged to join!

5 Post-Meeting Stage

Ask speakers if they give their permission for their presentations to be posted on the BHS website. Insert a watermark onto the presentation and convert to PDF format. Send to Honorary Secretary to post on the BHS website.

The Reporter is responsible for producing a written summary of the papers and discussion for Circulation. (See 'Notes for Speakers and Reporters')

The organiser should prepare a summary financial statement, and send together with copies of receipts and invoices to the Honorary Treasurer, who will collect any profits or settle losses.

The organiser to send an email of thanks to the host (if applicable), chair persons and speakers.

A brief meeting report including attendance figures and any lessons to be learnt should be submitted to the Main Committee via the Honorary Secretary. Feedback from delegates is welcomed. This will be used to assist in planning the future programme.