

Royal Astronomical Society- Template letter to be sent from Fellows to MPs

Guidance

- The Society has developed a number of key points which we invite you to include in your email to your Member of Parliament.
- We would encourage you to tailor and personalise your emails as much as possible to voice your own view and experience of the Society's work.
- The email address for your local Member of Parliament can be found [here](#).

Suggested key points to include in your email.

Dear [Name of MP],

- **Introductory line – for example:**
 - I am writing to you as my Member of Parliament to ask for your support for a campaign to secure the future of the Royal Astronomical Society at Burlington House.
- **Summary of situation**
 - The Society's landlord, MHCLG, has increased rents by 3,000% over the past ten years.
 - If this continues RAS will need to find and move to alternative premises in the next few years. This will entail a period of significant disruption to planned RAS programmes and investment, significantly impacting the contribution of the Society in terms of public value benefit.
 - In the longer term, the Society will face serious challenges and choices depending on the cost of any new location which satisfy the minimum requirements in terms of available space and accessibility.
 - A similar situation is faced by our neighbours, the Society of Antiquaries, the Geological Society and the Linnean Society.
- **About the Society, its work and value**
 - The Royal Astronomical Society founded in 1820, encourages and promotes the study of astronomy, solar-system science, geophysics, and closely related branches of science. RAS represents UK astronomy nationally and internationally.

- RAS contributes significant public value to the UK through its programmes, libraries and collections from its home in Burlington House.
 - **Connecting Businesses and Industry** – RAS has played a key part in the development of the UK space industry since its early beginnings, including close and ongoing relations with the UK Space Industry, the European Space Agency and has representation on UK Space Agency Committees. As a Learned Society it provides a recognised, esteemed space to support government and industry collaboration.
 - **Policy and advocacy** – RAS invests in an active advocacy programme to ensure that decision-makers were cognisant of the importance and effect of ‘blue skies’ research and its resultant applications coming from the study of astronomy, geophysics and related sciences.
 - Libraries and heritage** – The Society hosts one of the world’s premier astronomical libraries containing rare books and manuscripts as well as photographs, instruments and journals. The building, designed for the Society, allows for the safe, accessible storage of these heritage assets – including over 25,000 books, 3,000 photographic glass plates and an archive containing over 1,000 boxes of astronomical observations and correspondence.
 - **International** – The Society has global reach, profile and provides a significant contribution to international collaborations, including through its role as the UK 'National Member' of the International Astronomical Union (IAU). London easily provides the most accessible point for physical engagement, including for the one third of its membership located outside of the UK.
 - **Public engagement across the UK** – Burlington House allows the Society to host a programme of popular, free public lectures in its intimate and atmospheric lecture theatre. Outside of London we host the National Astronomy Meeting each year and sponsor regional events.
 - The United Kingdom faces losing priceless, unique and internationally renowned libraries and collections.
 - According to independent analysis by PwC the Society delivers £7,570,300 of public benefit value annually through its work.
- **Request**
 - As my local Member of Parliament, I would ask if you could:
 - Express my concerns on this matter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (as the landlord), as well as the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (as the department concerned with UK space policy) and ask for their support in finding a solution.
 - Contact Tim Loughton MP, who is helping co-ordinate Parliamentary interest on this matter.