



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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### AGENDA ITEM 2.1 ATTACHMENT C(2012/03)2/1

#### MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING 10 FEBRUARY 2012 AT 1100 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM

**1. PRESENT:** Professor R.L. Davies, Professor F. Honary, Professor M. Kendall, Professor O. Lahav, Professor A.M. Cruise, Professor M.A. Barstow, Dr I.A. Crawford, Dr L. Fletcher, Ms A. Bailey, Professor K. Blundell, Dr E. Bunce, Professor Y. Elsworth, Dr R.T. Holme, Professor A.W. Hood, Professor D.W. Kurtz, Dr A. Norton, Professor D.J. Southwood, and Professor R.E. Spencer (Professor Kendall and Ms Bailey left the meeting at 1230)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D. Elliott (Executive Secretary) and Dr. R. Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary)

**APOLOGIES:** Professor D.W. Hughes, Professor S. Miller and Professor C. Tadhunter

#### 2. MINUTES

**2.1** The minutes of the meeting of 9 December 2011 were approved (with minor corrections) and signed.

#### 3. MATTERS ARISING

**3.1** The Deputy Executive Secretary reported that the UK government delegation to the ITU Radiocommunication (ITU-R) Assembly meeting in Geneva in January 2012 successfully opposed the abolition of leap seconds from 2018 on the grounds that there should be wider debate and better understanding of the consequences before taking such a step. As a result it was agreed to defer a decision until 2015. It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to the Minister for Science, David Willetts MP and that the Society's existing position should be revisited and up-dated in advance of the 2015 meeting.

**3.2** The Deputy Executive Secretary informed Council that HEFCE was developing a new policy approach towards those subjects which were considered strategically important and vulnerable (SIVS) and which, following recent reforms in Higher Education, required support to avoid undesirable reductions in the scale of provision. While Physics was among them, the vast majority of Geophysics activity was regarded as belonging to "Earth, marine and environmental sciences", which was not. While being unable to qualify for additional moneys was disappointing for solid earth geophysicists, the inability to benefit from quota-free undergraduate admissions was much more serious. There was, though, no likelihood of solid earth geophysicists migrating to university physics departments, and in any case to review the position before the October meeting.

**3.3** Members noted with concern the low number of women candidates standing for election to Council in May 2012. There was broad agreement that, ideally, Council should more closely represent the diversity of its membership with respect to ethnicity, geographical region, subject specialism as well as gender, but no consensus about how to bring this about. Quotas were considered counter-productive and there was no appetite to revert to earlier practice where Council itself sought to determine its future composition rather than encouraging the membership to participate in meaningful elections. It was suggested that this, and other aspects of governance, might be looked at in a future ‘strategic away day’. In any event it was agreed that all members of Council should encourage more colleagues from ‘minority groups’ to stand for election in 2013 and, if this approach failed to produce the desired outcome, that Officers should take pro-active steps before the late November 2012 deadline for nominations.

#### **4. PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS**

**4.1** The President reported that STFC had given the Society £20,000 to support attendance of UK scientists at the General Assembly of the IAU in Beijing in August 2012. Grants, up to a maximum of £1k per award, would be given to post-docs and early career scientists and more generally to individuals who did not have access to other sources of funding and whose presence at the GA was considered important. This was welcomed with the suggestion that NERC might be persuaded to offer a similar scheme in connection with the General Assembly of the IUGG in 2013.

**4.2** The Liberal Democrat Science Spokesperson, Dr Julian Huppert MP, had invited the Society to submit comments, suggestions as well as existing policy papers which might be relevant to the update of his party’s science policy. In particular on the allocation of existing and new funding sources; skills, careers, gender/other balances and impact on this of immigration policies and, in the area of public policy, how government and parliament should use science; manage research and arrive at the correct balance between pure and applied work. In addition to providing the requested submission and documents, it was agreed to invite Dr Huppert to a meeting of the *Astronomy Forum* where he could engage directly with an important part of the Society’s community.

**4.3** Noting that the *Astronomy Forum* had proved to be a run- away success with both STFC as well as with the astronomy community, Professors Southwood and Kendall agreed, through informal contacts with the new CEO of NERC as well as with the Geological and Royal Meteorological Societies, to investigate the scope for establishing a *Geophysics Forum*.

**4.4** At the request of Professor Miller the President announced that University College London would be hosting the 2013 European Planetary Science Congress

#### **5. FINANCE**

**5.1** The Treasurer drew attention in the Operations Plan to the sums allocated for Society Fellowships in 2011 and the current year, which represented a commitment for the full 3 years of their expected duration. He also signalled that he would request the AGM to approve an increase in the 2013 subscriptions in line with RPI.

**5.2** In introducing this item the Treasurer noted a conflict of interest and volunteered to withdraw should Council wish to hold a discussion. In fact, Council saw no reason to depart from custom and practice in approving annual inflation linked increases in the honoraria provided to journal editors and other post holders including the Treasurer as well as to staff salaries. In respect of the latter the Treasurer noted that, discounting changes to the staffing complement, notwithstanding this increase, the cost of salaries would be some £19,000 (2.7%) lower in 2012 than in 2011 due to the changes Council approved to the employer’s contributions to the Stakeholder Pension Scheme. Turning to the honoraria of editors, the Treasurer asked for, and received, permission to discontinue the

requirement that a portion had to be paid directly to an editor's employer on the grounds that this was an unnecessary proscription. Finally, in view of their greater responsibilities than editors, the Treasurer was given discretion to enhance the honoraria paid to the editors in chief of both *MNRAS* and *GJI*. He undertook to return to Council in due course with his recommendations.

**5.3** As requested, details of the Society's *Staff Maternity and Paternity Leave Scheme* were tabled.

**5.4** The Treasurer reported that a generous donation had been received from the Tomkins Foundation (with a strong suggestion that this could be repeated). The objective of the donation was to encourage and support students engaged in instrumental science, including the development of new instrument designs or concepts, the building and testing of equipment and the development of instrument related software. It was agreed that one channel for pursuing this objective, which would account for around £5,000 of the £19,000 donated, was via a thesis prize, highlighting instrumental science. Another was through grants of up to £1,000 to assist PhD students working in the instrumental field. Council approved both proposals and asked the Executive Secretary to convey its appreciation to Dr Tomkins and to extend to her an invitation to attend the forthcoming NAM as the guest of the Society.

**5.5** The Treasurer introduced a paper outlining the case for developing a more strategic approach to obtaining funding from sponsors which would enable the Society to maintain its support of astronomy and geophysics. He noted that the Society had benefited from sponsorship and philanthropic giving for a long time and that in the past four years this had averaged about £35-£40k per year. He felt that the Society should do more to recognize their generosity, perhaps by organizing a 'donor's dinner', to which, in addition, potential sponsors could be invited as well. In connection with this, he noted that identifying new donors with relevant charitable interests and then researching their operating preferences was time consuming and needed access to specialised data sources. Accordingly he believed that the Society would need to engage a consultant to advise on the most effective schemes to propose to donors. Council agreed with both proposals.

## **6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

**6.1** Following the decision to restrict the Harold Jeffreys lecture to 'solid earth geophysics' topics (though not necessarily to the Earth), Professor Southwood rehearsed the case for naming the new 'named G lecture' in planetary sciences, solar physics and solar-terrestrial physics after Professor James Dungey. He observed that his work fundamentally had changed the way we think about the Sun-Earth connection and solar-planetary space physics in general. Dungey's model of the magnetosphere showed how reconnection controlled the interaction between solar wind and the magnetosphere, though wide-spread recognition came only decades after his seminal 1961 paper. The President-elect noted that Professor Dungey, a recipient of the Society's Gold Medal in 1990, would celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2013 when it was hoped the first of the new lecture series would be given. Notwithstanding the claims of other candidates Council agreed that it would be fitting and appropriate to name it the 'James Dungey Lecture'.

**6.2** Professor Southwood, Chair of the selection panel announced the results of the 2012 RAS Fellowships round for which there had been 43 applications viz. Leigh Fletcher (Oxford): to be held at University of Oxford on *Exploring the Mysteries of the Giant Planets in our Solar System and Beyond*; Benjamin Joachimi (Edinburgh): to be held at University of Edinburgh on *Advancing weak lensing and intrinsic galaxy alignment studies* and Nick Wright (Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, USA): to be held at University of Hertfordshire on *The Dynamics of Young Star Clusters*.

Professor Southwood noted that it had been most useful to have had the opinions on shortlisted candidates of a minimum of 3 independent referees. He added that while, in general, it was desirable for candidates to hold their fellowship in a different institution than the one at which they were currently based, there could be no objection providing there were clear and explicit reasons why such a course of action was not optimal. However a candidate who wished to be based at an institution

already hosting a RAS Fellow, as a condition of receiving the award, would be required to seek an alternative venue.

Council thanked Professor Southwood and all the other selectors and referees for giving up so much of their time (much of it over the Christmas break) to ensure the success of the scheme. For the next round, which the Treasurer confirmed would need to be restricted to one fellowship unless additional sponsorship could be found, it was agreed that a standing order similar to that for awards panels, describing procedures and criteria, should be produced for the guidance of selectors (whose names should be listed on the Society's web page).

**6.3** Professors Blundell and Spencer lead a discussion on the specifications required for enabling video-conferencing (V-C) between Burlington House and individuals at remote sites and the associated bandwidth this would require. It was agreed that, usually, off-site participants in Burlington House meetings would connect through their own computer, not in a V-C suite. Accordingly, for meetings of Council itself the options either were to install 2 retractable screens and a (directional?) camera or, possibly preferably, ensure all attendees in the Council Room were equipped with a SKYPE or similar enabled lap top computer. The latter practice would suffice for small V-C meetings in other parts of Burlington House. For larger meetings in the Lecture Theatre it was essential that remote participants were able to view presentations on the existing screens and hear both the podium speaker and, via a roving mike, members of the audience. Regarding bandwidth, it was likely that 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload would be required. Professors Blundell and Spencer agreed to seek costed proposals for the consideration of Council at the March meeting.

## **7. AGM**

**7.1** The 2012 Balloting List was approved viz

<b>1</b>	Barclay, Charles	A	Councillor
<b>2</b>	Daniels, Paul A.	A	Councillor
<b>3</b>	Davis, Richard	A	Councillor
<b>4</b>	Evans, Christopher	A	Councillor
<b>5</b>	Fraser, Helen Jane	A	Councillor
<b>6</b>	Griffin, Ian	A	Councillor
<b>7</b>	Penny, Alan John	A	Councillor
<b>8</b>	Smith, Michael David	A	Councillor
<b>9</b>	Burchell, Mark	G	Councillor
<b>10</b>	Crampin, Stuart	G	Councillor
<b>11</b>	Erdelyi, Robertus	G	Councillor
<b>12</b>	Holme, Richard	G	Councillor
<b>13</b>	Jones, Geraint	G	Councillor
<b>14</b>	Mackay, Duncan	G	Councillor
<b>15</b>	Peacock, Sheila	G	Councillor
<b>16</b>	Mitton, Simon	A	Vice-President
<b>17</b>	Parsons, Barry	G	Vice-President
<b>18</b>	Crawford, Ian	G	Secretary

**7.2** Council agreed that the following revision (in **bold**) to bye-law 33 should be recommended for approval to the May 2012 AGM:

*A candidate for Fellowship will be considered by Council for election if either of the following is satisfied:*

*(i). **The candidate has been proposed and recommended by a Fellow with personal knowledge of the candidate's suitability** ( replacing : 'The candidate has been proposed and recommended, according to Form No. 1 of the Appendix, by at least two Fellows or Associates, one of whom must certify personal knowledge of the candidate's suitability')*

*(ii). the candidate has submitted an application including a brief statement of his/her interest in astronomy or geophysics together with supporting information. Council will decide the applicant's suitability for election. On receipt by the Society all applications will be posted to the members part of the web site for a minimum period of two weeks to provide an opportunity for Fellows to draw the attention of Council to any relevant information about the candidate.*

The Executive Secretary explained that this change was necessary to give effect to Council's agreement that, to minimise the risk of error, the process for nominating a candidate for Fellowship from personal knowledge ('route 1') should require a proposer to give reasons for their support, not merely sign a form, and, at the same time, simplify the procedure by removing the need for a second proposer (which, in fact, had become something of a formality). He went on to say that the mention of 'Form no.1 of the Appendix' could be deleted on the grounds of redundancy. Finally, in response to a suggestion that the second paragraph of the bye-law should provide a more detailed explanation of what constituted 'supporting information' it was agreed to seek advice from the Chair of the Membership Committee.

Postscript: The Chair advised that the existing wording should be retained to obviate the requirement to revise the bye-law again should the 'supporting information' requirement change.

**7.3** The Executive Secretary drew attention to section 6 of the draft Annual Report which would be presented to the AGM in May highlighting the significant objectives which would be pursued in 2012 over and above more routine activities. He emphasised the promotion of the interests of the professional astronomical and geophysical communities in the run up to the next comprehensive spending review as well as education/ outreach and international activities. With some marginal changes this was approved by Council.

## **8. PUBLICATIONS**

**8.1** The Treasurer briefed Council on the status of the invitation to tender for the Society's journals publishing contract wef January 2013 which had been issued to 6 companies, chosen for their track-record and for not being associated with competitor journals viz Wiley-Blackwell; Springer; OUP; CUP; Nature and Taylor& Francis. He explained that testing the market in this way did not represent dissatisfaction with the current publishers, Wiley-Blackwell, with whose representatives he would be visiting China to promote *MNRAS* in late February. The sub-committee handling the exercise comprised himself, the 3 managing editors (with Professor Trampert, additionally, representing the interests of *GJI*'s co-publisher, the DGG), Professor Kurtz (representing Council), the Executive Secretary and the Head of the Editorial Office. All 6 publishers had attended a Q&A session before submitting an initial proposal which was asked to address the strategic issues outlined in the invitation to bid. Following this 2 or 3 would be shortlisted and, subject to a satisfactory outcome from site visits and detailed financial discussions, the Treasurer hoped to be able to present a firm recommendation to Council in May.

## 9. INTERNATIONAL

**9.1** Professor Lahav, Chair of the International Committee, outlined the proposed OAD (Office of Astronomy for Development of the IAU) –RAS Visiting Experts Scheme designed to aid capacity development in the developing world. He noted that the IAU strategic plan entitled “Astronomy for the Developing World” identified visiting scientist programmes as a key means to stimulate the development of astronomy in target regions. The visit by an expert to a developing country/region could have an impact on school level education, public understanding of science as well as and university level education and research. Additionally such a visit would broaden the perspectives of the UK scientists involved and encourage further collaboration. The OAD, it had been agreed, would administer the scheme, including the selection of UK and overseas partners, ensuring that the objectives of the visit (which would be a minimum of one week) were clear and realisable. The cost of the visit would be shared by the RAS-OAD grant (maximum £1,000) and the host institution (primarily in-country expenses and accommodation). The RAS would assist with the identification of experts, which could include post-doctoral students, as well as the examination (and publicising where appropriate) of visit reports.

Council warmly welcomed this initiative noting that were it to prove successful the initial £5,000 pa already agreed could be significantly increased. It was observed that payments to UK based individuals might be made directly to avoid bank transfer charges.

**9.2** The Treasurer reported on the attendance by himself and the Executive Secretary at the meeting of affiliated societies of the European Astronomical Society (EAS) in Switzerland where they had suggested that the authority of the EAS, which aspired to be the ‘voice of European astronomy’, would be enhanced if it had a structure for developing policy across a much wider membership throughout the continent, especially in those states in membership of the EU, since decision makers in Brussels, he felt, would welcome the opportunity to consult with such an organisation. That implied permanent staff, premises and more secure finances. This might be achieved by automatically enrolling all members of affiliated societies (for a modest subscription) and by ensuring that future *European Weeks of Astronomy and Space Science* (EWASS) were truly representative of the community (perhaps by not holding national meetings during the same year and, instead, encouraging their respective members to attend). The Council of the EAS had agreed to study these ideas and report at the Rome EWASS in July 2012.

**9.3** The Deputy Executive Secretary spoke to his paper which mapped the astronomy and geophysics ‘landscape’ in Europe covering EU institutions and initiatives, ESA, ESO and a number of pan-European organisations. He noted that some UK scientists had been very successful in bidding for (substantial) project funding from the European Research Council (though there was concern that the next ‘Framework Programme’ *Horizon 2020* might be biased towards innovation and growth rather than fundamental research). In addition to seeking to make the EAS a more effective organisation, the following actions were agreed:

- The RAS International Committee should include European issues within its remit
- The Society should continue to establish and develop links with key MEPs, officials in the Directorates-General and the UK Research Office (UKRO) in Brussels; MPs on the European Scrutiny Committee and relevant officers at the Parliamentary office of Science and Technology (POST)
- The Society should publicise EU funding opportunities (and highlight projects in which UK based scientists have been successful)

## 10. OTHER

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

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>
Brook	Paul
Cassatella	Pablo
Dawson	Daniel
Drake	Alyssa
Hawkins	Samuel
Jenkins	Luke
Kara	Erin
Lyman	Joseph
McDermott	Kathryn
Nickson	Elena
Osborn	Hugh
Paul	Jonathan
Power	Jessica
Powis	Jonathan
Pritchard	Jonathan
Rushby	Andrew
Sansom	Eleanor
van Niekerk	Annelize
Wilkins	Stephen
Abraham	Nicola
Armstrong	David
Arnold	Doug
Bajek	David
Blain	Andrew
Bond	Charlotte
Botti	Ismael
Bristow	Martyn
Brown	Gerard
Bryce	Casey
Bull	Philip
Campbell	Heather
Casewell	Sarah
Cegla	Heather
Chies Santos	Ana
Clark	Christopher
Clarke	Adam
Coulton	William
De Gaetano	Denise
Dobinson	Jack
Downey	Bill
Edmunds	William
Favier	Benjamin
Freij	Nabil

Gordon-States	Brian
Gordovskyy	Mykola
Halliday	Victoria
Hickinbottom	Scot
Hicks	Leon
Huckvale	Leo
Husband	Kate
James	Hugh
Kitchener	Ged
Laird	Alison
Lani	Caterina
Leinhardt	Zoë
Leistedt	Boris
Lux	Hanni
Lynch	Christopher
Mahtani	Deepak
Martinez	Luis
Mason	Jonathon
McCormick	Julie
Mohan	Mahesh
Murphy	Margaret
Murray	Sophie
O'Flannagain	Aidan
Pechhacker	Roman
Petrie	Elizabeth
Platten	Sarah
Preval	Simon
Reid	Hamish
Rodriguez	Bruno
Ryan	Jamie
Sanders	Jason
Satir	Onur
Scullion	Sian
Tatton	Benjamin
van Der Pyl	Nina
Vilela	Conrad
Vriend	Nathalie
Warren	Tristram
Zhang	Weijia

**10.2** The Minutes of the A&G meeting of 9 December 2011 & 13 January 2012 were approved

**10.3** It was agreed to approach Sir Arnold Wolfendale in connection with a potential nomination for a national honour

**10.4** Professor Edmunds, Chair of the Astronomical Heritage Committee (AHC) spoke to a paper prepared for his committee making the case for the development of a National Collections Policy for the conservation, recording, collecting and subsequent management of sites, materials and archives deemed to be important to the history of astronomy in the UK. Council agreed that this was an important issue and that funding and logistical support should be provided to the AHC to undertake a more detailed study covering:

1. The chronological range of the policy statement;
2. The identification of key thresholds in the development of the discipline;
3. The context(s) of those developments;
4. The range of evidence and criteria used in assessing importance;
5. Priorities for different kinds of evidence;
6. The potentials of different classes of evidence for research, teaching and wider communication;
7. The curatorial and related implications of any policy.

It was hoped that a report would be available for Council attention in December and that it would form the basis for a session at the 2013 NAM in St Andrews.

## **11. AOB**

**11.1** Council was informed that, subject to funding, the Royal Academy of Arts intended to erect in the courtyard of Burlington House a 3 metre high glass installation called *Tom Na H-iu designed to represent* the life and death of stars. This would be realized by a computer connected to the Super-Kamioka Neutrino Detection Experiment. It was agreed that this would be of great interest and that the Society should plan a specialist meeting involving Professor Suzuki, as well as a public lecture, about neutrino physics and astrophysics to coincide with the installation. The President added that this could be the first of many synergistic collaborations with the Royal Academy.

**11.2** Council was reminded that the Society's existing bursary scheme to support undergraduates considering research as a career to work in a research environment for part of the summer before their 3rd or 4th year had been supplemented, for the next 2 years, by a donation from the Nuffield Foundation.

Council rose at 1545

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R.L. Davies  
President

29 March 2012

*Action Points*

1. letter of thanks to the Minister for Science, David Willetts MP ( RM)
2. Invitation to Julian Huppert to the Astronomy Forum ( RM)
3. Informal soundings re Geophysics Forum ( DS and MK)
4. Changes to editorial honoraria ( MC)
5. RPI adjustments (MC)
6. Tomkins thesis prize and grants( MC and DE)
7. Invitation of Patricia Tomkins to the NAM ( DE)
8. Sponsors' Dinner & sponsorship consultancy proposal ( MC)
9. James Dungey Lecture ( DE)
10. SO for RAS Fellowships Panel ( DE)
11. Costed proposals for video-conferencing ( KB and RS)
12. Balloting list ( DE)
13. AGM ( DE)
14. Journals Publications contract ( MC)
15. Visiting Experts Scheme ( DE)
16. European Strategy ( OL and RM)
17. Sir Arnold Wolfendale (?)
18. National collections policy ( Chair of AHC)
19. SD /public lecture in connection with courtyard installation ( MB and IC)