

News from the ECG, 2020 Chair's report

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As many of our members will appreciate, 2020 has been a challenging year – and these challenges have not escaped the Environmental Chemistry Group.

Our first event of the year, the **Early career researchers' meeting** on March 11th, was also our last to be held 'in person'. The meeting, which included presentations from outstanding early career environmental chemists on subjects spanning the environmental chemistry of water, sediment, soil, and air, provided an opportunity for us to practice the valuable skill of greeting one another using elbow bumps. We're especially grateful to **Dr Laura Carter** (University of Leeds) and to **Antony Poveda** (Mangorolla CIC) for presenting keynote addresses, and congratulate **Chinonso Ogbaugu** (University of Reading) and **Fereshteh Hojatisaeidi** (London South Bank University) for winning the prizes for the best oral and poster presentations, respectively.

Many of our plans for events in 2020 have been postponed, including our **Distinguished Guest Lecture and Symposium on Electronics in the Environment** and collaborative events on **Plastics, From Cradle to Grave and Resurrection** and **Sensors and Networks for Environmental Monitoring**. We have tentative plans to reorganise these events either online or in person.

In July, we planned to hold a two-day **#EnvChem2020 (see page 9)** conference hosted at the University of York as part of our **#EnvChem** series: this annual event is planned as mobile, visiting different venues every year. After much debate, we hosted an online meeting using Zoom in partnership with the **Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC)** and made this event free of charge to both members and non-members. The response from our community was immense, with 48 abstracts received and more than 350 delegate registrations. We are particularly grateful to **Professor Iseult Lynch** (University of Birmingham) for providing an excellent keynote presentation on the ecotoxicology of nanoparticles in the environment. In an attempt to encourage online interactivity and replicate some of the networking made possible at an in person conference, alongside presentations made in the 'main room', we ran 13 parallel breakout rooms, where delegates viewed and discussed shorter presentations, similar to a poster session. While I would be lying if I claimed the event went without a

hitch, with extraordinary effort we were able to overcome many of the challenges, and the feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive. We were particularly pleased that the event had a more international reach than originally expected. A special issue of the science presented at the meeting is being prepared for publication in **Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry**. Plans are also underway to enhance and host **#EnvChem2021** online again in July.

For the last few years, the Environmental Chemistry Group has provided a stand at the **IF Festival of Ideas** in Oxford, as part of a programme of activities we undertake to support science engagement and outreach. This year, the festival went online, and we provided video and written materials demonstrating chemistry experiments that children of all ages can undertake at home during lockdown (see **page 21**), now a rich legacy resource of material that can be used by families and teachers.

I also report a few recent changes to the committee. At the start of the year, we welcomed **Dr John Collins** (Environment Agency) and **Dr Tomás Sherwen** (University of York) onto the committee. At the end of the year, we said goodbye to our **Secretary Dr Glynn Skerratt** and our *Bulletin* production editor, **Dr Clare Topping**. Glynn has provided invaluable support to the committee and me in particular over the past 2.5 years, ran the hugely successful meeting on **Sustainable water in the 21st century** in 2019, and has authored multiple *Bulletin* articles. Clare co-organised the inaugural **Plastics: From cradle to grave and resurrection** meeting in 2019 along with the RSC's Toxicology and Food Groups, and the Society of Chemical Industry (SCI). A follow-up event is planned for 2021. Clare also took on the monumental task of copy-editing and formatting the *Bulletin* as its Production Editor. I wish both Glynn and Clare all the best in their future endeavours. We're enormously grateful for their contribution to the committee.

We have rotated other roles on our committee: **Professor Steve Leharne** has taken over the position of **Secretary**, and **Dr Rowena Fletcher-Wood** succeeds me as the **Chair** (while I move to the position of **Vice Chair**). **Dr David Owen** has taken on the role of representing the ECG on the RSC's committee of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy Division.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a safe and prosperous 2021.