



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

## **ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

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### **AGENDA ITEM 2.1 ATTACHMENT C(2012/02)2/1**

#### **MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING 9 DECEMBER 2011 AT 1100 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM**

**1. PRESENT:** Professor R.L. Davies, Professor F. Honary, Professor C. Tadhunter, Professor A.M. Cruise, Dr L. Fletcher, Ms A. Bailey, Dr E. Bunce, Professor Y. Elsworth, Dr R.T. Holme, Professor D.W. Hughes, Dr A. Norton, Professor D.J. Southwood, and Professor R.E. Spencer  
**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D. Elliott (Executive Secretary) and Dr. R. Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary)

**APOLOGIES:** Professor M.A. Barstow; Professor K. Blundell; Dr I.A. Crawford; Professor A. W. Hood; Professor D.W. Kurtz\*; Professor M. Kendall; Professor O. Lahav, and Professor S. Miller  
\*RAS skype connection from USA failed

#### **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 14 October were approved (with minor corrections) and signed

#### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

**3.1** The Executive Secretary confirmed that the NAM in 2013 would be held at the University of St Andrews. It was hoped that the 2014 NAM would be a joint event with the European Astronomical Society.

**3.2** The Executive Secretary reported that the school at which Mike Cripps worked before his premature death planned to install a sundial in his memory to which the Society had offered a contribution

**3.3** Harrison Clock. Item deferred pending response from the Antiquarian Horological Society

**3.4** Council noted the report of Mr Pat Wallace, who represented the Society at a Royal Society meeting to consider the UK's position on the impending decision to abolish Leap Seconds. Given the powerful interests supporting this outcome, he had concluded that it was futile to oppose what he characterised as inevitable. Council regretted the loss to Science in de-coupling Time from the Earth's rotation. It requested the Deputy Executive Secretary to prepare a statement for the media along those lines, purely for responsive use, following the ITU meeting in January 2012 at which it was expected the decision to abolish leap seconds would be approved.

#### **4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

**4.1** The President briefed Council about the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) whose development had been under threat in Congress but now appeared to have secured budgetary approval. The Director of the Space Telescope Science Institute, Professor Matt Mountain, had written to thank the Society, and the UK community, for their 'strong and active support... ( which) played a very significant role in persuading the Administration and Congress that JWST should continue to be funded at the appropriate level to ensure a 2018 launch'.

**4.2** Following an unsuccessful approach to a company to secure sponsorship for the Society's Fellowship Scheme, the President reported that the Treasurer and Executive Secretary would develop a more concerted strategy aimed at existing and potential donors.

**4.3** There had been a fruitful meeting with Alec Shelbrooke, MP who invited the Society to use him as a parliamentary advocate for astrophysics and pure research.

**4.4** Similarly, the President reported a constructive meeting with the new CEO of STFC, Professor Womersley. In preparation for the next Comprehensive Spending Review in 2014 a programmatic review would identify high priority projects and instruments. He intended to champion the sciences for which his Council was responsible, and looked forward to having close relations with the community in demonstrating the wider benefits of research in astronomy and geophysics. In that connection Council agreed to produce a revised version of 'A new view of the Universe: big science for the big society' in 2013.

**4.5** The President undertook to circulate a bibliometric citation analysis commissioned by STFC which demonstrated that UK astronomers and space scientists achieved a higher impact than those of any other country.

**4.6** The President introduced the recommendations of Professor Blundell regarding the installation of video-conferencing facilities in Burlington House. Council agreed that they should be installed in the Lecture Theatre and Council Rooms, and possibly elsewhere via a mobile unit, to enable participation in meetings by individuals unable to travel to London. It noted that this would require a significant increase in bandwidth. Council welcomed the offer of assistance of Oxford Physics Department's IT specialists through whom a costed proposal would be obtained from a recommended supplier, ideally in time for the February meeting.

#### **5. FINANCE**

**5.1** The Treasurer spoke to the report of the Finance Committee noting that, despite market volatility, the return on investments had remained stable at around 4.5%. He planned to prepare a strategy to deal with the threat to the Society's journal income from 'open access' publishing. Finally, he noted that membership renewals and payments could now be effected on-line.

**5.2** The Treasurer informed Council that, thanks to the generosity of one of its Fellows, Dr Patricia Tomkins, a donation, the first of several, had been given to support the work of the Society. Some of the funds would be used to establish a thesis prize in instrumental science and the balance to support experimental laboratory work by students. Council recorded its appreciation of this gift and asked the Executive Secretary to convey its gratitude to Dr Tomkins and to invite her to attend the NAM as the guest of the Society.

**5.3** Council welcomed the outline programme of the 2012 NAM in Manchester and approved the application from the local organising committee for a grant of £12,500 to support it. The Treasurer informed Council that STFC wished to channel *its* grant, of £25,000, to future NAM organizers through the Society and to look to the Society to ensure compliance with the terms under which it was provided ( largely to encourage and support the attendance of students).

## 6. AWARDS

6.1 Professor Tadhunter announced the recommendations of the ‘A’ awards panel, all of which were approved viz

GOLD MEDAL - Professor A.FABIAN

HERSCHEL MEDAL- Dr M. IRWIN

JACKSON GWILT MEDAL – Professor J. BLAND-HAWTHORN

SERVICE TO ASTRONOMY- Professor P. MURDIN

GROUP AWARD - UKIDSS

FOWLER AWARD- Dr H. PEIRIS

WINTON CAPITAL PRIZE – Dr T. KITCHING

HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS – Professor R. WILLIAMS, USA; Professor H. SHIBAHASHI, Japan; Professor K. MENTEN, Germany

GEORGE DARWIN LECTURE - Professor A. COLLIER-CAMERON

GERALD WHITROW LECTURE- Professor A. LIDDLE\*

\*to be given in 2013

6.2 Dr Fletcher announced the recommendations of the ‘G’ awards report, all of which were approved viz

GOLD MEDAL: Professor J.C. BROWN

CHAPMAN MEDAL: Professor A.N. FAZAKERLEY

FOWLER PRIZE: Dr M. OWENS

WINTON CAPITAL PRIZE: Dr J. BIGGS

HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS: Professor R.LIN, USA; Professor H.OPGENOORTH, Sweden

HAROLD JEFFREYS LECTURE: Professor B.CHAPLIN

Council went on to suggest that the chairs of the 2013 awards panels, meeting in 2012, as far as possible should ensure that the panels operated both as search as well as selection committees.

6.3 Professor Tadhunter announced the recommendation of the panel established under the aegis of the Education Committee to award the 2012 Patrick Moore Medal to Dr Becky Parker. Council was impressed by the quality and quantity of nominations for this new award and suggested that some of them, particularly teachers near the end of their careers, may be considered for future ‘Service’ awards.

6.4 Council welcomed recommendations, made by the ‘A’ awards panel, of fellows who the Society might wish to propose for national honours. It was agreed that the individuals identified were most deserving and that soundings would be taken to establish the wider support which is usually advantageous to a successful outcome.

6.5 Council noted the interim report of RAS Fellow, Dr Ben Davies and requested the Executive Secretary to communicate its satisfaction with it and to suggest that, in due course, Dr Davies should submit an article for publication in *A&G*

## 7. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

7.1 Council noted the following nominations for 2012 Council elections:

1	Barclay, Charles	A	Councillor
2	Daniels, Paul A.	A	Councillor
3	Davis, Richard	A	Councillor

4	Evans, Christopher	A	Councillor
5	Fraser, Helen Jane	A	Councillor
6	Griffin, Ian	A	Councillor
7	Penny, Alan John	A	Councillor
8	Smith, Michael David	A	Councillor
9	Burchell, Mark	G	Councillor
10	Crampin, Stuart	G	Councillor
11	Erdelyi, Robertus	G	Councillor
12	Holme, Richard	G	Councillor
13	Jones, Geraint	G	Councillor
14	Mackay, Duncan	G	Councillor
15	Peacock, Sheila	G	Councillor
16	Mitton, Simon	A	Vice-President
17	Parsons, Barry	G	Vice-President
18	Crawford, Ian	G	Secretary

Council was concerned at the low number of women and ethnic minority candidates and asked both Professor Elsworth and the Committee for Women in Astronomy and Geophysics, to formulate a strategy to encourage more to stand in elections.

**7.2** Professor Southwood spoke to his paper proposing a modification to the annual Harold Jeffreys Lecture such that the topic would be restricted to solid earth geophysics. He suggested that, to achieve this, the rubric describing the lecture should specify a 'suitable topic in the field of Geophysics (excluding solar, solar-terrestrial physics and planetary & meteoritic sciences'. Alongside this a new lecture would be established on 'a suitable topic drawn from within the fields of solar and heliospheric physics, solar-terrestrial science, planetary or small solar system body science'. The name of an eminent scientist, after whom the new lecture might be named, was discussed, but a decision was deferred until the February meeting at which any additional suggestions, provided they were supported by appropriate evidence, would be examined.

**7.3** Dr Holme spoke to the Membership Committee Report. This proposed changes to the application form and the introduction of an appeals process, which was agreed. In addition he summarised the conclusions reached to promote membership, and greater involvement in the affairs of the Society, by members of the solid earth geophysics (SEG) community who tended to be fellows of either the Society or the Geological Society but seldom both viz

- a) Rather than a joint membership scheme with the Geological Society, for which neither Society had an appetite, support to the SEG community should continue to be provided through the British Geophysical Association
- b) However, the RAS needed to be more active in taking up policy issues affecting geophysics in the same way that it was active on behalf of astronomy
- c) There should be at least two specialist discussion meetings per year on SEG
- d) Points of contact should be named for all university departments where teaching or research in SEG is being undertaken
- e) Public lectures and Friends' events should regularly include SEG topics

- f) Attendees at SEG specialist discussion meetings should be actively encouraged to attend the ordinary meetings that follow.

Finally he reported that the number of 'Friends' had reached 194, a significant increase over past years.

**7.4** Professor Tadhunter summarised the previously circulated Education Committee Report drawing attention to its survey of outreach and education activities and its encouragement of GCSE Astronomy by presenting certificates of achievement to the 12 best performing candidates in the country. Council approved the appointment of David Swinscoe to the Education Committee.

**7.5** The Executive Secretary introduced the Library Committee Report. In particular he highlighted the recommendations concerning stock housed in the Annexe viz that

- a) the reserve book collection should be located on the fitted wall shelving and
- b) journals, in the first instance those not available on-line, currently occupying metal stacks should be disposed of (ideally by donation to ADS and/or fellows) it being noted that they were seldom, if ever, consulted and off-site storage was prohibitively expensive.

Council agreed that the Annexe rooms represented an under-exploited asset which could be used for other, more valuable, purposes and encouraged the Committee to complete the clearance of unwanted items by mid-2012.

**7.6** The Women in Astronomy and Geophysics Committee (CWAG) Report was noted. In particular Council welcomed its intention to discuss with fellows at the 2012 NAM whether the Committee's scope should be widened to encompass all aspects of diversity. The President added that he wished to participate actively in this meeting.

## **8. POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

**8.1** The Deputy Executive Secretary informed Council that he was undertaking a survey of European organisations and projects in which the Society might wish to be involved, noting the considerable financial sums available therein for science research. By way of illustration he tabled a paper provided by Professor Miller outlining 'Europlanet'.

**8.2** The Executive Secretary explained that he and the President had been invited to attend a meeting of national societies affiliated to the European Astronomical Society (EAS) in early 2012 to consider how the EAS could better promote, especially with the EU Commission, the interests of the European astronomical community. Council noted that, as apparently had happened when the Royal Aeronautical Society helped create the *European Federation of Aeronautical Societies*, the EAS might be better able to represent European Astronomers if it was restructured such that it became a federation of the existing societies rather than an individual membership body. Council encouraged the President to pursue this possibility at the forthcoming meeting.

**8.3** The Deputy Executive Secretary reported that the Society's input to the recent EU consultation on the European Research Area emphasized that, while improved EU infrastructure would be of some help, the real stimuli for scientific research remained high quality, properly funded projects which attracted wide international teams.

**8.4** Dr Fletcher reported the recommendations of the CWAG concerning the proposed further analysis of the data collected in the recent survey, *The Demographics and Research Interests of the UK Astronomy and Geophysics Research Communities*, to illuminate the relationship between gender and the career intentions of geophysics and astronomy postdoctoral students. They were that:

- a) this issue already had been investigated for the physical sciences community as a whole ( *vide* ‘Mapping the Future: Physics and Chemistry Postdoctoral Researchers’ Experiences and Career Intentions’) and that
- b) the career paths of physics, geophysics and astronomy postdoctoral students were sufficiently similar to make it unlikely that a separate analysis would yield additional insights but
- c) that the data, and structured interviews with students, including PhD students, could be used to identify interventions which might reduce the loss of female researchers

Council endorsed these conclusions and encouraged Dr Fletcher and CWiAG to pursue c) further.

**8.5** The Deputy Executive Secretary outlined the points the Society had contributed to the submission made by the Science Council, of which the RAS is an affiliate, to the House of Lords Science and Technology Sub-Committee inquiry into *Higher Education in STEM Subjects* viz

- a) while the reforms to funding under discussion by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) were expected to include a premium paid to subsidise the teaching of science courses, the mooted value of £1500 per student per annum would be too low to cover the additional teaching costs of more practical STEM subjects.
- b) HEFCE reforms, due to come into effect over the next two years, compounded the problem by removing some of the additional funding provided for *Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects* (SIVS), adding that geophysics, as much as other physical sciences, should be included in this category.
- c) the decision by NERC in 2011 to withdraw funding for taught MSc courses, despite the importance of these postgraduates to industry, should be reconsidered.
- d) the high debt (perhaps exceeding £60000) incurred by graduates might act as a deterrent to pursuing study at PhD level with adverse consequences for the long term viability of important disciplines.

## 9. PUBLICATIONS

**9.1** Council welcomed the paper from Dr Mitton, the commissioning editor for the RAS-Springer Book Series. In it he explained that the Series made possible publication of works of value to the community which otherwise would remain unpublished. This was because, whereas well known authors could access commercial publishers, others needed the support of the Society to establish their credentials. Springer could be assured that any RAS book proposal would be properly peer reviewed. It also helped that the Society generally assisted with book launches.

## 10. OTHER

**10.1** The following were elected to fellowship:

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>
Aldred	Christopher
Attree	Nicholas
Blackman	Eric
Bohle	Shannon
Cave	Rosemary
Cottrell	Geoffrey
Dobson	Amy
Galianni	Pasquale
Grant	Daniel
Haywood	Raphaëlle

Hull	Matthew
Khan	Aiyub
Lorber	Kira
Lucas	William
Mackie	David
Maguire	Kate
Mandel	Ilya
McMillan	Paul
Meredith	Calum
O'Malley-James	Jack
Onovughe	Elvis
Passmore	Richard
Schure	Klara
Shaw	Aarran
Shetty	Shravan
Suberlak	Krzysztof
Suutarinen	Aleksi
Thomas	Simon
Thompson	Graham
Thomson	Isabel
Ting	Yuan Sen
Tottle	Jonathan
Vidotto	Aline
Ward	Jonathan
Watts	Anthony
Ashmore	David
Bingham	Robert
Burden	Angela
Chapman-Smith	John
Cox	Grace
Dickinson	Nathan
Dunford	Alexander
Emery	Jon
Fletcher	Lauren
Gibb	Gordon
Gibson	Neale
Gillen	Edward
Hammond	James
Ho	Wynn
Huang	Hsiang-Fu
Huston	Ian
Irving	Jessica
Lohr	Marcus

Lukicov	Gleb
Lythgoe	Karen
Mallett	John
Marinello	Gabriel
McLain	Lynton
Melwani	Mohit
Daswani	
Mitra	Ayan
Narasimhan	Kirthika
Nilsson	Andreas
Old	Lyndsay
Ozsan	Osman Orhun
Papadopoulos	Andreas
Pinfield	David
Pont	Frederic
Priya	T.G.
Priyanka	Nowreen
Rose	Julian
Salaris	Maurizio
Stevens	Adam
Taylor	Christopher
Thompson	Benjamin
Vousden	Will
Ward	Anthony
Ward	Louise
Webb	Jim
White	Sarah
Wilkinson	David
Wolsey	Rebecca
Zhang	Zenghua

**10.2** The minutes of the A&G meetings of 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011 & 11<sup>th</sup> November 2011 were approved and signed

## **11. AOB**

**11.1** The Executive Secretary informed Council that it was hoped to implement an inter-university scheme with developing countries under the aegis of the *Global Office of Astronomy for Development* following the meeting in S. Africa in December, 2011

**11.2** Dr Fletcher reported that the Nuffield Undergraduate Research Bursaries programme was being progressively transferred to learned societies with which they were in discussion. Council expressed concern and asked the Executive Secretary to investigate.

Council rose at 1540

*Summary of action points:*

1. *Media statement on Leap Seconds (RM)*
2. *Donor Strategy (MC & DE)*
3. *New edition of 'A new view of the universe' (RM)*
4. *Circulation of bibliometric survey (RD)*
5. *Preparation of costed video-conferencing proposal (KB)*
6. *Utilization of Tomkins donation (MC)*
7. *Approval of grant for NAM 2012 (DE)*
8. *National honours (DE)*
9. *RAS Awards- Media and A&G (RM& SB)*
10. *Ben Davies(DE)*
11. *Women candidates for Council(YF&CWAG)*
12. *'Named lecture'(ALL)*
13. *POCs for geophysics (DE)*
14. *Annexe (DE & Library Committee)*
15. *CWiAG and diversity (LF& CWiAG)*
16. *EAS (DE&RD)*
17. *Early careers (LF& CWiAG)*

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R.L. Davies  
President

10 February 2012