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Creative Writing Higher Education News

Journal Item

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Higher Education News – Spring 2017

A new HE Committee was elected in November and we held our first meeting in January. Happily some experienced members stayed on but we were also delighted to welcome an exciting set of new minds and ideas. That, it seems to me, is what voting is for – to refresh and consolidate. With a definite ring of the latter, I was elected as Chair. Celia Brayfield was elected as Vice-Chair. We pondered co-opting various people to help with specific tasks – including Steve May (to help with the HEFCE REF consultation) and Simon Holloway (to help with the update of the research benchmark). A little more on both tasks later. A full list of committee members is below.

Warm thanks were extended at the meeting to Celia for the sterling work she undertook as Chair of the last committee. It is sometimes disconcerting when one group is replaced by another, with some faces staying but some gone. Several people decided against standing, including Shelagh Weeks, Harry Whitehead (outgoing principal editor of *Writing in Practice*) and Craig Batty (our Australian outpost for the past few years). Many thanks to all for their service to the committee. The longest standing member to stand down was Maggie Butt who confessed to being around when the notion of a HE Committee was first mooted, and who has been an ever-present in all HE Committee business over the past several years, as Chair, sometimes as elected member, or as Chair of NAWE. For many years Maggie has been emblematic of the work and bright will of the committee, often identifying and leading on tasks, readily taking on responsibility. She was, of course, the first Principal Editor of *Writing in Practice*, painlessly easing the journal into the world. That was a major achievement – such a journal had long been suggested but was deemed by many to be improbable or too difficult to bring about. Maggie led the way to make it happen – while also chairing this committee. Few would be able to manage both tasks at the same time. Her determination and wisdom will be missed (and no doubt occasionally sought out).

Members of the committee automatically form *Writing in Practice's* editorial board, making them peer reviewers and eligible to become issue editors. The journal is now at a moment of change. Stabilising its production will be among our most pressing matters. Over the next few months we will be appointing a new Principal Editor and scheduling editorial teams for future issues. Another agenda item is the current HEFCE consultation on REF21. We have formed a working group, and recruited Steve May with his rich experience of previous REF consultations. As I write this the NAWE response is all but finalised. As our subject has grown considerably over the years, the hope is that there is now a critical mass of Creative Writing HE academics. We should have better representations on the REF panels. That is what we have asked for, and also that those panels be more nuanced and receptive than in the past to practice-based research.

Two other working groups were formed. One for part time employment issues, continuing work from the previous committee. Another has been set up in order to update part of the NAWE Benchmark Statement. You will recall that the NAWE teaching benchmark has been influential in establishing the first ever QAA teaching benchmark. Several members of the last committee worked with QAA on developing this statement. The latter part of the 2008 NAWE benchmark – see <http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writing-at-university/research.html> pages 11-15 – defines Creative Writing research. This is sometimes controversial, and an assertive document necessary for a fledgling discipline. The text for this section is now in need of an update to take into account developments in the subject area and changes in modes of research appraisal, for instance in REF assessments where terms such as 'impact', 'environment' and 'open access' have arisen as important factors. If you or your institution have views on this research statement, please get in touch with the committee via me, a member of the committee or Seraphima. As I say, Simon

Holloway has been recruited to help draft the rewrite and it is also hoped to co-opt one or two authors of the original benchmark as readers of the draft we eventually produce.

Also prominent on our agenda is Creative Writing's developing relationship with English. Historically this is uneasy, sometimes convenient, often it is not as straightforward as might be anticipated. But in 2017 dealings with English are stepping into a new era of co-operation and collaboration with the advent of the *English: Shared Futures* conference in July, an event jointly convened by the three legs of the stool – English Language, English Literature and Creative Writing. See - <http://www.englishsharedfutures.uk/> . You will no doubt read more about this elsewhere – and we will certainly have more to say about the event, the collaboration and its consequences in our future reports. For a start, we hope to launch our updated Creative Writing research statement at that conference. And on that note of expectation – and with much to do in the meantime – we hope to see you there!

Dr Derek Neale

Chair NAWA HE Committee

The new NAWA HE Committee

Derek Neale (Chair) The Open University

Celia Brayfield (Vice Chair) Brunel University

Helena Blakemore, University of East London

Liz Cable, Leeds Trinity University

Liz Cashdan, Open College of the Arts

Jessica Clapham, Bangor University

Carrie Etter, Bath Spa University

Francis Gilbert, Goldsmiths, University of London

Susan Greenberg, University of Roehampton

Andrea Holland, University of East Anglia

Holly Howitt-Dring, University of Portsmouth

Andrew Melrose, University of Winchester

Kate North, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Amy Spencer, University of the West of England