

12<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Dear Colleagues,

*Strengthening the UK National Commission for UNESCO*

It has been a busy few months at the UK National Commission for UNESCO. I take this opportunity to share the most recent news and give you a foretaste of the work ahead.

Next week the UK Ambassador to UNESCO will submit, for the approval of the Secretary of State for International Development, a shortlist of candidates to complete the new Board of Directors of the National Commission. I was approved in May to continue as Chairman of the Board, together with Sue Davies and Tim Williams as deputy Chairs.

The seven members of the new Board will reflect all aspects of competence in relation to UNESCO's mandate. It will hold its first meeting in September, together with orientation sessions designed to build a team and identify a programme of work.

We will have also a new fully staffed Secretariat. We have appointed a new Head of Secretariat, Mr. James Bridge, who will be leaving his post as EU/International Adviser at the Royal College of Nursing to join us. He will complete the Secretariat, which includes Finance and Office Manager, Andrea Blick and Research and Communications Officer, Ian White who were appointed in June and April respectively. Isa Uny continues as part-time programme officer in Scotland, while arrangements for Wales and for Northern Ireland are to be reviewed.

Finally our lawyers have re-written the constitution to reflect our new size, activities and role, and have recorded these changes at Companies House.

Over forty experienced people applied to become Board members; and a similar number applied for the three new Secretariat posts. I believe this reflects an awareness of the important role that the National Commission plays in the relations between civil society and government.

DFID have also confirmed a new accountable grant for the UK National Commission that will ensure financial stability for our future activity.

None of this would have been possible without the support and agreement of the former directors to accept the government's recommendations for the National Commission, and to allow the legal reforms and reshaping of the Board.

The National Commission is now able to develop its programme of work, with the necessary legal, financial and management infrastructure firmly in place. One of its first actions will be to engage the new Board members and the National Commission network in policy development aimed at supporting UNESCO reform. It is intended that progress towards this will be made by the time UNESCO holds its biennial General Conference in October and November this year.

The United Kingdom National Commission has emerged from this process with a more influential role, a more focused brief, and with the opportunity to make an impact on reform and effectiveness through advising government and working directly with UNESCO itself.

Yours faithfully,

With all good wishes,

*John*

Professor W. John Morgan,

Chairman.