



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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## Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13th March 2015

### 1. ATTENDANCE

#### PRESENT

Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor James Wild,, Professor Andrew Norton, Professor Richard Davis, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Helen Fraser, Dr Sarah Matthews, Professor Martin Bureau, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Sheila Peacock, Dr Simon Mitton, Dr Stacey Habbergham and Dr Geraint Jones.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Ms Pamela Mortimer (Executive Secretary) and Dr Robert Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary)

#### APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Professor Gillian Foulger, Professor John Brown and Mr Charlie Barclay.

### 2. MINUTES

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> February were approved with minor corrections.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

The Executive Secretary updated Council on matters arising from the February meeting that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda. It was noted that whilst Council had directed that the GJI editorial board should consider the need for an ethical policy for geological sampling, the annual board meeting would not be held until December 2015. Therefore the first opportunity to consider this topic would be at the Publications Management Committee (PMC) on the 28<sup>th</sup> April. The PMC will be asked to make a recommendation on the RAS position to Council, thereafter the Executive Secretary would engage with her counterpart at the Geological Society to negotiate and agree a joint approach to establish an ethical publishing protocol applicable to GJI and the Geological Society's house journals.

### 4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

#### a. Behaviour of RAS Fellows

The President told Council that he has had a constructive conversation with the individual who had brought the alleged misconduct by a Fellow to his attention; the matter had been discussed at the Council meeting in February. The individual was grateful to Council for considering this matter.

**b. Public lectures**

The President recorded his thanks to Annette Webb for her very good proactive work on the public lecture series in particular for the success of introducing evening lectures that had attracted good numbers and a different audience type to the lunchtime lectures. He encouraged Council members to volunteer to present a public lecture.

**ACTION: Council member who wish to volunteer should contact Dr Mandy Bailey (Sec A)**

**c. Olinthus Gregory Plaque**

Council agreed that the inclusion of the RAS logo on a Fenland Trust plaque would be a fitting way to celebrate Olinthus Gregory's life; he was a founder member of the Society, served on the first Council and was a Vice President.

**d. Astronet**

The President advised that he had had reassured staff from Astronet that the Society's plans to engage on European matters in Brussels through the European Astronomical Society would not conflict with their work and that the Society would engage with them as this initiative developed.

**5. TREASURER'S BUSINESS**

The Treasurer had tabled a copy of a financial report for Council that had been used in previous years to allow Council to compare the formats. Council agreed that the current format provides more helpful management information and is more user friendly.

Council noted the financial and legal status of the Society as of March 2015 as set out below:

RAS Financial and Legal Status	Level of Materiality	Report for March 2015
Transfers in and out of Reserves	£50k	No transfers since last report. Investment assets at March 2015 were £6,787,010
Unplanned changes in Cash holdings	£20k	No unplanned changes since last report. £3,103,299 bank balances but preparations are nearly complete to transfer £2.5 M to a range of higher

		interest bearing accounts.
Heritage Assets	One heritage item	No change
Lease	Any change	No change
Debts	£5k	No change
Legal Agreements	Any change	No change, but rent review under legal debate as reported
Insurance	Any change	No change

### **Publications Staffing**

Council were reminded that they had agreed to the appointment of a further Assistant Editor post to cover for maternity leave and increase staffing levels thereafter, it was noted that some flexibility may be required over the coming months (e.g. temporary cover) depending upon the timing of this appointment as it is imperative that excellent levels of service are provide to our authors.

### **Grants (AKA Community Travel and Research)**

Council noted that external auditors had advised that the term ‘grants’ (used in most of the Societies paperwork including in the Annual report) was too general in nature and that the name used should explain the purpose that the grants are provided for, as such, henceforth the term Community Travel and Research will be used in formal paperwork.

Council noted that 116 applications for Community Travel and Research grants had been received totalling £156k that is approximately double the agreed financial allocation for this round.

Five applications had been received for Out of Town meetings and these would be dealt with using the algorithm previously agreed by Council. Council considered an application for an out of town meeting from Lancaster University and agreed to provide £2K. Professor Jim Wild left the room whilst Council considered this approval as he was one of the proposers.

### **Risk Register**

Council reviewed the Society’s risk register and noted that analysis and management of risk is an important part of the Societies governance activity and that the risk register will be provided to the external auditors as part of a portfolio of supporting documentation for the forthcoming audit.

### **Preparation for Audit**

Council noted that the following had taken place in preparation for the external audit by Buzzacott that was due to begin on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March:

- The Executive Secretary and Treasurer have met with the accountant on a weekly basis since mid-January to monitor progress towards the preparation of accounts for the external audit
- Bank reconciliations are in order

- Supporting financial and governance paperwork including on pension contributions (FRS17), publication income and expenditure, salary and tax information are ready.
- Control accounts are complete.
- Draft accounts are expected in the next week.

## **6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **6.1 First draft of Annual report 2014**

Council reviewed the first draft of the text of the Annual report for 2014. It was agreed that a second draft of the text would be provided to Council to approve out of committee before the next Council meeting, where they would be asked to approve the full report including the accounts.

**ACTION: Executive Secretary**

### **6.2 Review of RAS Byelaws**

Council were reminded of the activities that had been undertaken over the past 6 months to review and consult on a revised set of bye-laws, in summary:

- At the AGM in May 2014 the Council announced it would carry out a review of the Byelaws to improve and modernise the Society's governance mechanisms. It would put any revisions forward for approval at the AGM in May 2015.
- Council established a byelaw drafting group and held a special Council meeting in November 2014 to discuss its recommendations. Council identified significant changes to the byelaws during this process that it wished to see implemented.
- In January 2014 the revised set of byelaws agreed by Council were emailed to all Fellows where an email address was known and by post where an email address was not available.
- Twenty eight email responses to the RAS Consultation email address were received by the last day of the consultation and one email received indirectly via Council members.
- The byelaw drafting group held drop in sessions for members of the Fellowship to discuss the revisions in person and a number of points were also made on these occasions.
- Council agreed a final set of proposed byelaws to be put to the AGM.

#### **Summary of responses by the Fellowship to Council's proposals**

Council noted that the consultation process had provided useful scrutiny of the revised byelaws, in the main Fellows had made helpful substantive comments that have been incorporated into the later drafts and helpful proposals for grammatical improvements/amending typographical errors.

#### **Next steps**

Council approved the following next steps for the consultation and approval of the revised byelaws:

- The drafting group would issue a final draft to be approved out of committee, by the end of March.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** A third drop in session was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> April to coincide with the April Specialist meeting day, a final draft was circulated to Council on 14<sup>th</sup> April for approval out of committee.]

- The revised byelaws, regulations on Associates and the Code of Conduct (related documents, mentioned in the revised byelaws will be posted on the RAS website in advance of the AGM.
- In addition, the byelaw drafting group will provide a generic collective response to all who responded to the consultation.
- The AGM will be extended by one hour (including a tea break) to allow for 30 minutes discussion and a vote on the revised byelaws.

### **RAS 200: Sky and Earth announcement**

Council noted that the first 15 minutes of the Ordinary meeting (immediately following the AGM) will be dedicated to the announcement of the 5 or 6 projects that will be supported under the first tranche of the RAS 200: Sky and Earth programme. Recipients will be invited to attend this session and then join the drinks party after the Presidential address.

### **Matters arising from discussion of the Bye-laws**

Council were advised that in order to ensure that the Trustees of the Society (i.e. members of Council) meet the requirements of being fit and proper persons as defined by the Charity Act they should be asked to sign the Charity Commission's Trustee Declaration Form, that can be found at [http://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/media/94239/trustee\\_declaration\\_form.pdf](http://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/media/94239/trustee_declaration_form.pdf)

A hard copy was circulated for signature at the meeting. It was agreed that in future all candidates will be told that they will be required to sign this form on appointment, the form, together with the conflict of interest will be circulated at the first Council meeting of the academic year.

**ACTION: Executive Secretary**

Council noted that the staff handbook and employment paperwork will need to be reviewed following the approval of a revised set of byelaws. The Executive Secretary had received one quote from an HR consultant to undertake this work (expected cost approximately £5K) and will obtain further quotes.

**ACTION: Executive Secretary**

### **6.3 Regulations on Associates**

Council agreed the Regulations on Associates. These will be made available to the Fellowship, with the final draft of the revised byelaws, before the Annual General Meeting.

### **6.4 RAS involvement in external awards**

Council noted that the President, Vice President (A) and Vice President (G) (who chaired the awards panels in 2014/15), Executive Secretary and the Office, Events and Buildings Manager had a teleconference on 24<sup>th</sup> February to discuss how the Society

should engage in making meaningful nominations to awards made by external bodies, including the National Honours process.

It was agreed that there would be a call out for National Honours nominations (giving details of criteria) as part of the standard A & G Awards call. Nominations would need to be supported by a couple of paragraphs on why that person should be nominated (relating to the specific criteria.) Once a nomination is received it will be passed on to RAS/Awards Sub-Committee in first instance. The nominator will be told that if their nomination is successful they will be contacted for more detail.

It was agreed that a standing committee (Awards Sub-Committee) made up of those Council members on the A&G Awards Committees is established.

**ACTION: Office, Events and Buildings Manager**

It was noted that the Society had made nominations for the Science Council's 100 top scientists and the Queen Elizabeth Prize for engineering in the recent past and that the Kavli prize and the Franklin Institute Awards (Bower Award & Prize) are probable awards that the Society should engage in the nominations process for.

Council were asked to provide suggestions for which scientific awards the Society should become actively involved in making nominations for.

**ACTION: Council Members**

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** the Awards Sub-Committee had submitted a nomination for the Franklin Institute Bower Award & Prize for Achievement in Science 2016.]

## **6.5 Governance of the projects to support the 100 years of women projects**

Council were advised that Dr Mandy Bailey is unable to continue to be involved with this project because of other competing priorities. Council agreed that a small steering group, set up under the auspices of CDAG, chaired by Dr Sara Russell should be established. It was noted that Professor Mike Edmunds, Dr Sarah Matthews and Dr Stacey Habergham have volunteered to be involved.

The President thanked Dr Bailey for all her work and the members of Council who had volunteered to continue this work.

Dr Ian Crawford mentioned that it would be important to also involve Sue Bowler, Editor of A&G as one of the proposed activities involved A&G; it is yet to be agreed what format this will be in.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** A teleconference was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, an update will be provided at the Council meeting in May.]

## **6.6 NAM updates**

### **a. 2015 update**

Dr Mandy Bailey advised Council that planning for NAM 2015 was going well and provided a short update including on accommodation options and social events. Professor Mike Edmund advised that the academic programme was full and would consist of 6 plenary lectures and 58 parallel sessions. The Deputy Executive Secretary provided a short update on the planned outreach activities that will include a lecture by Martin Rees and a teacher training session.

### **b. Planning for future years**

The Executive Secretary briefed Council on the responses received from the universities who had indicated an interest in supporting a NAM in 2016/2017. Unfortunately Oxford University who had actively been considering hosting in 2016 were not able to. The Executive Secretary had approached London based Universities (QMUL, Imperial and UCL) to see if they were able to host a future NAM. Responses had not been received.

Council were pleased that:

- that the University of Hull had expressed an interest in hosting NAM in 2017
- Dr Sara Matthews confirmed that UCL is able to host a NAM in 2017 or 2018

but concerned that a location for 2016 was yet to be forthcoming. Options include use of a non-academic conference centre, such as the Yarnfield Park Training and Conference Centre.

## **6.7 RAS Council Elections 2014**

The Executive Secretary advised that the standard paperwork for the elections would be issued under the Senior Secretaries signature shortly.

## **6.8 Intellectual matters**

Council discussed a paper written by Professor Phil Charles, Chair of the International Committee that made proposals for further areas of collaboration with the OAD and requested additional funding. It was noted that current engagement is limited to providing travel grants for visiting experts.

The discussion was wide ranging and identified a number of specific concerns with the proposals for engagement with OAD (lack of human capital and administrative support to implement all that is proposed difficulties in corralling UK university staff to engage and possible problems with accreditation and International Property issues in preparing course content) and fundamentally that the Council should take a step back and revisit what the Society's aims for international engagement are.

It was noted that at the Strategic planning meeting in July 2013 Council had directed that the key deliverable to be developed to support the Society's international community was to record Ordinary meetings and Public lectures and make them available on the RAS website. Other proposals considered at the strategic planning meeting included enhancing the visiting experts scheme, establishing 6 month exchange visits and dedicated A&G pages to target overseas regions; these were not supported as there were many competing claims on the available resources and Council had favoured support of initiatives in other areas, such as diversity ambassadors and establishing a discrete education and outreach budget.

It was noted that:

- in addition to the significant investment to make lectures available on line, the International Committee has a budget of £9K to pay for exchange lectures and that applications for overseas projects can be made to the RAS 200: Sky and Earth programme.
- traditional grants funding is available to all of the Fellowship and many applications are received from overseas for travel grants etc.

It was agreed that:

- Council should deliberate on and agree the strategic intent of the Society's international engagement by email out of committee during April and early May.
- Professor Phil Charles should be informed of the discussion held at this meeting and invited to the May Council meeting to engage in subsequent deliberations.

**ACTION: Executive Secretary and all Council Members**

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Significant activity for the Executive and Council Members on the revised byelaws and other documentation for the AGM (e.g. the annual report) had delayed consideration on international matters. Officers agreed that Council should discuss the strategic intent of the Society's international engagement at the meeting in May but that as the position was as yet unclear Professor Charles should be invited to a Council meeting later in the year.]

## **6.9 RAS Research Fellowships**

Professor Jim Wild updated Council on progress towards the selection of three individuals to receive a RAS research Fellowship; there was a very strong pool of candidates, 72 applications had been received, from a long list of 19, the selection committee interviewed 7. Offers have been made and accepted by:

- Dr Emma Chapman: Imperial College London
- Dr Ben Rozitis: Open University
- Dr David J E Marsh: Kings College London

Professor Wild applauded the sterling work of Annette Webb, the Office Events and Buildings manager in supporting this process and thanked all the selection panel members for their invaluable help. It was noted that the process could be improved upon and Council agreed that Professor Wild should produce a short paper for their future consideration.

**ACTION: Professor Wild**

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** As the agenda for the May Council meeting is busy Professor Wild's paper would be presented to Council during the meeting at NAM.]

The President thanked Professor Wild for taking the Chair of the selection panel as he had declared a conflict of interest.

## **7. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **7.1 RAS 200: Sky and Earth Update**

Professor Steve Miller, Chair of the RAS 200: Sky and Earth Steering Group, updated Council on the programme. The slides from the presentation are attached.

Dr Geraint Jones left the room whilst Council asked questions following the presentation, as he is a co-proposer for one of the proposed projects.

Professor Miller confirmed that:

- the steering group had thoroughly discussed the options for providing feedback to those not selected for award; it had been agreed that relatively substantial feedback will be provided to those on the short list, not selected for

final award, otherwise the proposers would be told whether they were in the bottom, middle or top third of applications received.

- copies of successful applications would be made available to assist those applying in the second tranche.
- the range of proposals received included applications from overseas, both Astronomy and Geophysics proposals, and that wider diversity issues were addressed as part of many of the proposals.

He thanked all the members of Council who were on the steering committee and gave particular thanks to Dr Robert Massey and Dr Sheila Kanani for their work especially in organising the town hall meetings.

It was agreed that the panel members from the selection committee should also be invited to the drinks reception following the AGM.

## 8. OTHER

### 8.1 Officers Reports

Council approved the following candidates proposed for Fellowship:

Arnold	Jessica	Oxford	N.E. Bowles
Bailey	Alexander	Chatham	Dr Francisco Diego
Barnes	Ashley	Nottingham	Andrew Newsam
Bingham	John	London	Peter Homonko
Brydges	Tiffany	Merton College, Oxford	N.E. Bowles
Carilli	Christopher	Cambridge	P. Alexander
Chalkley	Simon	Alveston	Membership Committee
Chubb	Katy	Weybridge	Ian Howarth
Colclough	Adam	Stoke on Trent	Ian W.A. Browne
Cole	Sarah	Kings Lynn	Dr Mark Gallaway
Copperwheat	Christopher	Liverpool John Moores University	Mandy Bailey
Crossett	Jacob	University of Hull	Kevin A Pimbblet
Deighton	Richard	London	Margaret Joan Penston
Downs	Alan	Vale of Glamorgan	Paul Roche
Fernando	Benjamin	Birmingham	TS Horbury
Futcher	Stephen	Emsworth	A.J. Norton
Gandhi	Poshak	University of Southampton	P.A. Charles
Gordon	Yjan	Lincoln	Kevin A. Pimbblet
Hale	Steven	University of Birmingham	William Chaplin
Hardwick	Liam	Sheffield	Alan Wood
Hill	Catherine	Milton Keynes	Dr HJ Fraser
Homfrey	David	Oxford	Membership Committee
Jimenez Martinez	Noelia	University of St. Andrews	Dr J.D. Ilee
Li	Daohai	Armagh Observatory	Apostolos Christou

Lindsay	Sean	Oxford	N.E. Bowles
Lumb	Freya	Canterbury	Prof. Michael David Smith
Mazzali	Paolo A.	Liverpool John Moores University	Mark Sullivan
Naylor	Robert	Morpeth	Adrian Jannetta
Oakley	Dan	Horndean	Graham Bryant
O'Donnell	Stephen	Swindon	Mandy Bailey
Pratt	Jonathan	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Sarah Roberts
Reeves	Colin	Paignton	M.M. Dworetzky
Reines	Gabriel	Heriot-Watt University	Jason McEwen
Rowland	Simon	Newcastle upon Tyne	Roy Alexander
Sánchez-Cano	Beatriz	University of Leicester	Prof. Stanley WH Cowley
Schmit	Claude	London	Jonathan Pritchard
Smith	Gareth	London	Andrew Norton
Thomas	Kevin	Oswestry	Daniel L Holdsworth
Thomas	Timothy	Wakefield	Mandy Bailey
Tweedy	Michael	Sunderland	Roy Alexander
Wilkinson	Charlotte	Hull	Kevin A. Pimbblet
Worley	Clare	Cambridge	Gerard Gilmore

## 8.2 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held in February 2015

Council noted the minutes of the Ordinary Meetings held in February 2015.

## 8.3 AOB

Council discussed the activities planned to celebrate the Eclipse on the 20<sup>th</sup> March. It was noted that a booklet on how to view an eclipse, co- sponsored by the Society for Popular Astronomy was available and that the public lecture given by Professor Ian Ridpath was on the RAS website.

Council rose at 2.40 pm



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Professor M. Barstow

8<sup>th</sup> May 2015