

## COUNCIL

A meeting of the RAS Council was held on Friday 9 May 2025 at the Council Room, Royal Astronomical Society, Burlington House, London and by video conference (Microsoft Teams)

Present:

- Dr Chrysa Avdellidou – Councillor (G; online)
- Dr Alan Cayless – Councillor (A)
- Dr Imogen Gingell – Councillor (G)
- Professor Matthew Griffin – Vice-President
- Dr Iain Hannah – Councillor (G; online)
- Professor Mark Lester – Senior Secretary
- Professor Mike Lockwood – President (Chair)
- Dr Matt Middleton – Vice-President (A)
- Professor Steve Miller – Councillor (G)
- Dr Arvind Parmar – Treasurer
- Professor Caroline Smith – Vice-President (G; online)
- Dr Ashley Spindler – Councillor (A)
- Mrs Patricia Tomkins – Councillor (A)
- Dr Sheona Urquhart – Astronomy Secretary
- Professor Derek Ward-Thompson – Councillor (A)
- Dr Andrew Young – Councillor (A)
- Professor Silvia Zane – Councillor (A)

In attendance:

- Mr Phillip Diamond (Executive Director, RAS)
- Dr Robert Massey (Deputy Executive Director)
- Mr Ian Russell (incoming Executive Director, RAS)

## 1. Introductions

The President, Professor Lockwood, welcomed members to the Council meeting. Apologies had been received from Professor Curtis, Professor Eales, and Professor Hammond.

On behalf of Council Professor Lockwood passed on best wishes to Mr Audie Muller.

## 2. Minutes and Matters Arising

### 2.1 *Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2025 and Matters Arising*

Professor Lester noted two typographical errors:

Minute 2.4 “province of Queens” should be “Provost of Queen’s”.

Minute 4.2 in the title, “Budget was approved by Council” should be “Budget was discussed by Council”.

Minute 5 (wording of bye-law 23.4.7): “ML” refers to Professor Lockwood (MLO).

Minute 5 (Council membership): “A member of Council reiterated...” should be “Professor Griffin reiterated...”.

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With these corrections, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2025 were approved.

### **2.1.1 Matters Arising**

Minute 2.3 (NAM): Mr Diamond informed Council that he had been in contact with the University of Hertfordshire who had informed him that they are not now in a position to host NAM 2027 and have therefore withdrawn their interest. The Society will follow up with Keele University. Professor Ward-Thompson had previously drawn up a list of potential venues which he agreed to forward to Mr Russell.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to take forward discussions with Keele University for NAM 2027.**

**ACTION: Professor Ward-Thompson to forward list of possible future venues to Mr Russell.**

Mr Diamond reported that arrangements for NAM 2025, which will be held at Durham University from 7-11 July 2025, are going very well with over 900 abstracts received.

Minute 2.4 (Future of Herstmonceux): Professor Lockwood stated that Queen's University will be signing a new contract with the Observatory Science Centre and that the current arrangements at Herstmonceux would remain in place for now but that the longer-term situation is still uncertain. For this reason the Herstmonceux Futures Group will be kept on stand-by and not disbanded at this juncture.

**ACTION: Dr Massey to ensure that members of the Futures Group are thanked but asked to remain on stand-by.**

Mrs Tomkins offered to assist with any future interactions with the Observatory Science Centre.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to note Mrs Tomkins' offer to assist with any future interactions with the Observatory Science Centre.**

Minute 2.6 (OUP): Professor Lockwood noted that he and Mr Russell will visit Oxford University Press (OUP) on Wednesday 14 May 2025 to discuss our concerns and in particular actions to address the reduction in submissions to MNRAS.

Minute 3.2 (Voting methods): Proposals for, and discussion of, voting methods for elections to Council will be carried forward.

**ACTION: Mr Russell and Mr Muller to bring forward a proposal for appropriate voting mechanism(s) for elections to Council to a future meeting.**

Minute 3.3 (Organisation of Council Meetings): Suggestion regarding presentations from staff will be carried forward.

**ACTION: Mr Russell and Mr Muller to arrange a presentation from a staff member at a future Council meeting.**

Minute 3.5 (Away Day): A date has not yet been set for the proposed away day and Professor Lester requested that this is resolved as soon as possible as diaries are very full and that OUP should not be invited for the whole event. Dr Urquhart requested that the end of September should be avoided. Professor Smith suggested the Natural History Museum as a possible venue. It was agreed that a half day followed by dinner and a further day would be an appropriate format.

Professor Lockwood suggested that the Away Days would not be fully minuted with only actions and outcomes recorded.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to determine a suitable date and venue for the Away Day and produce an agenda for the retreat.**

Minute 4.3 (APCs and print subscription rates): Mr Diamond confirmed that an increase in Article Publishing Charges (APCs) of 2% and a 7% increase in the print subscription price for A&G had been agreed with OUP.

Minute 5.2 (Potsdam meeting travel grants): Dr Middleton reported that there had been 11 applications for travel grants to the meeting organised for early career researchers by the German Astronomical Society (Astronomische Gesellschaft or AG). There was a good gender balance with some applications from outside of the UK and some from PGRs and post-docs. Nine grants of £500 were awarded although one successful applicant subsequently withdrew as they were already attending too many conferences. It was felt that this initiative successfully advanced the Society's objectives to work closely with the AG and it was requested that support for this meeting, which will be held annually, should be continued.

Dr Parmar suggested that the grants are considered as part of the February grant round.

Council agreed that the RAS should reaffirm its commitment to these grants on an annual basis at the December Council meeting.

**ACTION: Mr Muller to ensure that approval for early career travel grants to the AG meeting is included in the December Council meeting.**

**ACTION: Mr Russell to brief Ms Nush Cole and connect her with Janine Fohlmeister (AG Press Officer) so that the collaboration can continue.**

Dr Middleton suggested that the successful applicants should also be invited to the Herschel Award ceremony. Council agreed with this proposal.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to ensure that those awarded travel grants to the German early career meeting are also invited to attend the Herschel Award ceremony.**

Minute 5.4 (Governance Review): Lucy Devine (Wellspring Consulting) joined the meeting for this item and thanked Council for their engagement and patience. Ms Devine thanked Professor Miller who had identified a number of issues that did not reflect the will of Council. Some of these were able to be addressed under the delegated powers given to Officers, namely:

1. The way that the balance of A and G on Council was described, which was intended to provide flexibility, could in fact set a precedent of unbalance and so this has reverted to the previous text where we have to have a balance of A and G.
2. That we should better express the way the Highlights meetings are named. The text now reads: "Scientific (A&G Highlights) meetings shall also be known as ordinary meetings or by such other name decided upon from time to time by Council."

Two further changes that needed to be corrected were identified by Professor Miller after the AGM papers had been sent to members and for which separate approval will be sought at the AGM. These are:

- A. Clarity that a person is elected to the role of President for a three-year term and serves the first year of that term as President-elect (Bye-laws 23.1.5 and 23.2).
- B. In the sections referring to the situation where there are a pool of candidates putting themselves forward for a number of vacancies, reference to a simple majority is not appropriate. Council had also requested flexibility to change the voting system at its December 2024 meeting. Therefore, it is proposed to change bye-law 23.5.13.1 such that it reads: ""such voting method as the Council shall from time to time determine".

These changes were approved by Council and there was unanimous agreement that these amendments should be put to the AGM.

Professor Lester asked if any suggested amendments from the Fellowship were known and Professor Lockwood confirmed that he did not know of any.

Minute 6.4 (Geophysics degrees): An online meeting was held including the Institute of Physics and the Geological Society of London. The letter to Lord Vallance, Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation, and Graeme Dey, Minister for Higher and Further Education in the Scottish government, outlining our concerns about the reduction in geophysics degree courses is being finalised. Professor Curtis was thanked for his assistance and for raising the issue.

**ACTION: Dr Massey to finalise the letters and send to Lord Vallance and Graeme Dey**

Minute 8 (House of Lords UK Engagement with Space Committee): The Society made a submission to the inquiry into UK space policy and the opportunities and challenges facing the sector. Professor Lockwood thanked Dr Massey and Ms Marieta Valdivia Lefort for their work on what was felt to be a really good document.

Minute 8 (STFC and Funding): The situation is ongoing. A template letter that could be sent to MPs to help articulate concerns had been produced.

**ACTION: Dr Massey to copy the letter to Council**

## **2.2 Action Status Report**

The Action Status Report was noted.

## **3. President's business**

### **3.1 New Executive Director**

Professor Lockwood welcomed Mr Ian Russell as incoming Executive Director, replacing the retiring Phillip Diamond. Professor Lockwood informed Council that, unfortunately, Mr Russell had had a serious heart attack between being offered the role and starting at the Society but was pleased to report that his recovery was progressing well and he had been able to start as planned on 1 May.

### **3.2 Implications of and reaction to the shutdown of all federal government ED&I activity in the United States**

Council held a wide-ranging discussion regarding the current situation in the United States and what, if anything, the Society could do in response. Professor Zane suggested collaboration with like-minded institutions and asked whether an article in A&G was appropriate. Professor Lockwood noted that the employment records of former federal employees are being deleted. Professor Griffin asked whether the RAS had signed up to the ALLEA declaration. Dr Massey explained that one more vote was required for that proposal to be passed.

Dr Spindler provided that vote and the proposal was therefore approved.

**ACTION: Dr Massey to sign the ALLEA declaration on behalf of Council.**

It was also noted that climate change data and other information is being irretrievably deleted. Council discussed whether the RAS could do anything in response. Professor Lockwood asked members of Council to contact Dr Massey if they had any further suggestions.

**ACTION: Council members asked to contact Dr Massey with any further suggestions to counter the rewriting of history as members of minorities are removed from the record and the deletion of important data.**

### **3.3 Astronomy Forum**

Professor Lockwood updated Council on the Astronomy Forum that had recently been held at Burlington House. It was a very constructive meeting with senior level representation from all important stakeholders. Professor Michele Dougherty, CEO of STFC, gave an honest appraisal of STFC's situation which is not particularly encouraging. Dr Paul Bate, CEO of the UK Space Agency, spoke positively about the space programme.

Council discussed the advantages of UK astronomy being better aligned and it was felt that the Society has a role to play in encouraging the community to seek more coordinated approaches; it was felt that the Astronomy Forum could prove very important in that regard.

Professor Lester expressed the personal view that STFC should be encouraged to ensure that astronomy and geophysics and particle physics are assessed to the same standards and in equitable ways.

**ACTION: Professor Lockwood to raise the issue of the equitable treatment of astronomy and geophysics and particle physics with Professor Dougherty.**

Professor Zane request that the minutes of the Astronomy Forum are made publicly available. Dr Massey explained that the meetings are *ad hoc* and no Astronomy Forum was held in 2024. He explained that there would probably be another meeting in the autumn when the results of the multi-year settlement are known. The minutes of the recent meeting would be available shortly.

Professor Zane suggested that more than one representative from each department be invited. In response Mr Diamond agreed there was merit in terms of advocacy in expanding the invitations to ensure a vibrant meeting.

Professor Lockwood noted that those influential to major projects may not always be heads of departments and suggested that institutions nominate their own representatives.

**ACTION: Dr Massey to investigate expanding the invitations issued to the Astronomy Forum.**

Professor Ward-Thompson raised a concern that the STFC small grants that were due to start in April have been delayed until July and the current round due to start in April 2026 have been postponed to start in October with the consequence that, after four years, one whole grant round has been lost. This means that a funding gap arises of perhaps 12 months for named post-docs on an existing grant which the universities are being asked to cover or risk early career researchers leaving academia. Professor Lockwood explained that this point had been made at the Astronomy Forum and that STFC acknowledged the situation, are trying to minimise it, and they are ensuring not to issue any grants that would need to be cancelled.

Dr Spindler expressed disappointment that STFC and UKRI were not being more open in their communications that budgets are being cut.

Professor Lester noted that NERC and UKSA are suffering similar issues with the latter only issuing six-month grants to his institution which means that staff are having to be placed at risk of redundancy after one month.

Professor Lockwood noted that there has been some discussion at a European level of making additional resources available for missions that have had American funding cut.

#### **4. Treasurer's business**

##### **4.1 Audit**

Professor Lockwood welcomed Mr Eddie Finch (Partner, Buzzacott LLP) who joined the meeting for this item and noted that after 11 years the audit will now be overseen by a different audit partner.

Dr Parmar confirmed that the 2024 audit process had concluded. Mr Finch referred Council to the audit report and confirmed that the Society had complied with all the relevant legislation and guidance and was happy that the accounts present the financial position at the year-end and reflect a true and fair position.

Mr Finch informed Council that Katharine Patel, who heads Buzzacott's Charity and Not-for-Profit team will replace him as our audit partner and noted that she has 25 years' experience.

Mr Finch noted that when he became auditor, the Society's principal risks were around Open Access publishing and the future of the building both of which had moved on significantly in the past 12 months.

Professor Lockwood asked why the report stated that the building has a useful economic life of 50 years and Mr Finch responded that accounting rules stipulate that this is the maximum permissible period over which the building can be depreciated. For accounting purposes the loan on the building has been treated as a concessionary loan which is permissible.

The calculation on total return is now based on the Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index which gives more headroom to build up funds and there was a restructuring of designated funds set aside for the building.

In terms of observations on processes, Mr Finch explained that the audit report makes one relatively minor recommendation regarding the Society's obligation to disclose any transactions with related parties which is broadly defined as those with significant influence and as such includes senior management and Trustees, and their close family. Any such activity must be recorded and reported in the Society's declarations of interest.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to ensure that the declarations of interests register is updated with this information at least annually.**

Mr Finch reminded Council members that they are welcome to access Buzzacott's free seminars and webinars and noted that the rules governing charity accounting are being updated and will come into effect for the Society's accounting year ending December 2027.

Professor Lockwood noted that the hyperlinks in the audit report were very helpful.

Dr Parmar thanked Mr Finch and his team for their work on ensuring that the audit went so smoothly.

#### **4.2 Formal approval of paperwork**

- a) Council approved the Annual Report and accounts for 2024
- b) Council approved the Post Audit report from Buzzacotts
- c) Council approved the Letter of Representation

Mr Diamond thanked Mr Mark Piper who is retiring as the Society's accountant and welcomed Ms Marie Hensfield who is taking over from Mr Piper.

#### **4.3 Statement of Accounts and Treasurer's Report**

Dr Parmar introduced the Treasurer's report and noted the satisfactory execution of the audit. He also outlined Finance Committee's recommendation that the Society should not make additional payments to pay down the loan on the Burlington House lease given the uncertainty over publishing income and the maintenance costs of the building. Professor Lockwood and Professor Ward-Thompson noted that it was advantageous to retain flexibility given the internal and external challenges faced by the Society and international volatility. Mr Russell noted that in normal times the return on the investment portfolio would exceed the interest on the loan.

The recommendation was approved by Council.

**ACTION: Ms Hensfield to note the decision not to make overpayments on the loan for the next 12 months.**

Dr Parmar proposed that Council approves changes to signatories on the Society's bank and investment accounts to replace Mr Diamond with Mr Russell and Mr Piper with Ms Hensfield due to staff changes.

This proposal was approved by Council.

**ACTION: Mr Piper, Ms Hensfield and Mr Russell to ensure that signatories are updated on bank and investment accounts.**

Professor Ward-Thompson raised the possibility of increasing income by growing the membership, noting concerns about low take-up from those who are mid-career. A discussion was held as to whether this should be an agenda item for a future meeting of Council or a separate meeting, noting the urgency of the issue. At Professor Lester's suggestion it was agreed to ask the Membership



Committee to come up with ideas and recommendations and invite the Chair of that committee to join a discussion at a future Council meeting.

**ACTION: Professor Lockwood to write to the Chair of the Membership Committee, Professor Mike Hapgood, and ask the committee to make suggestions of ways to increase membership and also to remove barriers.**

**ACTION: Professor Hapgood to be invited to the October Council meeting to present recommendations to increase membership.**

Professor Miller noted that on occasion university departments hold group meetings, open days, and other types of events that clash with RAS meetings. He suggested writing to Heads of Departments / Heads of Group and / or raising at the Astronomy Forum to highlight the dates of the RAS meetings and to encourage attendance by their staff and students.

**ACTION: Professor Lockwood to write to Heads of Departments / Heads of Groups to gently say that people are reporting that they cannot attend RAS meetings because of clashes and requesting that internal meetings avoid the days when RAS meetings are held.**

#### **4.4 Risk Register**

Dr Parmar noted that the risk to publishing income remains a key concern and that “The risks of Poor Investment Performance” and “Computer Internet Access or Website Compromised” were upgraded to a red level of threat. A new risk “Reduction of third-party funding in support of high-level activities” was added and the two exceptional risks due to a Covid-19-like situation were removed.

Professor Ward-Thompson commented that the recorded risk of reputational damage arising from responding to geopolitical situations supported the decision not to respond to current events in the United States.

### **5. Organisation and structure**

#### **5.1 Report by the Executive Director**

Mr Diamond gave a verbal report to Council. He noted that the names of volunteers to join a publishing strategy group had been passed to the Society’s Head of Publishing, Ms Liz Baker.

Mr Diamond thanked Council for their support, enthusiasm and commitment to the Society and wished the Society well for the future. He also thanked Dr Massey for his support and particularly commended his work on policy.

## **5.2 Arrangements for AGM**

Mr Diamond outlined the agenda for the AGM which will be held at the Geological Society of London and included the President's Report, the Treasurer's Report, approval of membership subscription rates, the motions approving changes to our governing documents and the Honorary Auditors' Report.

## **5.3 Wider University funding model**

Mr Diamond reported that the Society is keeping a watching brief on university funding.

## **5.4 Honorary Auditors' Report**

The Honorary Auditors' Report was noted. In response to a question from Professor Lockwood. Mr Diamond confirmed that the Honorary Auditors had not seen the audit report produced by Buzzacotts.

## **5.5 Honorary Auditors**

Mr Diamond suggested that Dr Olivia Keenan is asked to become an Honorary Auditor for a two-year term from May 2025 to May 2027 and requested approval that Dr Chris Lee continue for a second year.

This proposal was approved.

**ACTION: Mr Diamond to formally invite Dr Keenan to be an Honorary Auditor and Dr Lee to continue for a second year, and seek ratification at the AGM.**

Council noted its thanks to Professor Lorraine Hanlon at the conclusion of her term as an Honorary Auditor.

## **5.6 Staff organogram**

The staff organogram was noted.

## **5.7 NAM, Durham 2025**

Mr Diamond suggested that Mr Russell and Dr Massey should stay in close contact with the STFC to ensure that the £25,000 funding provided for NAM every year continues especially considering tightening budgets and given that STFC will not provide a commitment more than one year in advance.

**ACTION: Mr Russell and Dr Massey to liaise with STFC regarding funding for NAM at the completion of NAM 2025, stressing how useful the community meeting is for both parties and how this funding helps keep costs down for students and ECRs.**

Professor Lockwood suggested that NERC be approached for funding but it was noted that NAM may be seen as too far outside of their main sphere of influence with Professor Lester noting that the name of the meeting is problematic for geophysicists.

Mr Diamond noted that there have been suggestions of running an equivalent or mini- geophysics meeting possibly in collaboration with the British Geophysical Association.

## **6. Policy and Public Engagement**

### **6.1 *House of Lords UK Engagement with Space Committee (RAS response)***

This response was noted.

### **6.2 *Proposed cuts to US science budget***

This report was noted.

### **6.3 *Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee: Inquiry into Science Diplomacy (RAS response)***

Dr Massey thanked Council members for their assistance in drafting the response, particularly considering the short deadline and noted the importance of making a submission. He reported that he does not expect that the Society will be called to give evidence and noted that he would like to seek greater engagement with the Space Committee.

### **6.4 *Herstmonceux***

This report was noted.

### **6.5 *BSI Space Sustainability Standard***

This report was noted.

### **6.6 *Support letter for the European Light Pollution Manifesto***

The letter of support was noted.

### **6.7 *RAS Communication Strategy***

Dr Massey noted that this is an interim report on a work in progress that is contingent on things like the redevelopment of the website as we strive to improve digital engagement. He encouraged Council to contribute to the development of the strategy by providing feedback on the draft.

**ACTION: Council members to provide feedback on the Communications Strategy to Dr Massey by the end of June.**

## **7. Other**

### **7.1 *Membership Officer's Reports***

Professor Miller asked whether the Society had data on the number of new members that were students given that we need to retain these members. Dr Spindler noted that a number of people will

leave the field on completion of their PhDs and the membership fees for those that remain active in the discipline ramp up which would explain a fall-off at this career stage. Dr Parmar responded that he had been trying to investigate this for some time but that we cannot currently extract this data from our membership management system. He hoped that getting historical annual data for analysis will be a capability of a new system. Professor Miller noted that it would be good to retain members who did not stay in academia but nonetheless remain in astronomy-related careers.

Professor Lockwood noted that the founding of A&G was in large part to give members a readable magazine that kept Fellows in touch with the field and at the time he had wondered whether the Society should consider having different membership fees for amateurs and professionals or between the student and professional rates given that the Society plays an advocacy role of behalf of professional scientists which, perhaps, merits a higher membership fee.

Professor Miller noted that some leaving the field will go on to hold influential roles and that it would be good for our disciplines if those individuals remained in membership.

Professor Lockwood also suggested that student membership could be extended for two-years post PhD so that those Fellows are not hit with a rise at the same time that they are leaving the field.

Mr Russell noted that the Society's membership fees were tax deductible.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to forward these suggestions to the Membership Committee.**

Dr Hannah mentioned that one of his PhD students had recently re-joined after accidentally lapsing and that the process was convoluted. He suggested looking into making it easier for people to re-join.

**ACTION: Mr Russell ask the membership team to look into the process of lapsed members re-joining.**

Mr Diamond encouraged members of Council to provide this kind of feedback, even if it is critical and difficult to hear, to help the Society improve its operations.

#### **7.1.1 *Approval of candidates proposed for Fellowship***

The list of candidates proposed for Fellowship was approved.

#### **7.2 *Minutes of the A&G Highlights Meeting 14 March 2025***

Professor Lester provided feedback on the meetings held in Dublin in April at the Royal Irish Academy. He reported that attendance at the Specialist Discussion Meeting and A&G Highlights were good with the geophysics meeting having 38 in person attendees registered and 34 online, whilst the astronomy meeting had 29 in person and 31 online. Attendance for the astronomy meeting was perhaps lower than expected but this may have been due to nature of the topic (Communicating astronomy at historic observatories). There were attendees from the British Isles, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Professor Lester and Dr Urquhart both attended and Professor Lester urged Council members to attend RAS meetings in person if they were local and consider joining online if not.

He further noted that:

- (a) There was one long break for lunch and a short break for coffee about an hour after starting, which felt a bit odd.
- (b) Rather than having a poster session, they had “lightning” three-minute presentations which worked well.
- (c) The venue is an historic building with some accessibility issues particularly regarding stairs and this should be taken into consideration when choosing venues in future.
- (d) The lack of suitable space for posters was probably one of the reasons the meetings did not have posters.
- (e) Both meetings had a mix of invited and contributed speakers.
- (f) Dublin is, perhaps, an expensive city. This combined with the requirement for air travel from the mainland UK may have been a disincentive.
- (g) There were some issues with IT, probably due to lack of familiarity with systems and it is recommended that the RAS staff do some trial runs the day before the meeting.

**ACTION: Mr Russell to ensure that Professor Lester’s comments regarding the venue and meeting format are taken into account when planning future meetings.**

Professor Lester reported that Professor Miller had asked whether the lecture theatre at Burlington House would be opened for a live stream of the Dublin events. Mr Diamond responded that this was problematic due to a lack of staff and he felt that people would not be motivated to come to Burlington House to watch a stream that could be viewed from anywhere. Professor Lester pointed out that this could be considered in future for the A&G Highlights meeting for those that would be in the locale any way, for instance those attending the Dining Club.

Professor Miller asked how the costs compare to holding the meeting at Burlington House and Professor Lester responded that he did not yet have that information.

**ACTION: Professor Lester to circulate the costs of the Dublin meetings to Council.**

Professor Lester thanked the RAS staff: Dr Massey, Ms Valdivia Lefort, Mr Sam Tonkin, Ms Jessica Sharper, Mr Richard O’Sullivan, and Ms Pamela Rowden who provided excellent help and support that should be recognised.

Professor Miller asked whether Council members could claim costs in order to encourage attendance. Professor Lester noted that the quality of the presentations was excellent.

Professor Lester noted that we have had a NAM in Dublin before and that the Society might consider holding it in Dublin again in the future.

Professor Ward-Thompson remarked on the trend that the number of people attending RAS meetings in person has declined significantly, although the overall number has not due to those joining online.