

September 2024

Dear Fellow,

As we approach the end of 2024, I am writing to keep you informed about some of the work that is carried out by the Society on your behalf.

I am pleased to say that King Charles III has graciously accepted the role of patron. This patronage highlights the importance of astronomy and geophysics in advancing our understanding of the universe and underscores the RAS's contributions to scientific research and education. The acceptance of patronage by King Charles III continues the royal connection to the society, enhancing its prestige and reinforcing the significance of its work in the scientific community and beyond.

I am delighted to announce that an agreement has been reached with the Government to secure a 999-year leasehold on the Society's headquarters in London. This agreement protects the 150-year-old scientific and cultural ecosystem at Burlington House by transferring ownership of the 19th-century building to the Learned Societies that call it home, including the RAS, the Geological Society (GSL), the Linnean Society (LSL), the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), and the Society of Antiquaries (SAL). This will allow the society to plan for the future and begin to invest in building improvements.

We look forward to making more use of the courtyard and expanding our activities at Burlington House.

We also set out a new five-year strategy, which puts members "at the front and centre of everything we do," aiming to inspire the next generation of scientists and embodying more than 200 years of history that began when Sir William Herschel became the Society's first president in 1820. This comprehensive plan emphasises enhancing member engagement, fostering scientific innovation, and expanding public outreach, ensuring the RAS continues to lead in its field and honor its distinguished legacy. The strategy also sets out a clear statement of our values, including how we aspire to behave both individually and collectively.

The Society continues to organise and supports an excellent programme of scientific meetings from October through to May on the second Friday of each month, bringing a wide range of outstanding speakers to keep you in touch with developments in your fields of interest. The hybrid format is now a permanent feature of these meetings.

The National Astronomy Meeting in Hull this year was a great success, bringing together leading experts, researchers, and enthusiasts in astronomy, geophysics, and solar-system science. Attendees had a week filled with insightful presentations, collaborative discussions, and opportunities to engage with cutting-edge scientific advancements.

We look forward to our national conference, NAM, at Durham from 7th to 11th July 2025 (TBC), which promises to be a highlight in the RAS calendar.

As the leading UK learned society representing astronomy and geophysics, it is our priority to

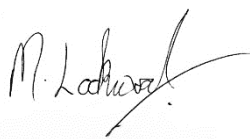
provide a welcoming, interesting, and inclusive environment for all our members. The RAS has always been run for, and by, you. The RAS speaks for the professions of astronomy and geophysics in multiple ways including regular input to Government inquiries, for example on the impact of large satellite constellations in the UK, Europe and further afield. The RAS also exists to promote cooperation and collaboration between its members of all ages and backgrounds.

The last few years continue to be difficult for our community and for people in general. We are still experiencing a very tough financial period which will have an impact on many of you. I also mention that the Society has a fund, the Gerald Merton Fund, to help Fellows who find themselves unable to pay all or some of their membership fees for the year, due to financial difficulty. Requests to the Fund are confidential and approved by the Treasurer. Requests can be sent to membership@ras.ac.uk. If you wish to help others who are in financial difficulty by donating to this fund, please get in touch with the Membership Officer either by email or phone (+44 (0)7516 030497) and this will be arranged for you.

In order to continue promoting our science through the various activities described here, and to maintain and extend the positive influence of our Society within Government, we need your support by continuing in membership, and by participating in the activities of the Society.

Finally, my hope is to see our community thrive and grow, so that our successors can continue to benefit from the scientific and educational activities of the Royal Astronomical Society well into the future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Lockwood', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Prof. Mike Lockwood, RAS President.