CHAIR'S REPORT TO AGM 2024

I am delighted to write my first annual Chair's Report for BELMAS AGM, to report on the work that the Trustees, office team and I are engaging with. This work is on behalf of our members and the authors of papers in both our journals, and in an ideal world I would like those who publish in our journals to also be members of our Learned Society, so please do continue to say this to our contributors as membership does give voice on the direction and change of our organisation. As usual, I am interested in any feedback that you have for me, so do feel free to drop me a line.

As I wrote in my first term's newsletter, I'm not sure I quite knew what was involved in the role of Chair! So, I am hoping that in being more transparent, it will – if nothing less – contribute to the wider knowledge about these roles, and encourage others to step up into them, and help our wider policy memory, and enable people to be better informed, moving forward.

So starting from the beginning of the 2023-2024 annual year we decided to have a stand at the ECER conference in Glasgow in August, which was really useful, not just to attend sessions, but to watch a lot of the conference from the Whova App, whilst talking to delegates from the stand. Many came to ask us about our membership, and we had enquiries about our great journals, and also with holding this summer's BELMAS 24 Conference on Clydebank, we were able to engage with lots of colleagues about visiting Scotland. This was the largest ECER conference to date, with nearly 4,000 people in attendance. I had meetings with both the outgoing and the incoming Network 26 lead for Educational Leadership network, with whom we are organising joint BELMAS and CCEAM events – at ECER in Cyprus this August.

We then attended BERA in Birmingham in September, again one of the largest conferences they have had, with just under a thousand participants, and I met with lots of colleagues from all over the world. Again, we held a stand and fielded some really interesting questions about our Conference 24 on Clydebank and our Research Interest Groups (RIGs), the opportunity to attend an ECR session and the BERA Educational Leadership SIG was useful. Again, we are holding a joint Symposium at BERA/WERA in September 24 from this meeting.

Then in October I was out in Jamaica for IEAL-J – meeting colleagues from UCEA, AERA and CCEAM. I also presented twice on the role of a Learned Society in the 21st century and raised questions on what role we should be playing leading a Learned Society in a time of decolonisation of our school curriculums and critical educational research. What do you think

we should be doing differently and why? Please do let me know. I met some Canadian colleagues at IEAL-J who are working on these issues within their own communities and are now presenting with us at BELMAS 24.

I have always said that the role of being Chair is to deploy our resources wisely, and I personally do not need to attend everything, but see us as a Council, representing our Society widely. So I am grateful to Victoria Showunmi, who went out to the Philippines in September to attend the WLE – Women Leading Education Across Continents conference, and to Denise Mifsud, who went out to Minneapolis in November to represent us at UCEA. Following, representing BELMAS at the Beyond Ofsted Inquiry launch in Parliament on November, I then went to straight to Musselburgh, for SERA 24 in Edinburgh.

On top of those conferences attendances we had also been doing some important work ready for the conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in January; updated our Research Interest Groups Handbook; held a BELMAS lunchtime session with Feyisa Demie and conducted a membership survey. I also attended the All Soul's Oxford November meeting and the term finished with our two Strategy Away Days to Manchester to think about the future.

Many of you will be aware by now that December was the most incredibly sad time for us as a society: to lose three such giant names, in our field in one week, was truly shocking. Jacky Lumby's contribution to field, really cannot be underestimated, then to lose Eugenie Samier just two days later, was shocking – Eugenie was a joint winner of the 2022 Best EMAL Paper Award, just last year, then to hear that Tim Brighouse had died, was followed by the sad news of the loss of Martin Thrupp, whose work will be known to many members.

The new term brought ICSEI in Dublin in January where BELMAS Board was represented by Berni Moreno. This term included a trip to Newcastle to look at their newly rebadged Centre for Education Leadership; discussions with Prof Daniel Muijs from QUB (one of last year's Conference Keynote Speakers) on what BELMAS's continued relationship could look like with Education Leadership departments in Northern Ireland. I have represented BELMAS at meetings of the New Visions Education Group (NVEG) and with The Foundations for Education Development (FED). We contributed substantially to the Academy of Social Sciences consultation document on the DfE's proposed Advanced British (English) Standard, and Ryan and I continue to take turns in attending AcSS Chairs & CEOs termly meeting. I attended the physical meeting of All Soul's in Cambridge. I have also met with the Distinguished Service Award (DSA) Panel a couple of times this term who have organised today's Summer Event &

AGM. This DSA 'in conversation with' event is to become an annual event, and we are delighted that Anne West has joined us for the inaugural one.

I attended a CCEAM Board meeting on their pre-ECER Day Conference in Cyprus on August 25th; held discussions with UCEA in preparation for their conference in November and attended AERA in Philadelphia in April where the AERA/BELMAS Symposium was reinstated. My thanks go to our fabulous contributions from Prof Chris Chapman, Prof Tony Gallagher, Prof Toby Greany, Prof Ging Gu, Prof Ken Jones, and Dr Lizana Oberholzer, one of our Trustees, and current Chair of IPDA, with whom we shared the exhibition hall stand to further raise our profile.

Since Easter, I have represented Trustees and members at the Chartered College of Teaching's Ethical Leadership event in the House of Lords at the end of April and had an in-person meeting with the AcSS Chairs and CEO group. Then of course, there has been the planning for BELMAS 24 in July, where we welcome Prof Chris Chapman joining us, among others, and I will look forward to seeing many of you. Then the year will go into its next cycle before ECER in Cyprus in August, there is the CCEAM conference. The MoU's are currently being sorted out within field are CCEAM, IEAL-J and UCEA, and these will be the conferences that are prioritised for 2024-2025.

In the meantime, I would like to thank the team in the office for their continued hard work and support of our Research Awards, Grant Funding and Events. We have had a wide range of members support our various Awards processes this term, so my thanks go to those of you who have given up additional volunteering time for this. There are plenty of RIG events happening, so thanks to those of you involved in those, and please do engage with these or let me know if there is anything else that you would like us to do.

Please can I take this opportunity to thank you for your membership of BELMAS, and your contributions to our society this year, and to thank everyone who works so hard in both our journals, and our office team who make sure that our annual conference and all our events go to plan. I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual conference, but remember if you are unable to join us, our Keynotes will be live streamed for members.

Dr Deb Outhwaite

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