



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Burlington House, Piccadilly
London W1J 0BQ, UK

T: 020 7734 4582/ 3307

F: 020 7494 0166

Info@ras.org.uk

www.ras.org.uk

Registered Charity 226545

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**MINUTES
COUNCIL MEETING
10th MAY 2013
AT 11:00 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM**

1. INTRODUCTION AND ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: Professor David Southwood, Professor Farideh Honary, Professor Barry Parsons, Professor Clive Tadhunter, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Ms Mandy Bailey, Professor Richard Davis, Mr Charles Barclay, Professor Donald Kurtz, Dr Sheila Peacock, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Dr Helen Fraser, Professor David Hughes, Professor Ralph Spencer, and Dr Geraint Jones

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms Pamela Mortimer (Executive Secretary) and Dr Robert Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary)

APOLOGIES: Dr Simon Mitton, Dr Andrew Norton, Professor Steve Miller

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 8th March 2013 were approved with minor changes.

3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President advised that a report of the External Geophysics Forum held on 15th March 2013 is on the RAS website. Duncan Wingham, CEO of NERC and a representative from HEFCE had attended and expressed their support for the initiative.

It was noted that the first Solid Earth Geophysics Forum was to be held on the 13th May 2013.

There was some discussion on proactively seeking Ministerial engagement. The President invited Council to suggest opportunities.

The President will attend the 150 year anniversary of the Astronomische Gesellschaft in late September, this presents an opportunity to continue to develop the relationship between the two societies as well as to extend fraternal greetings. Council were asked to consider if there were any specific issues that they would like the President to raise and to email him as required.

ACTION: All Council members

It was noted that the two events with MPs (referred to in the minutes of the March Council meeting) had both been rescheduled. The President will meet with Julian Huppert MP on the 10th June 2013 and Shabana Mahmood MP in September.

Dr Helen Fraser invited Council to listen to a radio broadcast of a discussion between John Butterworth and the UKIP representative on ERC and EU funding in Science. The potential impact on science funding were the UK position with respect to the European Union significantly altered was noted. It was agreed that Council should try to keep abreast of the range of political opinion on such matters.

4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

4.1 Audit Report

The Treasurer introduced this item by formally recording his thanks to John Struthers the RAS accountant who is due to retire in August 2013 after 14 years of service. Mr Struthers has managed the accounts very well over the years and enabled the society to have positive audit reports.

Council noted that no issues of any substance were identified by the auditors, Baker Tilly and agreed that the Treasurer should sign the letter of representation that will formalise the audit process. This was Baker Tilly's last audit of the Society accounts, the contract being awarded to Buzzacott from this financial year (pending approval at the AGM). Charles Barclay declared a conflict of interest as one of the Directors of Buzzacott is a personal friend. It was noted that he had not had any part in the deliberations in regard to appointing the new firm of accountants.

4.2 Minutes of the Finance Committee

Council noted the minutes of the Finance Committee that had met on April 24th 2013. It was agreed that the minutes would be amended slightly to state that Baker Tilly were allowed to compete in any future tendering exercise.

ACTION: Treasurer

It was noted that longer term financial planning would be a key discussion at the Strategic Planning meeting to be held on the 13th and 14th June 2013.

There was some discussion on the investment policy recently agreed by Council. In reviewing the text the Finance Committee had felt that it was not useful to identify tobacco as

a product in which we would not invest, as identifying one sector for exclusion went against the general idea of an approach simply consistent with Charity Commission guidelines.

Council agreed the following text for the Investment Policy:

“

1. Funds will be invested in stable, legally constituted bodies chosen to maximise the Society's investment income in the medium and long term.
2. No investment will be made in any financial concern whose activities in practice threaten the charitable purposes of the Society, namely the encouragement of Astronomy, Geophysics and related subjects.
3. No investment shall be made in a financial concern if there is evidence that they would be disapproved of by a majority of RAS members. ”

Council noted that deliberations on the investment policy had been instigated by a representation made by Peter Sinclair at the AGM in 2012 and subsequent correspondence during the year. They are grateful to Mr Sinclair for his engagement on this issue.

Council noted the management report from Newton Investment Management.

Council noted that Newton Investment Management are changing their interface with some investors, including the RAS, in the sense that the Society will no longer receive specific financial advice from them, merely management of our part of the fund. Council agreed that this was not in practice a significant change but wished to monitor Newton Investment Management more closely as a company. It was agreed that as a means of providing a more detailed comparison, the extra funds from the publishing contract will be managed by a separate company so that two forms of investment management might be compared.

ACTION: Treasurer and Accountant

4.3 RAS Risk Register

The Treasurer reminded Council that it is important that as Trustees they consider the risk register and confirm that it represents a good appreciation of the risks faced by the Society and that the actions proposed are appropriate.

The following specific points on the risk register were raised:

- Under Publications, Paying Tax on surpluses, the Treasurer reminded Council of the conditions pertaining to tax payments on publications especially the fact that charities are not completely exempt from tax but can claim exemption for certain items of income provided the funds are used for the charitable purposes.
- The preventative measures adopted to address the risk of Fellows misrepresenting the views of the Society needs to be explained more thoroughly.

The format of the risk register was discussed; it has been in place for many years and could be improved. It was agreed that a new format would be considered for implementation next year.

ACTION: Treasurer and Exec. Sec.

It was noted that many of the future risks will form the basis of a significant session during the Strategic Planning Meeting in June.

The Treasurer explained that in order to explore what modifications should be made to the Society's strategic development Council will be invited to engage in a process of Scenario Planning at the Away Day. This is a mechanism for exploring several of the main external factors that will face the RAS as the (always) unpredictable future unfolds.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Arrangements for AGM 2013

Council noted the arrangements for the 193rd Annual General Meeting of the Fellows and the following supporting papers:

a. Report (including the accounts) of the Trustees for 2012

It was noted that Council had provided comment on the draft annual report at the Council meeting in March 2013 and out of committee by email in April 2013. The Finance Committee approved the accounts at a meeting on the 24th April 2013 and it was posted on the RAS website on 26th April 2013.

b. Honorary Auditors report for 2012

It was noted that this report will be presented to the Fellowship at the AGM. It was posted on the RAS website on 26th April 2013.

Council discussed the proposed Management response to the issues raised in the Honorary Auditors report. It was agreed that again many of these issues will be raised as part of the deliberations at the Strategic Planning Meeting.

5.2 Progress report: Improvements to the Electronic Infrastructure

Professor Ralph Spencer, Chair of the IT and Communications Working Group, introduced the paper. There was discussion on various technical issues, such as server and desktop computer compatibility and concern over the procurement of WINDOWS 8 software. It was agreed that further work was required to bottom out the detail of the annual service and maintenance contract.

Council approved

- £13K for the purchase and installation of desktop computers in Burlington House
- £14 K for the purchase and installation of a new server and associated software and
- £7K annual expenditure for the service and maintenance contract (subject to further negotiation by the working group).

Council expressed their thanks to Professor Ralph Spencer for managing this process so effectively for the Society.

5.3 National Astronomy Meetings

a) 2014 arrangements

Council noted that preliminary yet significant progress had been made by Professor Bob Nichol and his team at the University of Portsmouth in making arrangements for the 2014 NAM that will be held on the 23rd to 26th June 2014. They have established a Scientific Organising Committee and a Local Organising Committee and have been engaging with the organisers for NAM 2012 and 2013 to learn lessons. A preliminary website (www.nam2014.org) is being created.

b) Discussion on time of year

Council discussed options for the time of year when NAM is held. This was previously in April (near Easter) and changed to July for 2013 and June for 2014 at the request of the organising bodies. It was noted that an advantage of a summer NAM was the opportunity to hold an additional day of Specialist meetings in April. It was agreed that these should be organised for 2013 and 2014.

ACTION: Senior Secretary

It was noted that consideration should be given to the timing of the UK Space Conference but that the conference should not be combined.

After much deliberation it was agreed that as a guideline the first two weeks in July should be earmarked for NAM. It was noted that this would clash with the Royal Society Summer Exhibition that is held in the first week of July.

It was noted that a key limitation is often locating a venue with a lecture theatre capable of accommodating plenary sessions with up to 1000 attendees. Given this, early soundings on availability in July for 2015 should be taken from potential venues, such as Manchester, UCL and Cambridge.

c) Proposal for 2015, EWASS proposal

It was noted that the European Astronomical Society are looking for a partner to host their European Week of Astronomy and Space Science in 2015. It was agreed that this would be a good thing to do, however we would need to be able to offer suitable venue.

5.4 RAS Communication Strategy

The President thanked Dr Robert Massey for his comprehensive paper on developing a formal RAS communications strategy. It was agreed that this paper would be considered fully at the Strategic Planning Meeting as it raises significant policy points to agree and resource implications that could be considered in the round, as part of the strategic financial planning work.

5.5 Membership of the Library Committee

Council approved the membership of the Library Committee as set out below, including renewing Dr Browning's appointment for a second term of two years, and appointing Dr Robert Smith and Miss Madeline Cox as new members.

Dr S. Mitton (Chair) (2014)

Dr P. Browning (2016)

Miss M. Cox (2016)

Mr M. Hurn (2014)

Dr R. Smith (2016)

With ex officio representation from:

Dr I. Crawford (Senior Secretary), Mrs J. Higham (RAS Librarian and Archivist), Ms P. Mortimer (Executive Secretary) and Professor M. Edmunds (Chair of the Heritage Committee).

Council and the Chair of the Library Committee formally recorded their appreciation for all the work done by Professor Ian Howarth and Mr Guy Hurst during their time on the Committee.

5.6 Committee on Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics, Terms of Reference

Council approved the following revised Terms of Reference for the Committee on Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics:

Committee on Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics (CDAG)

Membership:

A Fellow (Chair) and ca. 4 members, plus a Secretary

Term of Appointment:

Officers/Councillors serve for the duration of their office; others for 3 years, with the option of a further renewal of 3 years)

Terms of Reference/Responsibilities:

The objectives of the committee are:

- To support and represent the interests of under-represented groups in the RAS.
- To ensure that diversity issues are considered within the operations and working practices of the RAS and that best practise is implemented and promulgated.
- To advise Council on the formulation and implementation of strategies to assist in widening access to astronomy and geophysics by groups that are under-represented in these areas.

- To monitor and assist in issues of retention and career progression in astronomy and geophysics with the aim that all scientists should have equal career opportunities.
- To improve the diversity of the membership to better reflect the community as well as wider society.
- To liaise with groups with similar aims from other societies, such as the Institute of Physics Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Operation

At least yearly Meetings

Council noted the committee membership, previously approved in November 2012:

COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY IN ASTRONOMY AND GEOPHYSICS

Ms M. Bailey (2014)
 Professor V. Dhillon (2014)
 Dr A. Norton (2014)
 Dr S. Russell (2014) - Chair
 Dr N. Pressling (2012)
 Ex Officio:
 Dr L. Fletcher (Secretary)
 Dr R. Massey (Deputy Exec Sec)

POST COUNCIL NOTE: CDAG will seek another committee member to replace Nicole Pressling as her term has expired.

5.7a Membership of the Education Committee

Council approved the membership of the Education Committee as set out below:

Mr C. Barclay (Chair) (2016)
 Mr B. Sheen (2016)
 Mr D. Swinscoe (2015)
 Dr D. Waltham (2016)
 With ex officio representation from:

Dr A. Newsam (Liverpool Schools Telescope), Dr P. Roche (Faulkes Telescope), Dr J. Baruch (Bradford Telescope), Charles Tracey (IOP), Neville Hollingsworth (STFC), Dr Andrew Norton (Vice President), Mandy Bailey (A-Secretary), Pamela Mortimer (Executive Secretary), Dr R. Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary) and Claire Williams (Minutes Secretary).

Council and the Chair of the Education Committee formally recorded their thanks for all the work done by Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Clive Tadhunter and Dr James Wild during their time as representatives on the Committee.

5.7 b) Minutes of the Education Committee meeting

Council noted the minutes of the Education Committee held on 26th April 2013.

There was some discussion on the need for additional staff to support further education and outreach activities. The Treasurer suggested that a possible approach could be to employ staff on short term contracts (e.g. for 2 or 3 years) with the objective of the incumbent securing an income source to cover their salary costs. Potential sources could include Department for Education grants.

5.8 Membership of the 2014 Awards Committees

Council noted that the Chair of the Awards Committees change each year to one of the Vice Presidents, and the membership of the Committee change as needed to give a balanced panel, with members serving not more than three years. Membership of the Committees comprises the relevant RAS Secretary, either 'A' or 'G', plus six members, normally two of whom are Council members.

a. Astronomy Awards Committee

Council approved the membership of the 'A' Awards Committee for the 2014 round as set out below:

Dr S. Mitton (Chair)
Ms M. Bailey ('A' Secretary)
Professor D. Kurtz (Council Member)
Dr H. Fraser (Council Member)
Professor K. Blundell (previous Awards Committee member, third term)
Dr S. Bridle (previous Awards Committee member, second term)
Professor M. Ward (new member)
Professor M. Barlow (new member)

POST COUNCIL NOTE: Professor Barlow has declined to serve on this committee, so Professor Efstathiou, the reserve candidate, will be approached instead.

b. Geophysics Awards Committee

Council approved the membership of the 'G' Awards Committee for the 2014 round as set out below:

Professor B. Parsons (Chair)
Dr L. Fletcher ('G' Secretary)
Professor A. Fazakerley
Professor G. Houseman
Professor S. Miller (Council Member)
Dr S. Dalla
Dr K. Joy
Dr A. Ferreira

It was noted that the Patrick Moore Medal is considered by a subcommittee of the Education Committee and that deadlines for application and award differ from the 'A' and 'G' Awards

Committees. The panel normally consists of the Chair of the Education Committee, Vice President (A), a serving teacher and the Deputy Executive Secretary.

6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Science and Technology Select Committee Inquiry into the European and UK Space Agencies: RAS response

Council noted the RAS response to the Science and Technology Select Committee Inquiry into the European and UK Space Agencies that can be found at <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/WrittenEvidence.svc/EvidencePdf/587>

6.2 UCAS admission figures for astronomy and geophysics undergraduate programmes

It was noted that whilst it is difficult to disaggregate the different subject combinations, recruitment to astronomy courses in the general sense is increasing. In geophysics, recruitment is rising slowly, but from a low base.

There was some discussion about the unintended consequences of fiscal policy changes; the impact that student tuition fees are having on STEM course numbers. More students are opting for STEM courses however the fees charged do not cover the full cost of the courses rather the course costs are met by transferring money allocated to other courses with less expensive running costs where in many cases recruitment is declining. This will generate a significant financial challenge if this trend continues.

7. PUBLICATIONS

Council considered and noted the following four papers:

- MNRAS report
- GJI report
- A&G report
- Publications Management Committee Minutes (short version)

8 OTHER

8.1 Officers Reports

Council approved the following candidates for Fellowship:

Surname	First Name	Town/ University	Sponsor
Ahmed	Jakaria	Luton	Ian Crawford
Armson	Rosalind	Milton Keynes	Sheridan Williams

Balfour	Scott	Cardiff	A.P. Whitworth
Ball	Nigel A.	Nantwich	Yvonne Elsworth
Becker-Rohringer	Claudia	Coventry	Membership Committee
Brückner	David	St. John's College, Cambridge	Marcus Werner
Campante	Tiago	University of Birmingham	Prof. William Chaplin
Cyganowski	Claudia	University of St. Andrews	Andrew Collier Cameron
Dods	Joe	Leamington Spa	T.R. Marsh
Eagle	David	Higham Ferrers	Andrew R. Green
Grace	Philip	Colchester	Andrew Norton
Kiyani	Khurom	London	SL Chapman
Kolokythas	Konstantinos	Birmingham	Prof. T.J. Ponman
Ley	Robert	Luton	Andrew Norton
Lieu	Maggie	Coventry	Mengyao Wang
McLoughlin	Ev	Queen's University Belfast	Alan Fitzsimmons
Mulryne	David	Queen Mary, Univeristy of London	Joseph Elliston
Pehany	Spehro	Etobicoke, Canada	David Bruce Dickson
Pilkington	Nathan	Harrow	Nicholas Achilleos
Scott	Michael	Newmarket	Martin Rees
Smith	James	New Pelican, Canada	Russell Cannon

Sparrow	Giles	London	Prof. David W. Hughes
Williams	Daniel	Glasgow	Graham Woan
Woodland	Mark	Midsomer Norton	Andrew J. Norton
Zagkouris	Kimon	Oxford University	John Miller
Ambrosi	Richard	University of Leicester	Dr John Bridges
Ashcroft	Miles	Leicester	Prof. Mark R. Sims
Bastow	Ian	Imperial College London	K A Whaler
Beck	Peter	Knebworth	Martin J. Hardcastle
Bourne	Martin	University of Leicester	Dr Richard Alexander
Cave	John	Merseyside	Prof. M.F. Bode
Deller	Jakob	University of Kent	Mark Price
Dickson	Ewan	Glasgow	Graham Woan
Dobbs	Clare	University of Exeter	David Acreman
Drabek-Maunder	Emily	London	Tim Naylor
Elliman	Matthew	Brentwood	Roger G. Clowes
Goomanee	Salvish	University of London	Membership Committee
Hardy	Liam	Leicester	Prof. Vik Dhillon
Head	Jacob	Grimsby	John Lucey
Hill	Colin	Antrim	Prof. A. Fitzsimmons
Jacobsen	Idunn	MSSL	Mathew Page
Kawata	Daisuke	UCL	Mathew Page
Kelkar	Kshitija	University of Nottingham	Alfonso Aragon-Salamanca

Larkin	Adam	Keele	Mandy Bailey
Lazell	Matthew	University of Birmingham	Meliss Gillone
Mignani	Roberto	Guildford	Matthew Page
Peeters	Simon	University of Sussex	Peter Coles
Pickering	Juliet	Imperial College London	Dr Matthew Ruffoni
Rozek	Agata	University of Kent	Mark Price
Steele-Leith	Alastair	Northampton	Johanna F. Jarvis
Threlfall	James	University of St. Andrews	Alan Hood
Varsani	Ali	MSSL	Prof. Christopher J. Owen
Weijmans	Anne-Marie	Toronto ON	Vivienne Wild
Yamazaki	Hiro	Newcastle University	Prof. Peter Clarke

Council noted the list of grants awarded in 2012.

The popularity of RAS grants is increasing with applications made for grants totalling £122K against a normal annual expenditure of approximately £40K.

8.2 Patrick Moore Commemoration

Dr Helen Fraser advised that the Patrick Moore Commemoration will be held on 28th September 2013 in the National Space Centre (NSC) in Leicester and expressed thanks to Professor Martin Barstow for his help in getting the NSC involved. The event is aimed at adults and older children accompanied by adults. Tickets will be available to the members of the general public at a cost of £25 each.

The RAS is contributing £2.5K towards specific public outreach elements of the event.

The President declared a conflict of interest, as he is a Trustee of the National Space Centre.

It was noted that there will be an article on Sir Patrick Moore in the June edition of A&G.

8.3 Report from the RAS-supported young researchers to the Kavli Centre "Characterising Exoplanets" meeting

Council noted the above report.

8.4 2012 RAS Thesis Prizes

a) Michael Penston Thesis Prize 2012

Council noted that Dr Adam Ingram of the University of Durham is the winner of the Michael Penston Thesis Prize 2012. The runner-up is Dr Stephen Feeney of University College London.

Council discussed a suggestion made by the Awards panel that consideration should be given to having three prize-winners, ranked in the classical first, second, third. The cash award could be divided £750, £150, £100. The rationale being that the overall standard of submissions is very high. The Award of the Michael Penston Prize is an important boost to an early career astronomer. By allowing three winners 1 – 2 – 3 the Society would give wider publicity to the most outstanding doctoral candidates.

Council felt that Gold, Silver and Bronze may be a better approach. It was agreed that preliminary discussion should be held with Margaret Penston and that Council should consider again in October.

ACTION: Executive Secretary

b) Keith Runcorn Thesis Prize 2012

Council noted that Dr Sudipta Sarkar from the University of Southampton is the winner of the Keith Runcorn Thesis Prize and Dr Nicholas Johnson from the University of Edinburgh is the runner up.

Council noted that the Patricia Tomkins Prize for Instrumentation has just been advertised.

8.5 Council approved the Minutes of the A&G meetings of 12th October 2012 (C(2013/05)8.5a), 9th November 2012 (C(2013/05)8.5b), 14th December 2012 (C(2013/05)8.5c), 11th January 2013 (C(2013/05)8.5d), 8th February 2013 (C(2013/05)8.5e), 8th March 2013 (C(2013/05)8.5f) and 12th April 2013 (C(2013/05)8.5)

Council approved the minutes of the A&G meetings held over 2012.

It was noted that in future Council will be asked to approve these minutes sequentially throughout the year.

Council rose at 15:25.

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D. J. Southwood
President

05 July 2013