



Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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AGENDA ITEM

ATTACHMENT C(2011/12)/

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING 14 OCTOBER 2011 AT 1100 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM

1. PRESENT: Professor R.L. Davies, Professor F. Honary, Professor O. Lahav, Professor C. Tadhunter, Professor A.M. Cruise, Professor M.A. Barstow, Dr I.A. Crawford, Ms A. Bailey, Professor K. Blundell, Dr E. Bunce, Professor I. Elsworth, Dr R.T. Holme, Professor A.W. Hood, Professor D.W. Kurtz, Professor S. Miller, Dr A. Norton, Professor D.J. Southwood. Professor Spencer joined part of the meeting by conference phone.

APOLOGIES: Dr L. Fletcher; Professor D.W. Hughes; Professor M. Kendall.

The President welcomed Dr Holme to his first Council meeting. Professor Miller indicated he would need to leave at 1300.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 10 June were approved (with minor corrections) and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Professor Lahav drew attention to the recent appeal for support from the Global Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) and explained that the £5,000 pa already agreed by Council would be used in conjunction with the collaborative programmes being worked up by the OAD. He, and Council, congratulated Professor Cruise for assisting the production of the first ever school level astronomy textbooks in Pashtu to encourage education in Afghanistan. Islamic Astronomy, it was noted, was a valuable *point d'appui* for international cooperation with institutions in Muslim countries.

3.2 Professor Hood reported that, for NAM 2013, which is likely to be combined with the JENAM of the European Astronomical Society, St Andrews would be able to provide lecture room accommodation for up to 1000 delegates and on-campus accommodation for 700. Council welcomed this and requested him to make a firm booking for 1-5 July 2013.

3.3 Council reiterated the importance of disseminating the S&T Committee inquiry into Astronomy and Particle Physics to university vice-chancellors and deans of science.

4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

4.1 The President summarised the recent meeting of the Astronomy Forum attended by representatives of STFC and UKSA (report available from the RAS web site)

4.2 The fate of the JWST, owing to concerns about NASA's management record as well as budgetary constraints, remained uncertain but the public support given by the Society had been welcomed by the American astronomy community (though some planetary scientists were fearful its costs would eat into their projects). Continued uncertainty was affecting ESA's Exo-Mars project which it was agreed would be monitored on its behalf by Professor Miller.

4.3 Professor Southwood, who had represented the Society at a recent STFC meeting, emphasised the imperative of scientists engaging with the government's growth strategy.

5. FINANCE (Treasurer)

5.1 Professor Cruise outlined the Operations Plan observing that the Society's heritage assets were being re-valued in line with the requirement of the Charity Commission to include them in the annual financial report. He agreed to prepare a paper for a future meeting of Council setting out the insurance implications. He also informed Council that he was in negotiation with a benefactor initially to establish a prize for work in instrumentation. Finally, he referred to the 'cloud' hanging over the long term viability of the Society from open access repositories which could seriously affect journal income.

5.2 Council approved the following resolutions:

1st Resolution

That the Authorised Signatories in the current NatWest Mandate for the accounts detailed in Section 2 of the Change of Signing Authority Mandate, be changed in accordance with Section 5, and the current Mandate will continue as amended.

Remove: Professor Ian Donald Howarth
Professor Paul Geoffrey Murdin
Professor Michael Rowan Robinson

Add: Professor Adrian Michael Cruise
Dr. Robert Mark Massey

That the completed Additional Party application form be signed on behalf of the Royal Astronomical Society by the persons named in section 2, Roger Llewellyn Davies, President and Ian Andrew Crawford, Secretary and delivered to the bank.

2nd Resolution

That the Authorised Signatories for the Royal Astronomical Society and the F.A. Paneth Meteorite Collection for Newton Investment Management Limited are:

Dr. Ian Andrew Crawford
Mr. David Elliott
Professor Adrian Michael Cruise

5.3 The Treasurer introduced a tabled paper on the future staffing arrangements at Burlington House. The Executive Secretary had expressed a wish to retire in the summer of 2012 and arrangements were needed to prepare for his replacement. The Librarian was also interested in a retirement package in the near future and this needed to be negotiated whilst retaining some access to his expertise. After some discussion Council agreed to:

- a) Set up a search committee for a new Executive Secretary chaired by the Treasurer and comprising the President, the President-elect, Prof Elsworth, Prof Bunce and Prof Barstow to carry out the necessary tasks resulting in a selection by May 2012 and an appointment by July 2012.
- b) Authorise the Treasurer to negotiate an acceptable package with the Librarian leading to the appointment of a replacement by the end of calendar 2012, involving the new Executive Secretary as much as possible.

5.4 The Treasurer introduced the report commissioned from Professor Murdin on the salary levels, pensions and other conditions of work of RAS staff, pointing out that he had a small conflict of interest in respect of the inflation figures agreed for honoraria and would leave the room at any time requested. It was clear to all involved that Council valued very highly the dedication and expertise of the staff at Burlington house but it was necessary to be assured as trustees that the rates being paid were appropriate to the duties. The general view was that the report had satisfactorily answered the questions raised in February surrounding the comparability of salary levels for Society employees and their general conditions of work. Council agreed that salaries should be updated using the RPI index including the honoraria for Managing Editors and the Treasurer. Council agreed that the Defined Benefits Pension Scheme should continue unaltered and that the Defined Contributions Scheme should now be disconnected from any targeting of its benefits. A new level of employee contribution was agreed, starting at 5% which was mandatory for any employee opting into the scheme. The employer would contribute 7.5% for an employee contribution of 5% but would add 1.5 times the difference between 5% and the employee's contribution, up to a maximum employer's contribution of 10%. The normal retirement age should match the state pension age as this evolves under new proposals. London weighting and the cost of Luncheon Vouchers would be incorporated in the normal salary levels. Childcare vouchers, Cycle to Work schemes, life insurance and loans for season tickets were agreed to be valuable additions and should continue. Council also agreed to change the title of the Editorial Assistants to Assistant Editors. In the discussion it was not immediately clear what the maternity benefits being offered by the Society entailed and the Treasurer agreed to prepare an information note on this for a future Council meeting. Council agreed with the suggestion that a comparability review should be undertaken every few years to ensure that salaries and conditions were appropriate for the duties being undertaken, and were competitive with local market conditions.

5.5 The Treasurer outlined recent meetings with the Royal Society about future payment of the UK's contributions to the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG). Following elucidation by Dr Holme it was agreed to provide the requested £1.5K pa, initially for a period of 2 years.

6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

6.1 A Memorandum of Understanding with the Antiquarian Horological Society was approved.

6.2 To achieve a more balanced profile Professor Southwood recommended that the Harold Jeffreys Lecture, in future, should be restricted to topics in Solid Earth Geophysics while a new 'Named Lecture' should be established for solar system science. He agreed to bring a proposal to the December meeting.

6.3 Professor Edmunds, Chair, introduced the report of the Astronomical Heritage Committee. In particular he drew attention to the discussion provoked by the requests of the British Horological Institute (BHI) to build, and in one case, sell replicas of the RAS Harrison Regulator. Following discussion it was agreed that the President should send the following letter to the BHI:

We were delighted to hear of the excellent progress of the Harrison Clock project, but noted with some concern that the formal Agreement had not yet been signed by the BHI. Council discussed in detail your two requests. Before turning to them I should say that Council took the view that their further consideration should be dependent on the BHI signing the Agreement into which the Society, and the NMM, entered in good faith. The first of these is that up to thirteen members of the team, named in your e-mail to Mike Edmunds of the 25th July, be allowed to make replicas for their own use. We have some concerns that this could devalue the original but are prepared to consider requests from team members on a case by case basis as fair return for their efforts, provided (as agreed) they will not attempt to sell them during their lifetimes, and that the replicas are clearly numbered and marked. Indeed we would be interested in displaying one of them in our premises in Burlington House.

The second request that one of the "definitive" replicas (to be produced to test the potential accuracy of the clock) be auctioned for BHI funds is more problematic. The RAS and NMM have always regarded the aim of the project as being to bring information into the public domain to further research and scholarship, and not as a commercial venture. In the initial approach to the RAS (Paul Shrouder's letter of 22 March 2010 to the then President, Andy Fabian) no mention was made that a replica would be sold. Indeed it was explicitly stated that the replicas and the working model of the escapement and remontoir would remain in the possession of the BHI. Neither Mike Edmunds, nor the recent past Treasurer, Paul Murdin, recall any suggestion being raised during the negotiation of the Agreement that one of them might be sold. The view of Council was that I should write to you to express its unwillingness to grant permission, but also to ask if you can provide further arguments that might cause us to reconsider this decision. We look forward to the publication of both the drawings and the investigation of temporal accuracy, about which the Astronomical Heritage Committee will no doubt be keeping in touch.

6.4 Council agreed, with enthusiasm, to the loan of a number of its rare books and instruments to the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford in connection with the forthcoming exhibition on 'Renaissance Astronomy'. It was further agreed that one of the items, the 'Schoner Globe', recently returned from storage at the London Science Museum could be provided on long term loan.

6.5 Council approved the recommendations for Society endorsement of the distance learning courses offered by UCLan made by Dr Smith, the RAS appointed independent scrutineer, as follows:

The Royal Astronomical Society, the UK's society for professional astronomers, endorses the following University of Central Lancashire certificate, diploma and degree awards in astronomy as relevant components of a training in astronomy, which will be acknowledged as such if used to apply for fellowship of the Society:

University Certificate in Astrobiology (new award) (VSABIO501)

University Certificate in Astronomy (VSASTR501)

University Certificate in Cosmology (VSCOSM501)

University Certificate in History of Astronomy (VSHIAS501)

University Certificate in IT for Astronomy (VSASIT501)

University Certificate in Physics for Astronomy (VSASPY501)

University Certificate in Sun, Earth and Climate (VSASUN501)

Certificate of Higher Education in Astronomy (VSASTR511)

University Advanced Certificate in Astronomy (VSASTR502)

University Advanced Certificate in Astrophysics of Galaxies (VSASGL502)

University Advanced Certificate in Astrophysics of the Sun and Stars (VSASSS502)

Diploma of Higher Education in Astronomy (VSASTR512)

BSc (Hons) in Astronomy (new award) (VSASTR513)

6.6 Council approved the appointment of Dr Norton to the CWiAG

7. POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (Deputy Executive Secretary)

7.1 It was agreed to send the following submission to the consultation on STFC advisory panels:

For the grant funded science programmes, advisory panels reporting to Science Board should be established in the following areas:

- a. Astronomy*
- b. Nuclear Physics*
- c. Particle Physics*
- d. Particle Astrophysics*

The RAS acknowledges that it is difficult to establish panels without creating artificial boundaries between similar areas of research and the previous NUAP / FUAP system was no exception. We note that establishing an astronomy panel gives this area of research a clearer identity within the funding council, but urge STFC to set up a parallel Solar System science panel in recognition of the size and importance of this research area.

The Society welcomes the broad role of the panels i.e. that they are able to look to the future of their subject area and make recommendations for scientific priorities accordingly. We do nonetheless note that historically panel advice has been accepted where funding permitted and rejected where it did not, so suggest that panel members should be given the financial information necessary to assemble a realistic set of proposals.

There are some risks in the new proposed structure that will require mitigation. A key concern is that the panels effectively represent all the science areas they cover, particularly in an area like astronomy with its many sub-disciplines. The Society is further concerned that

the new astronomy panel may not have the expertise to take good long-term decisions on areas unrepresented in its membership. In the past some areas, like Solar System science, have been poorly represented, with no researchers in that area on Science Board, which led to the perception that these same areas were less likely to be funded. The Society therefore believes that a sensible solution would be to create a separate Solar System science panel. Furthermore, such a development would better facilitate 'dual key' work with the UK Space Agency.

There are very significant disparities in the size of the investment made by STFC in the areas identified for the Advisory Panels which in turn implies an imbalance in the relative attention given to each area. We urge STFC to re-examine the proposed panel structure to ensure that it receives advice and invests its administrative and support effort in proportion to the relative size of its programme in each area.

We also ask that the new college of non-core experts on Science Board is adequately empowered to search for any areas of work, perhaps those cutting across panels that are omitted in initial panel recommendations.

The RAS urges STFC to ensure that the new panels (and STFC Council members) engage with the wider astronomy community. Although UK astronomy and space science researchers have been ranked second in the world after the US for at least the last decade, this status is very much at risk with the ongoing cuts to the astronomy research budget. Maintaining a good working relationship between astronomy researchers and those that set their funding is obviously of crucial importance in such an environment.

Given their status as bodies independent of government, learned societies such as the RAS are well placed continue to facilitate this communication, via formal bodies such as our governing Council as well as through the wider Fellowship. Informal groupings such as the Astronomy Forum also have a key role to play in providing constructive criticism and helping STFC to be seen as an organisation that takes consultation seriously.

7.2 The Society's submission to the consultation on the draft National Policy Planning Framework was noted

7.3 It was agreed that Dr Holme would communicate Council's concerns about the abolition of leap seconds to Mr Pat Wallace, formerly of HM Nautical Almanac Office, who will represent the Society at a forthcoming meeting to determine the UK position on the proposed change to UTC. Council agreed to give this topic further consideration in December ahead of the ITU meeting which is scheduled to take the final decision.

7.4 The government response to the S&T Committee inquiry into Astronomy and Particle Physics was noted.

8. PUBLICATIONS

8.1 Council noted the report from the MN Editorial Board and expressed some concern about the decline in the impact factor. The Executive Secretary agreed to circulate additional data.

8.2 While Council appreciated the efforts made by Dr Simon Mitton, the commissioning editor of the RAS Springer Books Series, it was disappointed that so few books had been printed in the past 5 years and that the titles were of such limited appeal to research astrophysicists. It was speculated that books were no longer relevant to this community which would raise a question mark over the longer term future of the collaboration with Springer. It was agreed to ask Dr Mitton to prepare a paper outlining his vision for the Series.

9. AWARDS

9.1 Council approved the appointment of Anthony Whitworth to the ‘A’ Awards Panel and of Christine Peirce to the ‘G’ Awards Panel.

9.2 After long and thoughtful discussion, Council decided that Mike Cripps was not eligible for consideration for the 2012 Patrick Moore Medal on the grounds that he had died before the planned nomination on his behalf was made and that posthumous nominations would not be appropriate. There was, though, sympathy for the notion that the Society should try to recognise his outstanding contributions to school level astronomy in some other way and remitted this for further consideration to the Education Committee.

10. OTHER

10.1 The following candidates, listed for election in the Officers’ Reports of June, July, August & September 2011, were elected to Fellowship:

<u>Surname</u>	<u>First Name</u>
Backes	Michael
Chadney	Joshua
Dunn	Michael
Gierlinger	Richard
Gray	Rosemary
Johnston	Evelyn
Kiddie	Greg
Kimm	Taysun
Leithes	Alexander
Morris	Peter
Rapparini	Camillo
Argo	Megan
Clayton	Christopher
Greenshaw	Timothy
Hanson	Margaret
Howe	Rachel
King	Robert
Lavender	Gemma
Longden	Nicola
McQuillan	Amy
Jones	Lyndsay
Kendal	Lynn
Lewis	Paul
Maccalli	Stefania
Mahesh	Ishwar
Mathioudakis	Mihalis
Michnowicz	Jan
Mortlock	Alice
Muldrew	Stuart
Pisano	Giampaolo
Quarta	Giovanni
Tan	Peng Kian
Venn	Mark

Wears Irene
Worsley Andrew
Zhang Daoxi

11. AOB

11.1 The President encouraged colleagues to provide feedback to STFC on the e-Val data collection system.

11.2 The Executive Secretary was asked to contact panel members for the 3rd tranche of RAS Fellowships.

11.3 Colleagues were reminded that the deadline for nominations for election to the 2012 Council was 25 November 2011.

Council rose at 1530

Action Point Summary:

1. *NAM 2013 - confirm reservations for 1-5 July (Alan Hood)*
2. *Exo Mars - monitor evolving situation (Steve Miller)*
3. *Valuation and insurance of heritage assets - future Council paper (Treasurer)*
4. *IUGG - £1.5K for 2 years agreed (Treasurer)*
5. *MoU with AHS approved (Exec Sec)*
6. *Space Science 'named lecture' - proposal for December Council (David Southwood)*
7. *British Horological Society re auction of replica and permission to produce up to a further 13 (Mike Edmunds and President)*
8. *STFC Advisory panels - (Robert Massey and President)*
9. *Leap Seconds- Richard Holme to brief Pat Wallace about concerns of Council prior to his attending the Royal Society meeting*
10. *MN citations - circulate details (Exec Sec)*
11. *Springer Books - Simon Mitton to produced Council paper (Exec Sec)*
12. *Patrick Moore Medal - EdComm to consider alternative means of honouring Mike Cripps (Clive Tadhunter)*
13. *RAS Fellowships Panel - confirm membership (Exec Sec)*
14. *S&T Committee inquiry into Astronomy and Particle Physics – circulate to university vice-chancellors and deans of science (Robert Massey)*
15. *Revisions to staff pay and pension arrangements (Exec Sec and Treasurer)*

Note:

Outstanding action point from June Council: Provide list of geophysics contacts willing to promote the RAS to students (Mike Kendall)

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R.L. Davies
President

9 December 2011