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## CONVERGENCE – A FACTSHEET - Carole Milner, Chair NCCR

### National Council for Conservation-Restoration (NCCR)

The National Council for Conservation-Restoration is made up of 12 bodies, together representing approximately 4000 individual members. More information on NCCR, its member bodies and Convergence can be found on NCCR's website at [www.nccr.org.uk](http://www.nccr.org.uk).

### March 2002: a new shared purpose

In March 2002, the member bodies agreed unanimously “to explore the possibility of dissolving all existing structures and creating a new single body representing the whole of the conservation profession”. It was agreed that, above all sectoral or factional interests, the ultimate rationale for doing this must be *the good of the cultural heritage*, also that:

- the new body will be a wholly new body, not a re-vamped version of NCCR, UKIC or any other pre-existing body;
- it will be inclusive, seeking to unite both the conservation profession and the wider community of conservation-related managers, technicians, volunteers, craftspeople, scientists etc;
- it will seek to be independent, forward-looking, flexible and cost-effective, providing efficient services to its members and to the public and promoting conservation at all levels;

### Convergence process

The process of moving towards a single unified body has been called *convergence*. Since March 2002, NCCR has met regularly to pursue this aim and to undertake other activities aiming to draw its members closer together and build on previous achievements such as the PACR (accreditation) scheme and the Conservation Register. The member organisations have been supported by activists, external advisers and independent consultants. Resources have come from individuals' own time, NCCR membership fees and additional voluntary contributions from several of the member organisations. External funding has been received from English Heritage (EH) and the Anna Plowden Trust. Councils, committees, members and stakeholders have been informed and consulted; websites have carried information; articles, features and correspondence, both for and against convergence, have appeared regularly in the professional journals and newsletters and in other publications such as the Museums Journal and the National Preservation Office Journal.

### Convergence status of individual NCCR organisations

In terms of their involvement with convergence, NCCR member organisations fall into the following groups:

- The Vanguard group: the five organisations (UKIC, IPC, SSCR, CCF, PhMCG) that declared themselves willing to make convergence a priority and to lead the moves towards a new single body. Together, these five constitute over two-thirds of NCCR's total individual membership.
- Ireland: two groups, IPCRA and ICHAWI, cover both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. They therefore cannot formally converge but support convergence and want to remain closely involved with the process.
- The “Hybrids”: three of the groups (SoA, BHI and NatSCA) are organisations with mixed memberships and a majority of non-conservation professionals. As such, convergence has never been directly applicable to them. However, in view of our overlapping membership and shared interests, special reciprocal arrangements are currently being explored. It is likely that many of their conservation members will belong to both organisations.
- Trade Associations: two organisations, BAFRA and BAPCR, could have joined the Vanguard group but so far have opted, as organisations, not to do so. Many of their individual members already belong to Vanguard bodies.
- The Institute of Conservation Science has been invited to join NCCR, to participate in meetings and to join the Vanguard group. A vote to join the NCCR convergence process is imminent.

### **The Convergence Consultation and Feedback**

In September 2003 *BlueSpark Consulting*, in the person of Mike Caudrey, was appointed through competition to put together formal proposals for a new structure, in consultation with the member organisations. In

January 2004, 4250 free printed copies of the Consultation Document and Feedback Questionnaire were circulated by NCCR organisations to their individual members, with the exception of BAFRA, NatSCA and the Irish organisations who opted not to do so.

Over 445 questionnaires were returned, representing 619 individual members (not including in this count overseas and institutional members). 175 people sent in additional comments and 6 collective responses were received. In comparative terms, this represents overall a very healthy 19% response rate. The number of respondents with multiple memberships came to 180. These people are currently paying between two and six separate membership fees.

86% of respondents agreed with all the recommendations made. Significantly, 85% said they were prepared to pay the membership fees proposed, so putting the Business Plan onto a more solid footing. A number of considered questions and real concerns were raised. These provide the grit to form the pearl and are being actively addressed. A comprehensive Feedback report and 3-page summary was posted on NCCR and other members' websites in May 2004.

### **Regional and national agendas**

Alongside other work on convergence, 11 roadshows, organised by Caroline Saye and Susan Bradshaw, have taken place at venues across the UK and Ireland, encouraging debate and informing conservation professionals and other stakeholders about progress on accreditation, the Conservation Register and convergence. In parallel with this, information has been gathered on the major changes and initiatives currently taking place in each nation and region and impacting on conservation and conservation policies there. These papers form profiles to be used in supporting regional and national conservation networks and their involvement with relevant partners and agencies.

### **Inclusivity**

A consultation has been carried out by Dr. Stan Lester to explore the needs of the wider conservation community of volunteers, assistants, technicians, managers, scientists and advisers in terms of their recognition and status within the new conservation body. The conclusions from this study are being integrated into the planning for the new organisation.

### **Current activity**

- The final version of the Business Plan is nearing completion and indicates a financially robust organisation, with adequate reserve levels and operating surpluses.
- More detailed work has been done on issues to do with the financial and operational autonomy of the specialist and other groups, the continuation of much valued publications, events and core services. This discussion is now being opened up very broadly to a mixed group of individual members who have come forward from across NCCR.
- Plans are being made for a Membership Forum for the new Institute. This will ensure that information and learning can be shared and that members' voices are heard effectively at all levels throughout the new organisation.
- A short Prospectus for the new body is being prepared, describing in straightforward terms what the new organisation will mean in practice from an individual member's point-of-view: what will change, what will not, how things will work. This will be published and disseminated in advance of the votes and in order to inform them.
- Discussions are underway to work out the new body's future relationship with the "Hybrids" and the Irish groups, as well as with external sister organisations such as the Museums Association.
- Work is nearing completion on the specifications for the new membership database and website. These will provide both an interactive means of communication for all members across the world and a source of workforce information and statistics to underpin research and development. This work is being carried out by Dr. Stan Lester, with support from EH, BlueSpark Consulting and Susan Hughes and advice from a range of stakeholders.
- It has been agreed that the new organisation will need a start-up phase of 12-24 months. This will provide the necessary transition period for the new systems and structures to be tested, evaluated, amended and strengthened.

### **Setting up the new organisation**

Steps are being taken to ensure that the new organisation can be set up as a registered charity (a charitable

company limited by guarantee) and that NCCR can be wound down, as agreed at its 2004 AGM.

**Name**

On the basis of the Feedback, and in deference to both our charitable aims and our membership, we have agreed provisionally that the new body should be called simply **The Institute of Conservation**, with a strapline that highlights the inclusive nature of the organisation.

**Voting for the new organisation**

The Vanguard members will all hold their votes in the same week: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2004 PhMCG; 28<sup>th</sup> UKIC, 29<sup>th</sup> SSCR, 30<sup>th</sup> IPC, 1st October CCF.

**A strong majority vote will give the new Institute the endorsement, support and critical mass necessary for it to become the efficient, effective organisation we all wish it to be.**

Note:

The whole Convergence document, of which this is a précis, is available to anyone who is interested in seeing it.

- VN - ed.



**Courses:**

**New Undergraduate Course at the University of Newcastle**

The university of Newcastle, Australia is very proud and excited to announce a new and unique undergraduate program: Bachelor of Illustration (Natural History)

Currently the University of Newcastle offers the only courses in Wildlife Illustration in Australia. Students study a comprehensive variety of subject matter, and divide their time between studio and field studies. This program includes traditional hands-on illustration techniques such as drawing, watercolour and airbrush as well as the application of digital media and photography.

Natural history Illustration has been designed as a bridge between art and science. It contains both conceptual and commercial applications, visually documenting the natural world. There is a wide range of electives available within and outside the Faculty of Science and IT so that students can choose an individual pathway.

The University of Newcastle enjoys hosting a large number of international students wishing to experience Australia's unique environment and diverse culture. The University offers students the perfect combination of lifestyle and learning and is highly regarded as one of the leading research universities in Australia.

For more details contact:  
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