



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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## Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 July 2017

### 1. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND INTROUCTION

#### **PRESENT:**

Professor John Zarnecki, Professor Mike Cruise, Dr Mandy Bailey, Mr Charles Barclay, Dr Nigel Berman, Dr Paul Daniels, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Brad Gibson, Dr Catriona Jackman, Professor Mark Lester, Professor Steve Miller, Dr Sheila Peacock, Professor Hiranya Peiris, Professor Stephen Serjeant, Professor Giovanna Tinetti, Professor Michael Watson, Professor Clare Watt.

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Dr Robert Massey (Acting Executive Director)

**APOLOGIES:** Dr Megan Argo, Professor Mike Bode, Professor Ian Crawford, Mr Mark Woodland.

The President welcomed new members of Council to the meeting, who then introduced themselves. He reminded them to complete the circulated trustee declaration and conflict of interest forms.

### 2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting of 12 May 2017 were approved.

The President-Elect updated Council on the proposed merger of the International Council for Science (ICSU) with the International Social Science Council, discussed at a meeting at the Royal Society in May 2017.

The precise new arrangement is not finalised, but he noted that the International Astronomical Union (IAU) pays a subscription to ICSU, and the IAU is in turn supported by national astronomical societies including the RAS.

**Action: President-Elect to update RAS Council as the discussions progress**

### 3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

## **Executive Director**

The President noted the resignation of Pamela Mortimer, the RAS Executive Director, and her important and positive contribution to the work of the Society over the 5 years she held the post. He advised Council that Robert Massey was now Acting Executive Director, while the Society carries out recruitment for a permanent post holder.

### **[POST-COUNCIL NOTE:**

Officers are in the process of appointing an external recruitment agency, and will advertise the vacancy of Executive Director through this route.]

## **RAS 200: Sky & Earth**

In June the Treasurer, Astronomy Secretary, and President had attended a reception at the Prince's Trust, partly covering activities with young people funded by RAS 200: Sky & Earth.

## **RAS Fellowships**

One of the recently awarded RAS research fellowships was offered to a candidate who subsequently took up a Royal Society funded post instead, reflecting the high calibre of the applicant. The RAS fellowship was then offered to another applicant. Catriona Jackman noted the number of applications from senior candidates, reflecting the need for the Science and Technology Facilities Council to reinstate its postdoctoral fellowship scheme.

**Action: President to supply form of words on appointment of candidates to most recent Fellowships to draw attention to the need for STFC and others to offer similar appointments**

## **IAU**

The President noted the two potential UK bids, from Glasgow and London, to host the International Astronomical Union (IAU) General Assembly in 2024. If a single national bid is put forward, the RAS would need to support this as the convening national society.

### **[POST-COUNCIL NOTE:**

Further discussions took place with Glasgow, with the IAU, and with the AAS who hosted the most recent General Assembly in Hawaii. Council concluded that the potential financial and organisational risks were too great for the RAS to proceed with a letter of intent on this occasion.]

## **National honours and IOP awards**

Two RAS Fellows appeared in the Queen's Birthday Honours list:

- Professor Carlos Frenk, of the University of Durham, made a CBE
- Professor Katherine Blundell, of the University of Oxford, made an OBE

The Institute of Physics gave awards to two RAS Fellows:

- Professor Lucie Green, who received the Lise Meitner Medal
- Dr Jane Greaves, who received the Fred Hoyle Medal

#### 4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

The Treasurer discussed the statement of balances, circulated prior to the meeting. The Society will undertake a review of fund managers, in line with a Statement of Investment Principles in preparation of a member of the Finance Committee.

**Action: Treasurer**

Following the lease arbitration process, the courtyard societies have all agreed to accept £40k each as a refund for costs awarded (a share of £200k). Council will receive an update on GVA proposals (including the likely level of rent) in due course.

#### [POST-COUNCIL NOTE:

After further negotiation the refund for costs rose to £215k, meaning that each of the societies, including the RAS, will receive an award of £43k.]

#### Bank Balances

Council noted the following bank balances:

Statement of Bank Balances at 30 June 2017

##### 1. HSBC BANK

Account Name	Account Number	Balance £
Deposit/Money Manager Account	21664522	3,320,326
Restricted Funds Account	21664530	24,409
Pension Fund Account	51665456	23,138
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,367,873</b>

##### 2. NATWEST

Account Name	Account Number	Balance £
Current Account	60671688	51,518
<b>Total</b>		<b>51,518</b>

Statement of Investment Holdings at 31 May 2017

##### 1. BNY MELLON/NEWTON INVESTMENTS

Account Name	Price (1 = par)	Balance £
Newton Growth and Income Funds for Charities (RAS)	1.2921	7,570,836
Newton Growth and Income Funds for Charities (Paneth)	1.2921	381,913
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,952,749</b>

#### 5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

##### 5.1 Review of NAM 2017 and plans for EWASS 2018

The President, and Council, gave formal thanks to Brad Gibson, and the LOC and SOC, of NAM 2017, for their delivery of a successful and engaging conference.

Prof Gibson described various aspects of NAM, including the increased take up of external accommodation (e.g. via AirBnB), rather than on campus rooms, and the larger number of day registrants, compared with those staying for the whole week. Many delegates also registered very late, including at the beginning of the conference itself.

He also noted two regrettable clashes: with a scientific meeting of UK astronomers involved with the LSST project (this took place at the University of Hull at the same time as NAM), and the Stephen Hawking 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday Conference in Cambridge, covering the first three days of NAM. The second of these was supported by an RAS grant, so the Society in future should avoid funding events that coincide in this way.

**Action: All to support this by encouraging meeting organisers to avoid clashes with future NAMs**

The next national astronomy conference in the UK will be in April 2018, when Liverpool hosts the European Week of Astronomy and Space Science (EWASS). The Acting Executive Director reported on meetings with the European Astronomical Society (EAS), where organisation of EWASS was discussed. There is some negotiation needed on the business model, as the EAS uses the conference as a revenue raising activity, so STFC and the RAS might simply act as fixed-cost sponsors, though the Society will retain a role in organising the events and sessions normally included in NAM.

For example, EWASS will include the presentation of awards and medals at the conference dinner, and a community session will still take place, albeit with a more European flavour.

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) and Scientific Organising Committee (SOC) are confident that EWASS will be very successful, and expect between 1200 and 1500 delegates to attend. Many of the onsite arrangements will be handled on behalf of the EAS by the commercial company Kuoni, who organise registration, abstract submission, accommodation and many social events.

**Action: Acting Executive Director to ensure that announcement of EWASS session proposal deadline is widely circulated**

**[POST-COUNCIL NOTE:**

The RAS will be represented on the LOC by the Acting Executive Director and/or the Office, Events and Buildings Manager. The session proposal deadline was circulated in the e-bulletin, on social media, and in an email to Fellows. The SOC report that around 130 proposals were sent in, meaning the timetable is oversubscribed by a factor of 2.5]

**5.2 RAS Staff - Additional Expenditure Proposal (Acting Executive Director), for approval**

RAS Staff – Additional Expenditure Proposal

Council approved the following expenditure:

- a) an increase of £28,500 (salary and pension costs) for a further Administrative Officer who will bolster the front of office staff resource and provide basic IT support ; this annual increase is proposed as a trial for one year (October 2017 to October 2018) at which point the position will be reviewed.
- b) £1,200 for staff training for the Administrative Officer.

**Action: Acting Executive Director/Office, Events and Buildings Manager to issue contract for Administrative Officer**

Council noted the following:

- c) An assessment is being undertaken to determine the cost to improve the working conditions in the current Executive Director's Office (to address inadequate light levels) and modify the room to accommodate 4 to 6 staff (installing computer and telephone lines etc.) The Executive Director would move to the smaller office on the third floor. Council will receive a paper for approval out of committee by email over the summer.

**Action: Office, Events and Buildings Manager to review accommodation as described**

- d) After some discussion, Council noted the request for a 3:2 job share arrangement for the Education, Outreach and Diversity Officer post, including recruitment of a new part-time post holder, and a one year trial relocation for an existing member of staff. Council requested that the 3-day a week post include education, outreach and diversity, and the 2-day a week post, based at Burlington House, cover education and outreach.

Council also asked the Acting Executive Director to seek HR advice on the employment position resulting from changing a full-time to a part-time post, including a geographical relocation.

**Action: Acting Executive Director to redesign job share proposal, based on feedback from Council, and seek HR advice on temporary relocation request**

**[POST-COUNCIL NOTE:**

Croner, who give HR advice to the Society, indicate that the proposal should be set out in writing, as meeting a flexible working request, on an interim basis. If the trial is unsuccessful, then the 3 day a week post will return to London. The Society will now move to advertise the 2 day a week post with the aim of recruiting a member of staff by October.]

- e) The Acting Executive Director also noted that the Society would recruit an externally-funded intern for the editorial team for a period of 10 weeks.

**5.3 RAS website upgrade (Acting Executive Director), for approval**

Council agreed the appointment of Yonescat Ltd to build the new RAS website, in consultation with stakeholders including staff, fellows and other users, with an initial outlay of up to £8,000, and a monthly maintenance cost of around £350 (the latter will become clearer once the project is underway, but should not exceed £500 a month).

Staff, working with Yonescat, will redevelop website content as described, with the aim of completing the project by December 2017.

Mike Watson added that the company represented the best value for the RAS, compared with two other suppliers previously considered.

**[POST-COUNCIL NOTE:**

The IT and Information Manager met with Yonescat in the second week of July; staff have been informed of the decision, and the project planning is underway.]

#### **5.4 Pro-am collaboration**

Paul Daniels presented proposals for collaboration between professional and amateur scientists working in the fields represented by the Society.

Council approved these plans, with an initial budget of £1,000, to include:

- An online questionnaire for professional research groups, inviting them to comment on collaboration with amateurs and where this might be strengthened
- Publicity, including a short promotional article in A&G, social media, and the RAS e-bulletin, as well as requesting cross-promotion by the Geological Society
- A second questionnaire for amateur individuals and groups on their potential contribution, distributed and promoted via groups like the Federation of Astronomical Societies
- Matching the two groups to build relationships
- Convening a meeting at Burlington House to allow sharing of ideas

Sheila Peacock noted that the paper should refer to geophysicists as well as geologists.

#### **5.5. AGM minutes – to note**

With one minor change, Council noted the draft minutes of the 197<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society, held on 12 May 2017. These will be formally approved at the 198<sup>th</sup> AGM, to be held in May 2018.

#### **5.6 A&G Chair**

Council approved the appointment of Mike Watson as chair of the A&G Management Board.

**Action: Acting Executive Director to advise the A&G Editor of his appointment**

## **6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Demographic survey: further comments needed**

The Acting Executive Director presented the full and most recent draft of the report on the RAS Survey of the Demographics and Research Interests of the UK Astronomy and Geophysics Communities. He invited members of Council to review the reports and provide feedback as soon as possible, so that the report can be published, as well as a summary article in A&G.

**Action: All to review the report and pass comments to the Acting Executive Director.**

## 6.2 European Astronomical Society: Brussels liaison

The Acting Executive Director gave an update on the EAS plan for a consultant to liaise with EU institutions in Brussels. At the recent EWASS meeting in Prague, the EAS set out proposals for contributions to this post from different affiliated societies, including the RAS.

The EAS has appointed Mike Bode (who was not present at Council) to the role, as a consultant initially funded until the end of 2018.

After discussion, members of Council asked for the scope and level of support to be considered by officers, with a decision paper to follow.

**Action: Officers/Acting Executive Director to prepare a decision paper**

*The President then left the room to attend the NAM Community Forum, and Professor Cruise took the chair as President-Elect.*

## 7. PUBLICATIONS

### a. **Publications Management Committee (PMC), April minutes, for information (Editorial Office Manager)**

Council noted the minutes of the Publications Management Committee, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017.

### b. **RAS Journals: Anonymity of scientific editors, for information (Editorial Office Manager)**

Following a request made in May for more information, Council noted this paper on the anonymity of scientific editors.

At present GJI editors are not anonymous. For MNRAS, authors are not aware of the identity of editors or referees handling their paper, unless they elect to waive anonymity. The list of editors is though published with the journal, so most authors would be able to establish who is likely to be connected with their paper. The Editorial Office Manager does not recommend a change in this policy at this point.

### c. **Dutch universities lose access to our journals, for information (Editorial Office Manager)**

Council noted a paper from the Editorial Office Manager on the dispute between OUP and VSNU (the Association of Universities in the Netherlands), over the implementation of open access for scientific papers. VSNU argue that all authors should be able to publish open access papers in journals without payment of an article processing charge. This would have a significant impact on journal revenue, so OUP are not able to accept this position.

Until the dispute is resolved, Dutch universities will not have access to MNRAS, GJI and A&G.

## 8.1 Officers reports, approval of candidates for Fellowship

Council approved the list of candidates proposed for Fellowship:

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Amy Jade	Newell	Telford	UK	Andrew Norton
Chrissy	Mitchell	Northampton	UK	Andrew Norton
Marion	Weinzierl	Durham	UK	Anthony Yeates
Louise	Hawkins	Liverpool	UK	Richard Holme
Isra	Ezad	London	UK	Richard Holme
Marisa	Wood	Sidcup	UK	Richard Holme
	Mohammad			
Afsaneh	Zaheri	Oxford	UK	Richard Holme
Jennifer	Jenkins	Cambridge	UK	Richard Holme
Linh	Le Phuong	Newcastle	UK	Sergiy Shelyag
Antonia	Bevan	Cambridge	UK	Michael Barlow
	Fraser-			Alfonso Aragon-
Amelia	McKelvie	Nottingham	UK	Salamanca
Nuzhat	Tabassum	Bristol	UK	Richard Holme
Kiran	Chotalia	Harrow	UK	Richard Holme
Tatiana	Willson	Newhaven	UK	Andrew Norton
Elizabeth				
Erin				
Amelia	Lawley	Ipswich	UK	Daniel Brown (5811)
Joanna	Bates	London	UK	Ian Howarth
Kumiko	Hori	Leeds	UK	Richard Holme
Judit	Gonzalez			
Maria	Santana	Oxford	UK	Richard Holme
Michael	Shara	New York	USA	Philip Charles
Robert	Bows	Otley	UK	Andrew Norton
Armando			Saudi	Membership
Ruggiero	Sena	Dhahran	Arabia	committee
	Rees-			
Thomas	Crockford	Pontyclun	UK	Eamon Scullion
Peter				
Samuel				
James	Clark	Broughshane	UK	Kate Maguire
James	Robinson	Belfast	UK	Kate Maguire
James	Panton	Cardiff	UK	Richard Holme
David	Edwards	Bristol	UK	Richard Holme
Jac	van Driel	Pulborough	UK	Richard Holme
Sam	Mangham	Southampton	UK	Christian Knigge
Ajay				
Kumar	Tiwari	Newcastle	UK	James McLaughlin
Fiorenzo	Vincenzo	Oxford	UK	Martin Hardcastle
Oliver				
Paul	Bardsley	Cambridge	UK	Richard Holme
Tim	Greenfield	Southampton	UK	Derek Keir
Martin G.				
H.	Krause	Hatfield	UK	Martin Hardcastle
	Valenzuela-			Francisco Suzuki-
Vicente	Villaseca	Santiago	Chile	Vidal
Ronaldas	Macas	Cardiff	UK	Haley Gomez
Kuangdai	Leng	Oxford	UK	Richard Holme



Martyn Patrick	Steel	Seaton Burn	UK	Richard Holme
Dez	Ogunkolade	London	UK	Samuel Morrell
Sunil Romain	Mucesh	Leicester	UK	Nial Tanvir
Raphael Marie	Clement de Givry	London	UK	Michael Johnson
Thomas George	Measey	Brading	UK	James Wild
Jack	Walpole	Bristol	UK	James Wookey
Stephen	Chapman	Chester	UK	Peter Williamson
Robert	Jones	Newport	UK	Barbara Hassall

## 8.2 A&G meeting minutes (for approval)

Council approved the minutes of the A&G meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

## 9. AOB

The President had requested a standing invitation to all the RAS subcommittees, as he would like to attend these in an ex-officio capacity, diary permitting.

**Action: Acting Executive Director, committee chairs**

**Council rose at 1.35 pm.**



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**Professor John Zarnecki**

**13 October 2017**