

# Executive powers

**Barry, the Society has never had a 'Chief Executive' before, and lots of people were surprised when they heard the term. I think that they mixed up the notion with being Chief Executive of a commercial organisation and a captain of industry. What is the role of a Chief Executive in the BPS?**

Very different from that of a captain of industry. As I am the first to hold this appointment in the Society, it would be fair to say it is still evolving. Although with regard to Society direction and policy I have influence, in real terms I have no power. That power lies firmly with the members and those elected to office.

In industry or commerce my opposite number would probably have the power to produce a business plan and budget and be judged at the end of the year on financial results. It is much more difficult to quantify and measure the work of a learned society like ours, particularly in terms of complexity and working with members in their own time rather than within their professional work remit.

In terms of the office, my responsibilities have taken over from the former Business Manager and Executive Secretary. Clearly, my biggest area of responsibility is to ensure the office and staff deliver what is required by Council and the Board of Directors. Although a captain of industry would work to a board of directors, I have to do this and manage

**GRAHAM POWELL** (*Chair of the Psychologist Policy Committee*) met

**BARRY BROOKING** to discuss his role as the Society's first Chief Executive.

the interface between office staff and chairs of Divisions, Boards, committees, Branches, and 34,000 members, which can be much more complex.

As with similar organisations, the Society has grown rapidly but could in the past be seen as a number of 'cottage industries', each doing its own thing reasonably well, but not necessarily interrelating up and down or sideways as well as it might. Staff performed well in their own jobs, but had a very restricted view of how it affected the Society overall.

**I can see that changing the 'cottage industry' aspect would make the Society more efficient, but does this necessarily mean that the aims and desires of its members are better met?**

Having one person at the helm should help ensure we meet the aims of our Charter and desires of members better than before. Management these days is no place for the do-it-yourself enthusiast. Our responsibility and accountability needs to be managed in as professional a manner as possible. Ultimately, if the office does not perform, I am the one who does and should take the blame.

With one person as Chief Executive, we can not only keep and improve the quality

of our service, but also treat our staff in as consistent and fair a way as possible and ensure that their personal and professional development needs are looked after.

**Does this mean that we'll move on to obtain an Investors in People award to show that we look after our staff?**

We very much hope to achieve this within the next year or so. Initial attempts to achieve the accreditation have failed precisely for the reasons I have mentioned. Individual staff knew their own job, but had very little idea of how it connected with other parts of the Society. Clearly, Investors in People is about good management. Achieving the award would be of no real benefit if it could be achieved very quickly – I am far more interested in ensuring that we have a long-lasting, effective management structure and system.

**You are managing a large central office and attempting to stay in contact with the needs and interests of 34,000 people. It's a big job and a big budget. Looking back at your career, what sort of grooming did you have for this?**

It is true to say that I have needed to draw upon most of the qualities and experience that I have gained over a 35-year management career. It was useful to have studied education as a first degree and occupational psychology as a postgraduate. The Royal Navy gave me a sense of discipline to ensure that my teams and I delivered, and to ensure the welfare of individuals working with me. I was very fortunate to work for three years in the Royal Navy's Applied Psychology Unit in what is now called the Admiralty Research Establishment. Ten years in a professional society helped me develop the interpersonal skills to work with professional colleagues in a variety of fields and helped me ensure that offices like ours produce results. Seven years in the 'not for profit' sector helped me appreciate that working through councils and committees comprised of members took time and interpersonal skill.



**Expectations and stereotypes are never actually met in practice. Since you joined us, how have your views of psychologists and psychology moved on?**

Having studied psychology and worked with psychologists, it was not a great culture shock when I came to the Society. Indeed, it may well have helped in my application! I have to say that for the most part, my views of psychologists have been enhanced over the past two years because I have been given excellent support from Council and the Board of Directors to achieve the changes expected from the office.

It is rewarding for me to report to a Board that is highly intelligent – not that usual in this sector! But on the other hand, while respecting the academic qualifications of those to whom I report, I have sufficient confidence in the ability of myself and my colleagues to manage the organisation efficiently and effectively once the policy and direction has been set in accordance with our Charter. I do not think it is necessary for a psychologist to hold my position. In fact, I can think of good reasons why it is best held by a non-psychologist, provided that we receive the appropriate support in psychology. I was, however, taken aback at the complexity of the Society.

**You mentioned the support necessary to achieve changes. How do you see the balance of conservatism versus risk-taking behaviour?**

Where you have a well-educated group, often with passionate ideas, there will always be differing views. In my career I have never experienced such a wide range of individual views as I have from our members. At the top level, it is up to Council and the Board to accommodate this by way of governance and direction. At this level, I can only advise, and possibly influence.

As a large and national organisation, we need balance. In some circumstances being conservative may in itself involve 'risk-taking behaviour'. However, we are bound by the terms of our Royal Charter, and the rules of the Charity Commission. I do not think that we will ever reconcile what we do to the satisfaction of everyone, and one of our biggest problems is to progress and develop while complying with what may or may not be beyond our remit.

**If I understand you correctly, you anticipate change and development, and new ventures and projects?**

I believe that it is healthy for a Society

## THE DIRECTORATE AND BOARD STRUCTURE

This is the first of a series of interviews with key Society honorary officers and staff that will aim to explain the complex structure of the Society. As Chief Executive, Barry Brooking is responsible for five directorates: Publications and Communications; Finance; Operational Processes and Systems; Science and Practice; and Membership and Qualifications. Five Directorate Managers and their teams (a total of 106 staff) support the work of the new board structure. For diagrams of the management and Society structure, see pages 23 and 51 of the *Annual Report 2001* (also available online at [www.bps.org.uk/about/report.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/about/report.cfm)).

like ours to look ahead to change, develop, and constantly improve. Clearly this change has to be managed properly. It is particularly important that the office can accommodate change in a planned way. However, this sector is noted for setting targets because of the passion of those who wish for change, in a way that commercial organisations would never accept.

Probably our biggest challenge and change will be the achievement of statutory registration of psychologists. Another project would be to improve what is our only real object – to promote and disseminate psychology. Personally, I believe that we look after our members and subsystems very well, but I believe that the centenary activities have shown us that there is a great interest in psychology throughout the country. I hope that we will be able to do more to fulfil our Charter in terms of promotion to the public as well as smaller interest groups. Although psychology is still riding on the crest of a wave, this is the very time that we need to ensure that our profile and promotion of psychology not only keeps at the right level, but is also enhanced.

**One of the ways that we are disseminating psychology is to have a regional structure. I know from the records and notices that we bought or rented properties. Are they actually being used? What goes on in them?**

We have set up regional offices in Belfast, Cardiff and Glasgow in the past year. In each city, the 'office' at present simply comprises a room in a university department for a part-time Regional Officer at a very subsidised rate. The total budget for each during 2001 was only £15,000 inclusive. As a result of the success of this project, we have doubled the budget for this year. The offices provide a focus for activities in each country, and will help us at some stage in dealing with parliamentary and assembly work. Our investment is already showing excellent results in terms of profile and co-operation. The offices

were particularly effective in assisting with the organisation of the regional centenary receptions, and they could prove very useful in co-ordinating CPD.

**So we are involving more of the psychologists around the country, but what about all those who are actually not a member of the Society yet? What are we doing to draw these people into the Society? What are we doing to make them understand that we are relevant to them and their future?**

This is a very important area to me, and I hope that we can do more. A major step has been taken to appoint a Marketing and Promotions Officer – a very exciting area to be involved in because only about 20 per cent of individuals who gain a first degree in psychology actually stay in psychology. Many move from psychology to general or personnel management or other such work.

Developing strategies, activities and products aimed at the '80 per cent' is a task which our Marketing Officer and I will work on. We must find ways of ensuring that certainly those with first degrees keep in touch with us, and also others who simply have an interest in the subject. One way might be to publish some form of magazine that could cater for their interest, and I hope that over the next few years we might consider this type of project.

It is also important that we have more academic psychologists 'on board'. I have heard some individuals in this sector ask what the Society can offer them; we could try to offer more.

**Increasingly organisations make contact with people via the internet. How is our website going?**

It is proving extremely popular, and we are getting 70,000 to 80,000 hits a month. However, as with all such websites, it is only as good as the resources available to keep it live and updated. Clearly this needs to be the responsibility of all parts of the Society, as well as the office.

**You mentioned a range of new and exciting activities. Is the directorate structure working out, and what sort of developments are there going to be in that structure as these new ventures are taken on board?**

The directorate system involved major change and is now set up and established. It is helping to improve our communication, efficiency and effectiveness, and to establish a fairness in dealing with staff. We have, over the past two years, achieved a great deal through the office. I believe that we are running a 'tight ship' in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, in a complex and complicated organisation. My vision and overall aim for the office is that we become a model of excellence in the way that we perform in all respects and within the resources we are allowed.

Given the scope of our work and the number of members, we receive comparatively few complaints, which is testimony in itself. However, we are not complacent. I would not anticipate a great deal of change in the structure that we have now set up. Indeed, such has been the pace of change, that I now hope for a period of consolidation to 'bed in' the massive change that has needed to take place over

the past two years to bring us in to the 21st century. I would hope that as further new developments and ventures are taken on board, we will have the appropriate number of staff to ensure that they are brought in effectively.

**How do the current staff find the new structures?**

Change is always hard but my management philosophy is to expect every member of staff to commit themselves to the Society, to earn their pay, but also to be aware that they will be treated fairly and that their needs and development will be looked after. I am well aware that structures and systems need to be put in place with appropriate input from those involved, and now we need to concentrate on improving the culture of the organisation. Clearly this affects both members and staff. From the members' point of view, where once there might have been direct access to Council on behalf of a committee, they now find themselves working through a Board. This could be quite difficult, but I hope that the effect will be positive rather than negative. In the office, we have to balance working directly with appropriate office holders as well as working through a clearly defined management system.

**A big organisation, lots of changes, a centenary year, up to a 70-hour working week: how on earth do you wind down?**

Winding down over the last two years has not been easy because of the pace of change. I did not necessarily set the pace. Indeed, in many ways I wish the centenary had been in 2003 or 2004 rather than last year! However, it has been necessary to embrace change to achieve not only innovation, but also to establish for the first time, what are considered accepted practices of management.

In terms of winding down, I have always played a great deal, particularly soccer and cricket. These days, I tend to be more of a spectator, but when I have the chance I play golf, walk and ride.

But probably my main interest and relaxation is travel, and I have visited many parts of the world. I also very much enjoy the theatre and films. I hope that now most of our management processes are in place, that the emphasis will be on fine-tuning rather than setting up, so one of my aims for this year is to improve the personal balance of my life and find a bit more time for myself to relax and wind down.

**Barry, thank you, and keep us in touch.**

## SCHEME FOR VISITING FELLOWS

MEMBERS of the Society are invited to nominate overseas behavioural scientists to come to the UK to meet and exchange research ideas.

Visits are for about 10 days, during which the Visiting Fellow may read a paper at a meeting of one or more subsystems of the Society and also give talks at a few university departments or other institutions. Criteria for selection include: having a strong reputation for research in his or her own field; being fluent in English and a good speaker; and appealing to more than one interest group within the Society.

The scheme, arranged by the Scientific Affairs Board, pays for the return air fare to the UK, assuming that this is by economy class and taking advantage of cut price fares such as 'Apex'. Nominees may come from any part of the world, but preference will be given to those with lower travelling costs to the UK.

Subject to availability, the funding may also contribute to travel and accommodation expenses in the UK, in line with those which can be reasonably claimed under the existing Society expense claims arrangement. However, subsystems of the Society or institutions wanting to be included in the Visiting Fellow's itinerary will be expected to meet the cost of rail travel within the UK and hospitality and accommodation involved, as they would for a guest speaker from within the UK.

Nominations should include the nominee's name, position held and full address, plus an account of his or her scientific contributions to psychology (either pure or applied), and a CV. An estimate of the air fares to and from the UK should be given. A provisional itinerary must also be included, plus a list of other psychologists who have an interest in the nominee's visit and a willingness to contribute to travelling expenses within the UK. The person nominating must be prepared to act as host, or to arrange a host, for the Visiting Fellow if the nomination is successful. Nominations submitted without all of the above information will not be considered.

Nominations are welcomed for candidates who may not be able to come to the UK for at least a further year. Unsuccessful nominations must be re-nominated to be considered again.

*Nominations for 2002–2003 should be sent to the Chair of the Board at the Society's office by 27 September 2002.*