

The
LINNEAN
SOCIETY
of London



The Linnean Society of London

The Linnean Society of London is the world's oldest active society devoted to natural history. Founded in 1788 by Sir James Edward Smith (1759–1828), who was its first President, the Society takes its name from the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) whose botanical, zoological and library collections have been in our keeping since 1829. These unique collections are of continuing fundamental importance as a primary reference for naming of plants and animals. They are enhanced by the Society's own rich library which provides key resources for scientific and cultural research.

Our vision is a world where nature is understood, valued and protected. To do this we aim to inform, involve and inspire people about nature and its significance through our collections, programmes and publications. Through the expertise of our wide Fellowship and the heritage of our unique collections, we are a hub for the communication of science through interdisciplinary learning and engagement. The Society encourages the debate and discussion of natural history including taxonomy, evolutionary biology and ecology, alongside their application to addressing some of the urgent issues facing nature on our planet today. We aspire to inspire by bringing together diverse communities and engaging with scientists, historians, artists and all those interested in nature.

Members (Fellows) come from all walks of life and include anyone passionate about the natural world. The Fellowship is international and includes world leaders in natural history who use the Society's platforms to communicate advances in their fields. We are committed to increasing the diversity of our Fellowship, and to providing opportunities for those usually excluded from the study and appreciation of natural history.

I am the 51st and only the third female President of the Society, I took office in 2018 and remain in the role until May 2022. The Society is governed by a Council of 20 elected members, as stipulated in our Royal Charter, including a set of Officers comprising the President, a Treasurer, two Scientific, a Collections and an Editorial Secretary. The main streams of activity are assisted by set of committees, each chaired by one of the Officers or a Council member. We have a complement of 16 extremely dedicated staff, who carry out the day-to-day work of the Society in delivering its charitable objectives.

While President-Elect, I instigated an independent review of the governance of the Society, recognising its expanding scope of charitable activities and the need to update based on best practice for charities. The Governance review, conducted by the independent body NCVO, gave us some far-reaching recommendations, one of which was to create the new role of CEO. Council has begun to implement these recommendations, which will improve our operations and governance.

The last year has been tumultuous to say the least, but our dedicated and entrepreneurial staff have risen to the challenge of pivoting to virtual events, to securing our premises, and to continuing with day-to-day operations - all from home. They are extraordinary self-starters and are looking forward to new leadership and strong direction from a CEO and Council working in tandem.

We are a dedicated group of people passionate about delivering our vision through our events and educational activities, our heritage collections, and above all our global Fellowship. Our changing culture and expanding activities are exciting prospects for the future of this, the oldest extant learned society dedicated to, as our founders put it, "the study of natural history in all its branches". I am looking forward to our next decade.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sandra Knapp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Sandra Knapp
President, Linnean Society of London