



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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AGENDA ITEM 2 ATTACHMENT C(2011/06)2/1

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING 13 MAY 2011 AT 1100 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM

1. PRESENT: Professor R.L. Davies, Professor J.E. Drew, Professor M. Kendall, Professor O. Lahav, Professor J.C. Zarnecki, Professor P.G. Murdin, Professor M.A. Barstow, Dr I.A. Crawford, Dr R.J. Barber, Professor K. Blundell, Professor P.K. Browning, Dr E. Bunce, Dr I.F. Corbett, Professor A.W. Hood, Professor D.W. Hughes, Dr A. Norton, and Professor D.J. Southwood
APOLOGIES: Dr H.J. Walker, Professor R. Ivison; Professor R.E. Spencer; Mr. M. Thompson.
IN ATTENDANCE: D. Elliott (Executive Secretary); R. Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary.)

Note: Professor Davies arrived at 1245; until then the meeting was chaired by Professor Southwood.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 11 March 2011 were approved and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Treasurer reported that he had signed the Agreement with the National Maritime Museum and the British Horological Institute for the examination of the Harrison Regulator. He added that the project was expected to commence in the near future and that the BBC had agreed to film the process at key stages.

3.2 The Deputy Executive Secretary reported that the Demographic Survey, to which there had been over 900 responses, was near completion and he hoped the Report would be available for discussion at the June meeting of Council.

4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS *

4.1 The President reported that 26 departments had informed him of their difficulties with 'e-VAL', the new reporting system for projects funded by the STFC. This had been discussed at the STFC community session at the NAM when a request to put it 'on hold' pending improvements was rejected; however, it was noted that failure to comply carried no sanctions and that STFC intended to review the lessons learned from the current exercise with the aim of making modifications to the system for the next round.

4.2 While he had received STFC's assurance that it would consider re-submissions of applications for 'consolidated' grants that had just missed out due to lack of funds in this, their first year of operation, the President explained that his principal concern, administrative overload on the peer review system, had not been addressed.

4.3 Council agreed that the ‘2010 Fellowships’ had been warmly welcomed by the community and should be continued beyond the next, third, round (to which it had already committed). However, their nomenclature, it was felt, would be increasingly anachronistic while the number offered would depend on success in securing co-sponsorship. Accordingly, it was agreed to postpone a change of name pending the views of any potential sponsor. Otherwise, styling them the ‘Sir William Herschel Fellowships’, it was felt, would be eminently suitable.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Professors Kendall and Lahav tabled their nominations for membership of 2012 Awards Panels, all of whom were approved viz:

‘A’ - Ofer Lahav (Chair), Martin Barstow, Katherine Blundell, Richard Ellis, Rob Jeffries, Clive Tadhunter, Diana Worrall and Anthony Whitworth.

‘G’ - Michael Kendall (Chair), Lyndsay Fletcher, Emma Bunce, Andreas Rietbrock, Barry Parsons, Philippa Browning, Jim Wild and Graham Stuart.

5.2 Council considered the recommendation in the Membership Committee Report that, instead of a simple signature, proposers of ‘Route 1’ applicants should be required to explain, in 1 or 2 sentences, the reason for their support. This was because while the Society welcomed applications from suitable persons, it was noted that ‘Route 2’ admissions, by comparison, were subject to searching examination by the Membership Committee. Indeed, in that connection some time was taken to review (and subsequently confirm) the decision of the Committee to reject a particular application. Council was concerned that the application process should be as simple and welcoming as was consistent with the need to maintain standards of professional integrity. This might, for example, allow proposers of ‘Route 1’ applications to tick a box to confirm that the candidate was a full time post-graduate student. Council also noted, while acknowledging the difficulty of setting objective criteria for membership of a Society that prided itself on not insisting upon formal qualifications, that there should be an appeals system. In conclusion, it was agreed the Committee should be asked to revise the application form and to devise an appeals process for consideration at a future meeting.

The appointment of the following new members of the Committee was approved: Professor Hapgood, Dr Norton and Mr Monaghan.

5.3 Professor Lahav, Chair of the International Committee, summarised the recent meeting with Dr Govender, Director of the newly established IAU Global Office of Astronomy for Development, located in South Africa. Council welcomed the opportunities it was hoped this would create for the Society to provide assistance to developing country institutions and organisations. It was suggested that funding overseas visits, especially of younger UK based scientists, might be particularly effective and asked the International Committee to prepare a costed proposal, of the order of £5,000 pa, to achieve this.

5.4 Council noted a paper listing representatives on Society Committees.

5.5 The Report of the Committee for Women in Astronomy and Geophysics was noted. It approved the appointment of Dr Russell as its new chair.

5.6 Council approved the appointment of Professor Edmonds to the Astronomical Heritage Committee.

6. FINANCE (Treasurer)

6.1 The Finance Committee Report and up-date Operations Plan were noted.

6.2 Council noted the Trustees Report, including Financial Statements, for 2010 which, following approval at the AGM, would be signed by the President.

6.3 The Audit Report 2010 Letter of Representation was approved and signed by the Treasurer.

6.4 The Report of the Honorary Auditors was noted and discussed. Council agreed that its recommendation for enhanced terms of maternity leave should be considered by Professor Murdin as part of his review of staff pensions and emoluments. A suggestion that the entrance into the Society's Burlington House premises could possibly be made more welcoming was remitted to the Executive Secretary. Additionally, it was suggested that newly elected fellows might be invited to induction meetings while further thought should be given to optimising the use of the premises outside normal working hours.

7. POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Dr I. Crawford summarised the Earth Sciences Heads of Department meeting he attended on behalf of the Society where he was able to discuss the role of the Society with Alan Thorpe, the Chief Executive of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). He reported that NERC wished to encourage interdisciplinary activity (under the umbrella of 'Earth System Science') and that this was causing grants to be concentrated in consortia of universities, rather than distributed to individual researchers. Professor Thorpe believed that learned societies were in a unique position to communicate community views by organising meetings and the like. In the case of the Society, this would be particularly valuable given the wide range of inter-disciplinary activity, much of which was relevant to 'Earth System Science', covered by its fellows. Dr Crawford added that he would also appreciate feedback from the community following the transfer of funding responsibility for ground-based STP activity from STFC.

7.2 Professor Zarnecki drew attention to the formal Consultation on its Strategy for 2011-2015 being carried out by the UK Space Agency. It was agreed that the Deputy Executive Secretary, assisted by Professors Zarnecki, Southwood and Barstow and Dr Crawford, would prepare a draft response for consideration at the June meeting of Council.

7.3 Consideration of the Report of the Science and Technology Committee inquiry into Astronomy and Particle Physics Funding, which was made public during the Council meeting, was deferred until the next meeting.

8. PUBLICATIONS

8.1 The Executive Secretary summarised a recent 'scenario planning' meeting with the Society's chief editors and publishers. Council welcomed the intention to develop closer relations with China and noted the desirability of appointing a Chinese editor to the Board of *Monthly Notices*.

8.2 Council noted the paper submitted to the Council of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) to endorse exploratory talks about co-publication of *A&G*. If the AAS confirmed its interest, and Council subsequently decided to pursue this initiative, the Society would sign a non-disclosure agreement to allow for detailed financial discussions.

8.3 Council formally approved the subscription prices for its Journals for 2012.

9. MEETINGS

9.1 The President invited members of Council who had attended the 2011 NAM, while they were still fresh in their minds, to share impressions. There was universal praise for the location (Llandudno) and conference centre (Venue Cymru) and agreement that holding a future NAM there would be welcomed by the community. The only downside was the poor attendance at the 2 public outreach events reflecting the limited audience for such events in a non-university town (compounded by their coinciding with school holidays). A full report on the NAM would be presented at the June meeting of Council.

9.2 Professor P. Browning outlined the plans for the 2012 NAM in Manchester which would be held between Tuesday and Friday 27-30 March (when local schools were still in term time) at the

University's Conference Centre. Representatives of the German Astronomical Society had been invited to join the Scientific Organising Committee.

9.3 The President reminded Council of the interest of the European Astronomical Society (EAS) in co-hosting the 2013 NAM, possibly through their affiliated Nordic/Northern European Societies. In that connection the offer to host the event at St Andrews, which would be celebrating its 600th anniversary, notwithstanding that accommodation constraints would require it to be scheduled for June/July, was particularly interesting. It was agreed that this option should be discussed with the EAS. However, as a precaution, and if possible, a provisional booking should be made with Venue Cymru for Easter 2013.

9.4 The Treasurer reported that, following consultation with Vice-President Lahav, he had agreed to provide £3,100 towards the costs of a conference in Oxford to celebrate the achievements of **Professor** Carole Jordan, the first woman President of the Society, as well as a Gold Medallist. He also informed Council that, in accordance with the Agreement with Durham, the RAS would provide £2100 towards the cost of the 2011 Grubb Parsons Lecture.

10. OTHER

10.1 The Minutes of A&G meeting of 11 March 2011 were approved and signed.

10.2 The following candidates were elected to Fellowship of the Society

Surname	First Name
Abouel-Rous	Amir
Belles	Pierre Emmanuel
Brunskill	Christopher
Elliott	John
Hamilton Williams	Niel
Howes	Nicholas
Jones	Olivia
Kamal	Rasha
Kastanas	Pavlos
McGuire	Alan
Pritchett	Katherine
Simpson	Malcolm
Simpson	Charles
Szyszka	Cezary
Aylott	Benjamin
Benedict	Gordon
Dickson	Bruce
Eaves	Martin
Elliston	Joseph
Forbes	Christopher
Llama	Joseph
Lodhia	Deepali
Sekulla	George
Sloper	Adam
Sullivan	David
Walters	Richard
Wang	Mengyao

10.3 The President concluded by thanking the retiring members of Council (Professors Browning, Drew, Ivison and Zarnecki and Drs Barber, Corbett and Walker) but particularly the out-going

Treasurer, Professor Murdin, whose stewardship of finances over a 10 year period had given the Society the means to undertake many more activities in furtherance of its aims.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1400.

* These items were taken after Professor Davies joined the meeting.

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R.L. Davies
President

10 June 2011