

# Future Photonics Leaders Sandpit discussion- Minutes

Friday 9 September 2022, Virtual Teams

## Attendees:

Kirsty Annand, Aisha Bibi, Iain Butler, Angeles Camacho Rosales, Joe Gannicliffe, Dipankar Ghosh, Vladimir Gordienko, Victor Jalil Ochoa Gutierrez, Alexander Jantzen, Shields, Joe, Mukhit Kulmaganbetov, John Lincoln, Manuel Marques, Cameron McEleney, Elissa McKay, Alison McLeod, Cillian McPolin, Katrina Morgan, Nicolo Pisani, Matthew Posner, Vincenzo Pusino, Paulami Ray, Madison Rilling, Pablo Ruiz, Namita Sahoo, Jorge Sanchez, Marc Smillie, Roman Spesyvtsev, Callum Stirling, Mat Wasley, Dawn Wood

## Direct Apologies:

Callum Littlejohn, Alice Iles, Emma Le-Francois (Apologises to anyone missing from apologies)

*Editorial comments in italic – hence why being minute editor is interesting 😊*

## 1) Introduction to current Photonics Leadership Group – what does, how it works?

John Lincoln provided an [overview of the photonics leadership group](#) covering the motivation, mission of the photonics leadership group, principle activities, how PLG operates and examples of activities.

Notes that PLG focuses on fostering a vibrant photonics innovation eco-system through range of practical activities including:

- Quarterly meetings - Hybrid + virtual covering topics issues
- Rapid reactive response to government consultations and request for info from gov committees
- Proactive generation of information on [sector vision](#), [future horizons](#), and future trends (e.g. Net Zero), [industry statistics](#), [employment case studies](#), [careers info](#), surveys and [UK directory](#) of photonics organisations.
- Voice for the industry on industry panels, press interviews, [presentations](#) and through the [PLG BLOG](#)
- Support and secretariat for the Westminster all party parliamentary group in Photonics and Quantum

## 2) Future Photonics Leaders group

### a) Motivation

A short summary was provided of why it is timely to consider standing up a future photonics leaders group including:-

- Lengthening time horizons for policy and innovation strategies particularly driven by the longer time scales (2040+) seen in Net Zero targets. A timescale in which those now earlier in their careers will lead in the future.
- Recognition that although photonics has come far, it has much further to go, illustrated by the close relation to progress in quantum 2.0
- Innovation is increasingly complex necessitating more collaboration, connectivity and interactivity in the community
- The energy, drive and vision of those early in their careers looking to the future is increasingly appreciated as a vital compliment to the experience of those who have been around for the odd decade (or more)
- There is no future without people and in an increasing competitive world for the best talent integrating the views of those earlier in their careers in shaping the eco-system of the future is vital maintaining a vibrant photonics industry.

### b) Gains of participation and committee membership

The potential benefits to individuals from participation in the future Photonics Leaders group were introduced:

- Visibility across a the community and opportunity to forge connection beyond current place of work/institute and technical area of focus.
- Influence and shape both one's own future and the eco-system that one will work within
- Expand ones knowledge beyond technology to the challenges and opportunities faced in bringing novel solution to application.
- Skills & experience that one can leverage, hone and use to differentiate oneself

Noted that all of the above apply to participation in future leaders activities e.g. meetings, but apply even more to those participating in any organising committee.

### 3) Proposed operating model and remit

[Draft terms of reference](#) were made available in advance. Highlighted it should be up to the group to define any boundary conditions e.g. on participation.

A broad distribution of career stages was suggested as relevant to the proposed group, ranging from apprentices to those in their first management positions. The only exclusion suggested was those in snr management positions.

Discussion noted the importance of including those beyond Degree/PhD University education pathway.



Key topics from 4 breakout rooms were captured on online [Mural Board](#), that remains open post meeting.

### 4) Breakout 1: Discussion of concept, terms of reference, representation

**Concept:** universally welcomed. Additional comments

- Community side of photonics is so important. Great to create this so it's not so reliant on word of mouth etc. Important to bridge a gap that currently exists and really great opportunity to bring next generation together.
- How to make sure have SME representation especially from manufacturing
- Good to get connection to government policy, important for UK ECRs to have a say
- Need to cover all areas of photonics
- Should support cross fertilisation between different areas / sectors of photonics
- Mentorship / training will be important
- Real benefit for committee members to broaden scope and network, not just a benefit for the community that we are supporting.

**Terms of reference (*editorial italic*):**

- Is participation in this well received by industry? (*YES*)
  - How do we sell to companies? -different levels of engagement with group are possible, depending on size of company, time available etc
- Would representation be academic heavy? (*ideally 50:50 but will need work*)
  - What are the statistics for distribution of academia vs industry for this meeting? (*60:40 aademic:industry*)
- We think that there would be great benefit in bringing people together in person for meetings even once per year.
- How does it work for international members? (*like PLG focus? Primarily UK, with international through meetings of e.g. global photonics alliance*)
- We speak a lot to UK gov/policy in TOR - how do we raise voices and have impact. (*point of future discussion ? inputs to consultations and proactive outpurs e.g. Westminster showcase*)
- Networking element could be something we could push in terms of benefitting both individuals and companies.

**Representation (combined with committee roles, below)**

## 5) Breakout 2: Identification of priority tasks & committee roles

### a) Priority tasks

#### i) Urgent

- Spread the word on existence of group- Need to get going
- Put out a call for committee member nominations against identified roles. Make sure the wording is welcoming, and make sure we disseminate via the right channels.
- a) Identify the representation that we want from different groups - and what kind of diversity we want from our committee?
- Committee appointment process
  - a) Identify who gets to decide who gets to be on the committee? (*popular vote used by PLG*)
  - b) Ensure diversity and inclusion when selecting committee
  - c) Discuss what happens if we get insufficient diversity?
- Identify priority goals
  - a) what would success look like
  - b) Voice must be heard, or it's pointless
  - c) clarity of goals
- Blog page - re volunteering but other forms of recognition

#### ii) Medium – post committee formation

- Connect to outreach activities of existing organisation
- Think about comms and marketing –
  - How is the committee seen? On line? (*yes e.g. <https://photonicsuk.org/contributors>*)
  - Getting presence of mind in influences
- Attracting funding
  - Will the PLG sponsors map on to the future leaders group or do we need to identify our own sponsors? (*Separate sponsors more complex, but some funding may depend on being future leaders group focused*)
  - Who are our supporters in terms of in kind and financially
- Fun things are important - people/connection aspect
- Interaction with PLG
  - Must have freedom to operate, but also have inside track on opportunities/topics e.g. special projects
  - Bring both committees together for projects/meetings (*absolutely*)
  - Is it one person from PNx or PLG as the link e.g Chair/Co-Chair?
  - PLG and PLNX should not be distinct - mechanism to do this?
- Policy language/glossary to help those not experience in area
- Think about the name!
- How to reach e.g. apprentice - go down through company
- Reaching newer employees is difficult, this needs to be pushed downward through companies (*note the contrary view also exists that activities 'pushed' downward are not always well received, 'encouraged & fostered may be more successful'*)

#### iii) Longer term

- Additional sub-groups, e.g. by field or career stage

### b) Committee Roles

- **Chairs or co-chairs**
- **Secretariat (*secretary?*)**
- **Role for engaging with gov/policy**
- **Role engaging with community**

6-8 people total appeared to be consensus with flexible roles depending on task

- Suggested roles should be shared / rotating with more than one person per role, supporting diversity, being less daunting & providing variety in those leading discussion.
- Roles may need to be fluid - the people on the committee initially may not be all the representation required once we pin down main potential activities
- Welcome coverage across different area of photonics and at different career stages and across industry and academia. Committee members should not be there for too long - and should be diverse
- Can we have the committee then also contributing members? (*PLG's experience is anyone attending a meeting or providing input is a contribution member. The very simplest structure is normal found to be best*)
- Request PLG Staff liaison dedicated to group and training (*staff hard as PLG has no staff, PLG volunteer mentors and training no problem. In many cases combined input from the PLG and future leaders group will be most effective which will enable familiarisation and input from future leader group without having to start from blank page.*)
- Potential for links to POST/CSA links? (*For those interested in policy development and currently funded by a UKRI checkout [POST fellowships](#) and [UKRI policy fellowships](#) – not currently open but will be very soon*)
- Anticipated that participation from those in smaller companies and at lower qualification levels could be harder to secure (both in committee and more generally)

## 6) Ways fwd, volunteers and wrap-up

Those present asked to confirm their continue interest by completing Future Leaders contact list sign up at <https://photonicsuk.org/contributors/future-photonics-leaders>

- Noted that the list of those registering for this meeting but not attending will not be available due to a Teams bug.

**Volunteers** to support the urgent tasks identified above asked to either put their name against a task in Mural (tasks have been approx. grouped) with a note or comment or by email to [john.lincoln@photonicsu.k.org](mailto:john.lincoln@photonicsu.k.org) in first instance. Many thanks to those who have already vounteered

## 7) Next meeting

Suggested next meeting alongside the main PLG meeting at Photonex @ NEC 6 or 7 December 2022. Hybrid participation being enabled.

The PLG invite those helping set-up the Future Leaders group to observe the full PLG meeting in December