Almost a full year has passed since the Society’s 105th Annual General Meeting, and while it seems this time has flown past, I’m looking forward to updating members on another busy year for the Biochemical Society and Portland Press at this year’s meeting which takes place on Wednesday 5th July.

You may remember that at last year’s meeting, the membership approved a new Governance structure, following recommendations of the Governance Review – which is now in the final stages of implementation. A key change arising from the review was the formation of an Executive Management Committee (EMC), which has been meeting monthly since the start of 2017. The EMC focuses on operational matters and this has enabled the Society’s Trustees to focus on the development of the Society’s strategy to greater effect, with the new Council of Trustees reviewing key strategic themes in the run up to our third Strategy Retreat in November of this year, at which we will be looking at progress with the current strategy and ways to enable the Society and Portland Press to face the considerable challenges facing the life sciences sector.

Another important change in the new structure is the expansion of roles available for members, and it has been pleasing that we have received a very positive response to the call for nominations earlier this year through the Society’s electoral platform, MiVoice. This new system has improved member engagement fourfold since its implementation and we have been able to use it to find several enthusiastic new representatives who will be ratified at the AGM.

In April, the Society honoured eleven scientists in the annual Biochemical Society Awards, which recognise excellence amongst distinguished researchers, as well as highlighting achievements of outstanding early career scientists. The 2018 Award Winners include eminent scientists from the UK, Austria, France, Germany and the USA. All the winners have made an outstanding contribution to their field, and we look forward to hearing more about their award-winning work in our programme of Award lectures next year.

At the time of writing, the Society has just launched the first issue of our new journal, Emerging Topics in Life Sciences, at the Experimental Biology conference in Chicago. Each issue of the journal – which is jointly owned by the Royal Society of Biology – focuses on an emergent topic which reflects the interdisciplinary nature of life science research. The first issue (guest edited by Daniel Walker from the University of Glasgow) addresses the timely subject, ‘Antibiotics of the future’ – is available online. Articles from this issue – and from the recent Essays in Biochemistry issue exploring mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance – can also be found in Portland Press’s recent themed collection: Antibiotics – resistance and new directions.

This month, our popular MOOC (or ‘massive open online course’) developed in conjunction with the University of East Anglia and FutureLearn will run for the third time. Previous iterations of the course, entitled ‘Biochemistry: the Molecules of Life’ have attracted thousands of registrants. The course – aimed particularly at 15–19 year olds studying biology and chemistry with an interest in pursuing further studies in biochemistry – is free, and starts 26 June. Anyone interested can register via FutureLearn (www.futurelearn.com/courses/biochemistry). To date over 10,000 people have accessed the MOOC and we hope that this latest run will encourage more to take an interest in molecular biosciences.

The annual Parliamentary Links Day will take place this year at the Houses of Parliament on 27 June. The event – organised by the Royal Society of Biology – is the largest science event on the annual Parliamentary calendar and aims to strengthen the dialogue between scientists and politicians. The theme for this year will be UK Science: Global Opportunities.

Finally, I am pleased to give advance information about our forthcoming collaborative event with the other co-owner societies at Charles Darwin House. International Coffee Day will present opportunities for every life sciences society to offer their perspective, from the ecology to physiology to biochemistry of coffee. On 28–29 September 2017, Charles Darwin House plans to host a celebration of the event. This will take the form of a scientific meeting, as well as a public engagement activity – visitors will be taken on a ‘journey’ following the production of coffee, from bean to cup.