Professor Polly Arnold Visit – 11th March 2016

A group of PhD students and post doctoral research assistants (PDRA’s), under the helpful eye of Dr Mark Crimmin, were tasked with the organisation and execution of a student-led seminar for the Catalysis, Sustainability and Applied Inorganics section of the Department of Chemistry.

The pre-seminar organisation allowed a group of early-stage researchers to experience the processes required in order to arrange a seminar with an external speaker. These involved first choosing, and then inviting the speaker, arranging a suitable time and venue for the seminar, advertising the day to fellow PhD students and PDRA’s and organizing catering for the post-seminar wine reception. Through distribution of the required tasks and holding several meetings, all of the pre-seminar planning was carried out successfully.

We were delighted to receive Professor Polly Arnold to the Chemistry Department on Friday 11th March. Polly currently holds her professorship at the University of Edinburgh, and is widely recognised as a fantastic researcher and public speaker across the inorganic chemistry community. During the day, a total of eight meetings with members of the Chemistry Department at Imperial College were organized for Polly – six of these were with PhD students or PDRA’s. Polly commented on how refreshing it was for her to hold meetings with students during her visit, as she usually doesn’t get the chance to meet the people who ‘actually do the work’.

Along with the individual meetings, the organising committee also had the pleasure of inviting Polly for lunch. This was an informal gathering whereby the organisers were able to quiz Polly on passion for d- and f-block chemistry, get an insight into what it would be like to collaborate with Polly and also enjoy some time out of the lab in order to reflect on their own research.

The day ended with Polly’s talk and subsequent wine reception. As anticipated, Polly’s talk was a fantastic showcase of the work carried out in her research group on novel complexes of the f-block elements, with a focus on Uranium, in different oxidation states.

In summary, the day appeared to be greatly received, with an attendance of around 50 students, PDRA’s and academic staff for Polly's seminar. The organising committee was able to appreciate the importance of creating a flexible schedule and having a good line of communication with the invited speaker. Comments from fellow PhD students and PDRA’s were positive, with many of them enjoying the opportunity to meet Polly for themselves and some expressing the desire to be involved in future student-led seminars.