

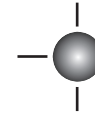
Sirs,

The issues surrounding the BGS's proposed re-location of the UKCS collections from Gilmerton to its main site at Keyworth have been well-aired in recent months. However, the tone and degree of inaccuracy of Prof. John Underhill's article in the February PESGB newsletter was disappointing, especially in comparison with the balanced and constructive contribution from Graham Goffey of the Geological Society's Petroleum Group.

We do not intend to go over old ground or rehearse well-worn arguments here, but Prof. Underhill's article contains a number of inaccuracies. The record needs to be put straight on the key matters so that any further consideration of the issues can be based upon fact, in an atmosphere of more light and a little less heat.

Prof. Underhill states *'There is now recognition for a need to delay the move to accommodate oil company users who wish to view core during the upcoming licensing round. However, it does seem amazing that none of these things had been considered before...'* In fact, the licensing round was discussed in a meeting between BGS and DECC on September 30th 2009, in a meeting between BGS and the UK Oil & Gas Exploration Forum on November 24th 2009, and on other occasions. On all such occasions BGS has explained it is fully aware of the need for collections to be fully accessible during the licensing round, and has given assurances to this end.

- *'More recently the Geological Society Council discussed this issue, but since John Ludden and Richard Hughes both sit on that committee, one questions whether the debate was balanced or fair. Certainly no opponent of the move was invited to put the case against core transfer'*. The Geological Society Council is a democratically elected body, with representation from across the geoscience profession including the oil and gas sector. The 'BGS Core Store' was discussed at the Council meeting on November 25th 2009. On this occasion the President first invited the Chairman of the Geological Society Petroleum Group to speak to the agenda item, followed by Richard Hughes who was invited to present the full background. Full minutes of the meeting have been available on the Geological Society's website since a few days after the meeting: they show that John Ludden did not attend the meeting, and that several Council members who work in the oil and gas industry were present.
- Prof. Underhill is critical of the role of the Geological Society Petroleum Group in the discussions. A constructive dialogue between BGS and the Petroleum Group began in advance of the November 24th Council meeting. It has resulted, so far, in the Petroleum Group accepting an invitation to nominate a representative to sit on a small group advising on preservation of the Gilmerton core during transportation. This constructive engagement continues.
- Prof. Underhill states *'Another key question that has arisen in the whole debate has been how users' views get reported and added into the mix'*. This statement is made partly in the context of Gilmerton core store usage by Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt universities. In an effort to engage with the Scottish university user community BGS wrote to Prof Underhill



and to Heriot-Watt University in November 2009 offering to meet and open a dialogue on the matter. Regrettably, neither invitation has been accepted. Similarly, invitations have been made by BGS to opponents of the move in the consultancy sector, but none has been accepted.

- Prof. Underhill refers to the *'discredited Tribal Report'*. This personal opinion is not shared by those who understand the report to be a review of all BGS's information management facilities across the UK, of which Gilmerton is one. The scope of the review was to 'Examine the current information management facilities, identify the limitations of the current configuration and propose alternatives that will deliver efficiency and cost savings'. The report responds to this scope fully. It also contains many recommendations relating to storage conditions and facilities which will be challenging for BGS to implement, but which will greatly improve the way that BGS discharges its responsibilities as custodian of national geoscience collections. To describe this professional report as 'discredited' is without foundation.

We thank the PESGB for this opportunity to respond.

John Ludden and Richard Hughes

February 5th 2010

BGS Edinburgh Core Store Survey

Over the past 6 months we have tried in the PESGB newsletter to air debate on the contentious subject of the future location and management of the nation's offshore core collection. Some deeply held views on the subject have been reflected in heated and passionate comment in these pages, but until now we have not been truly sure of the views across the breadth of the membership. A survey conducted through the PESGB website has attempted to ascertain this, and the results are presented here as well as on the website.

The results are self-explanatory but given the contentious nature of the subject, we would encourage you to view them objectively, read them without implied criticism, and do not fall into the trap of "using statistics as a drunk uses a lamppost - for support rather than illumination."

The President has discussed this whole issue in his extended President's Pages. We hope that the letter from the BGS in this issue is therefore the last letter we will publish on this subject.