

Meeting of UKFN Executive Committee

09:00, Thursday 8 April 2021
via Zoom

MINUTES

Present:

Matthew Juniper (Chair)
Nick Daish
Matthias Heil
Ignazio Viola
Neil Sandham
Steve Tobias
Yannis Hardalupas
Cath Noakes

1. Agree last minutes

The EC accepted the Minutes of the previous meeting (20/7/20), subject to the following correction.

Corrigendum to Item 5 'SIGs': MH pointed out the Non-Newtonian Fluid Mechanics SIG had not in fact organised an online SIG meeting, as stated in the previous Minutes; rather, the SIG leader Rob Poole had set up a series of online seminars in Complex Fluids¹.

2. Outstanding actions from previous EC meeting

MJ noted the action concerning contacting SIG leaders about their online meeting experiences was included in error.

The EC agreed to postpone further discussion of the Advisory Board refresh to Item 5.

3. Update on UKFN activities

MJ noted the newsletter continues to grow in use by the UK fluids community. The website was currently lacking an active developer to deal with any issues or make substantive changes to the design, and steps to address this are ongoing. However, ND has continued to add content within the current content management system.

3(c) SIGs

MJ noted some SIGs had been active since the last EC meeting, but many had not. MH reminded the EC of the plan to review SIG activity and suggest retirement of those without any demonstrable activity after 18 months, and MJ/ND agreed to email SIG leaders later in the year, when there is more clarity over possible future funding (cf. Item 4).

Action: ND/MJ to contact SIGs showing little activity to check whether they wish to continue, later in 2021.

¹ Journal of Non-Newtonian Fluid Mechanics, Complex Fluids Seminar Series, which currently includes recordings of around 50 talks – available at http://pcwww.liv.ac.uk/~robpoole/jnnfm/jnnfm_seminar.htm.

The EC discussed the general move to working online during the pandemic – including the likelihood this would continue at some level into the future – and how this related to the SIGs and their activities. Given there is no longer any central funding for SIGs to meet, the general move online has been a stimulus for SIGs to remain active.

This led to discussion about whether SIGs have international members and take on a more international role. The EC saw benefits and costs. A benefit would be a higher international profile for UK researchers for minimal effort. A cost could be loss of the friendly atmosphere that allows open exchange of ideas and a risk-free environment for early career researchers.

3(d) UK Fluids Conference, 8-10 Sep 2021

NS gave an update on current plans. The conference would take place online, using a mixture of platforms, MS Teams handling the ‘formal’ parts of the conference – the keynote talks and parallel sessions – and Gather Town (<https://gather.town/>) to take care of the more ‘informal’ aspects, such as the poster sessions and general mingling of conference delegates. Teams would also allow talks to be recorded. There would be nominal conference fees, used to support students helping with the organisation.

The EC agreed to run the student presentation competitions again. ND agreed to check with CUP whether they wished to be co-sponsors again and contribute book prizes, and to liaise with NS over competition organisation.

Action: ND/MJ to email institutional points of contact and SIG leaders to ask them to publicise UK Fluids Conference and associated UKFN competitions and abstract deadline by 23/4/21 Complete

Action: ND to confirm details of UKFN competitions with NS and check co-sponsorship by CUP by 9/4/21. Complete

Action: ST to publicise UK Fluids Conference at start of JFM Friday webinars 30/4/21 & 7/5/21.

3(e) Competitions

In addition to the UK Fluids Conference, the latest photo/video competition had just closed (31/3/21) and the annual Thesis Competition was to close to nominations at the end of April. The EC agreed it would be worth using the institutional PoCs and SIGs to publicise the Thesis Competition as for the Fluids Conference.

Action: ND/MJ to email institutional points of contact and SIG leaders to ask them to publicise the Thesis Competition by 23/4/21. Complete

4. Further EPSRC funding

MJ, ST, CN outlined ongoing conversations with EPSRC about future initiatives of the UK Fluids Community.

Action: MJ to find out how ARIA is developing and report back by 30/9/21.

5. Advisory Board refresh

MJ reiterated that Advisory Board meetings were currently paused, with a refresh of the AB pending. It was agreed such a refresh was not urgent, and therefore to continue paused until future possibilities for a new fluids initiative were clearer.

6. Fluids report and press release

ST gave an update on the report, commissioned by LIFD, on the value of Fluid Dynamics to the UK. The report is broadly divided into two parts: (i) the financial contribution of Fluid Dynamics to the UK economy, and (ii) its societal impact, including the importance to industry.

An interim report has been produced, in which analysis of the first of these is essentially complete. The size of the economic contribution, even using conservative estimates, is shown to be large.

The next stage is to focus on the societal impact of Fluid Dynamics, which will be covered in the report through a series of appropriate case studies.

The EC discussed possible sources.

- MJ suggested REF Impact studies could be used to demonstrate fluids research that has led to societal impact.
- A case study focused on the Met. Office, for example, could be used to demonstrate that taxpayer investment is very important.
- NS noted that the ARCHER website includes a collection of 2-page case studies (<https://www.archer.ac.uk/casestudies/>), with Fluid Dynamics playing the central role in around a half of the 19 examples.
- The UKFN SIGs could be a valuable source taken from their own specialist areas. A demo case study would be helpful to ensure uniformity across the SIGs approached, and ST agreed to produce one for circulation to SIG leaders. (This would have the useful side effect of helping to keep SIGs active.)
- YH pointed out that Fluid Dynamics has recently been seen to play an important role in the understanding of COVID-19 transmission, i.e. a significant societal impact from existing research, pointing to the need to maintain this underpinning discipline.

The EC also discussed the format for presenting the case studies.

- The number of studies appearing in the report itself should be limited to, say, 5 or 6 examples with around 2 pages per case study.
- It was likely that many more than this would be accumulated, so the best of the rest could be hosted on the report website (and repeated on the UKFN website). The website could also contain a more in-depth version of each of the report's primary case studies.
- Consideration needs to be given to who would write the Foreword. There could be 2 or 3 parts, possibly including UKFN/LIFD plus a couple of high-profile individuals, such as a government minister. The EC agreed to forward any suggestions to ST/CN.

A press release is also planned, perhaps aiming for mid/end May, in advance of completion of the full report, to publicise the report's findings on economic impact. This should be prepared jointly with UKRI.

Action: ST to produce template for case studies by 21/5/21.

Action: MJ/ND to circulate template to SIG leaders for a case study by 28/5/21 with responses requested by 4/6/21.

7. ED&I in Fluid Dynamics

CN noted that the aim is to develop ED&I for Fluid Dynamics at a national level. The first step is to find out the experiences of the fluids community and identify gaps. The information gathered would be useful to UKFN, to help run events that are inclusive, non-discriminatory and safe. An effective survey would also be useful to individual departments to assess their own circumstances.

A draft survey on ED&I in Fluid Dynamics has been prepared, and EC members were invited to provide comments on the questions asked or suggestions for improvements.

- The idea of barriers could be useful, e.g. what are the barriers to equality, how to remove inequality, how to be inclusive. Include personal experience of barriers.
- Anecdotal evidence is useful in general, so provide opportunity for respondents to include it in the survey.
- Include a standard range of questions about respondent – ID, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, etc – if they wish to supply the information.

Action: All to email CN with feedback, including suggestions of questions to ask in ED&I survey, by 14/5/21.

Action: CN to re-write survey and circulate by 4/6/21.

8. AOB

The EC welcomed the news that Prash Valluri, leader of the Multi-phase Flows SIG, has been appointed to the EPSRC Engineering SAT in the Fluid Dynamics role.

Action: MJ to update Prash Valluri on recent developments with the UKFN by 30/4/21.

Complete

Postscript: On the morning of 14/6/21, there will be a short meeting of the EC, of those who can make it, to talk to Prash before the EPSRC SAT meeting, which is on 16/6/21.

NCD/MPJ, 29/4/21