

LONDON MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY

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From the Executive Secretary:
Peter Cooper

Personal Assistant:
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Sir David Wallace, CBE, FRS, FREng
Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences
20 Clarkson Road
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7 February 2008

Dear Sir David

Consultation on the future of the National Advisory Board and the role of Institute Correspondents

I write on behalf of the President and Council in response to your consultation on the future of the Isaac Newton Institute (INI) National Advisory Board.

The Council of the London Mathematical Society considered the matter at its last meeting. Although the Society's representative on the Board, Professor Alice Rogers, will present the Society's views in person, the Council felt it would be useful also for you to receive a formal response in writing.

The Council noted that the National Advisory Board had been established in order to ensure that the INI established a national role. In that, it has fulfilled an effective and useful role.

Council also noted that the Society had similar objectives when awarding its annual grant to the INI, as stated in its award letter:

“...[T]he LMS has been concerned in the past about the apparently small proportion of the Institute's scientific costs spent in some years on wider UK participation... INI has made significant and effective efforts to ensure that its activities benefited mathematics and mathematicians throughout the UK...[T]hose efforts should be continued and strengthened, and the Society's grant should be seen in that light... Council would appreciate a report each year on the ways in which the Institute has fulfilled the aims of the LMS grant.”

The Society does see the INI as being in a position to counteract the increasing concentration of research in a few major institutions, by providing opportunities for those in small pockets of activity to work in a stimulating setting.

We concur with the view in the Consultation that the functions of the NAB do now duplicate some of the work of other committees. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, to review its role and to consider whether other, more efficient mechanisms can be found to achieve the same ends.

In principle, therefore, Council felt happy to agree with the proposal that the NAB should be disbanded, provided the new Network has the structure and mechanisms to ensure that it is effective and representative. We support, therefore, the proposal that the role of the Correspondents' Network should be enhanced as suggested and, in particular, that there should be an independent chair for this network, with input from the Society into her/his selection.

As required of it as a grant-making charity, the Society will continue to review annually how the INI is fulfilling the criteria included in the Society's award letter quoted above, particularly its role as a national resource. If the proposed changes go ahead it will wish to monitor the way in which the Correspondents' Network develops, and whether both subject area and geographic coverage are maintained.

I hope these points are useful to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter Cooper
Executive Secretary