



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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RAS Council meeting at NAM 2014

1. INTRODUCTION

PRESENT

Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Barry Parsons, Professor Richard Davis, Dr Andrew Norton, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Helen Fraser, Mr Charlie Barclay, Dr Sarah Matthews and Professor Peter Coles , Professor Gillian Foulger, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor James Wild, Dr Martin Bureau, Dr Jane MacArthur.

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Professor Mike Cruise, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Dr Geraint Jones, Professor John Brown, Dr Sheila Peacock, Dr Simon Mitton and Dr. Stacey Habergham.

The President welcomed everyone to the Guildhall, Portsmouth where the Council meeting was being held during the National Astronomy Meeting 2014. He offered a very warm welcome to the new members of Council, Professor Mike Edmunds, Vice President (A), Professor James Wild, Vice President (G) and Councillors Dr Martin Bureau and Dr Jane MacArthur who were attending their first Council meeting.

2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

Council approved the minutes of the meeting of 9th May 2014.

The Executive Secretary updated Council on the following matters arising:

- A meeting with the Executive Secretary of the Geological Society to discuss how the RAS and the Geological Society could work more effectively together had been scheduled for August. An update will be provided in October.
- The transfer of Trusteeship of the Herschel House Trust to the Bath Preservation Trust was progressing. An update will be provided in October.
- Professor David Southwood continues to negotiate on proposals for better coordination on European policies and political issues with the European Astronomical Society. An update will be provided in October.

- The proposal for establishing a regional chapter for the Friends of the RAS has been put on hold as more time needed for discussions with interested parties. Felt may be an idea to set up programme of regional public lectures as way of gauging interest.

3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President advised that that there would be no business covered under this item as time was limited and the agenda for this meeting was full.

4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

The Treasurer was not in attendance and had sent his apologies. The Executive Secretary spoke on the recent confidential HR matters. It was noted that Anne Starrs would leave the Society on the 11th July 2014.

Council discussed various options for the daily management of the finance function within the Society, including possibly outsourcing the payroll and were reassured that all payments require authorisation by the Treasurer and the Executive Secretary, the pension revaluation and VAT returns have been submitted on schedule, back ups of the computer system (including financial information) were regularly made and that the Treasurer had drafted a financial procedures manual. It was noted that the finances of the Society remain in a sound condition.

It was noted that the next set of issues to be addressed included:

- Appointment of a replacement accountant, involving a higher salary and a more extensive interview process.
- Completion of the financial procedures manual.
- Discussions on the future of our defined benefit pension fund.

Dr Jane MacArthur volunteered to assist with the recruitment process.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: Michael Kyriakides, an accountant recommended by the external auditors, Buzzacott, joined the Society on the 14th July 2014 on a temporary basis. He will undertake the regular financial functions for the Society and provide advice on improvements to the current systems and working practices. John Struthers, previous RAS accountant, worked with Michael Kyriakides to familiarise him with the processes.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Review of NAM 2014

The President introduced discussion on this item by saying that NAM 2014 had been a thoroughly enjoyable week, the University of Portsmouth had done an excellent job and that their innovative programming (e.g. Comedy evening) had been successful and was very welcome.

Council members made the following observations:

- The poster sessions seemed marginalised, with limited space for display and no dedicated poster sessions in the programme.

- There was the inevitable clashing of parallel sessions.
- The outreach sessions had been particularly good.
- The social media had been very active, vibrant and dynamic.
- The cost of the NAM dinner had meant that younger people had not attended in great numbers.
- The Scientific Organising Committee had created a good programme in response to community demand for sessions but this may have led to some topics not being represented.
- The UK Planetary Forum are keen to collaborate on future NAMs.

There was some discussion on the cost of attendance at NAM in comparison to other conferences, e.g. MIST which is significantly less expensive and AAS meetings that are significantly more expensive.

It was suggested that future NAM organisers should offer a social event that the full demographic of the Conference can afford.

The President mentioned that he had been approached by a Fellow who was annoyed that contact details for attendees had not been provided on the NAM memory stick. It was noted that the University of Portsmouth had considered this request, including taking legal advice on data protection and access to personal information, and had decided not to provide this data. It was agreed that in future years the application paperwork should include a question on consent for release of their personal data.

It was agreed that there would be benefit in arranging 'how to do a good poster' session and that A&G should be used to promote these sessions and encourage entries. Poster winners should also be expected to work with the Editor of A&G to write a short article for the magazine.

5.2 NAM survey results

The President explained that the results from the NAM Questionnaire had given no strong steer as to what time of year would be best to host NAM although had been useful in identifying individuals who would be happy to help organise future NAMs. It was noted that 450 Fellows had responded out of 3497 Fellows who were emailed the questionnaire and that two responses had also been received by post.

Regarding dates, within the June/July period there had been a preference for the first week in July. This is in keeping with the policy previously agreed by Council in 2013. Following some discussion it was agreed that the timing is likely to be driven by the specific circumstances of the chosen host or venue.

It was noted that Officers would discuss options for NAM 2015 over the summer and provide an update in October.

5.3 Awards Committee membership

Council approved the membership of the 'A' Awards Committee and the 'G' Awards Committee for the 2015 round:

Astronomy Awards Committee

Professor A. Norton (Chair)
Dr M. Bailey ('A' Secretary)
Dr P. Murdin (Council Member)
Dr H. Fraser (Council Member)
Professor M. Ward (previous Awards Committee member, second time)
Professor D. Ward-Thompson (new Committee member)
Professor C. Crawford (new Committee member)
Professor I. Baraffe (new Committee member)

Geophysics Awards Committee

Professor G. Foulger (Chair)
Dr L. Fletcher ('G' Secretary)
Dr S. Matthews (Council Member)
Dr S. Peacock (Council Member)
Dr S. Dalla (previous Awards Committee member, third and final time)
Dr M. Freeman (previous Awards Committee member, second time)
Professor T. Lay (new Committee member)
Professor M. Fowler (new Committee member)

Council expressed their thanks to Professor Andrew Norton, Professor Gillian Foulger and Annette Webb for their work on the awards panels.

5.4 100th anniversary of election of women to RAS fellowship

On behalf of the Committee on Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics, (CDAG), Dr Mandy Bailey introduced her paper on the 100th anniversary of the election of women to the Fellowship of the RAS. January 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the election of women in their own right.

CDAG have proposed the following two projects to celebrate this historic event:

RAS Women Portraits

Commissioning a series of 20 portraits of female RAS Fellows with accompanying narrative on their careers. The portraits could be displayed in Burlington House during 2016 and possibly 'go on tour' to other exhibition sites. They could be digitalised and made available as an online educational resource. Option to also produce a book or booklet to accompany the portraits and describe the historical events in more detail.

Re-enacting the election

Commissioning an historical acting company to write a bespoke play that tells the story from the first proposal of Mary Pogson in 1886 to the re-enacting the 1916 election. The play could take place during the ordinary meeting of the January Specialist Discussion meeting.

The play could be recorded and made available as an educational resource.

Dr Bailey explained that CDAG were seeking agreement in principle from Council so that further investigation of the projects can be made.

Council were supportive in principal of both projects although stressed that the Society needs to ensure that it is presenting a modern message as well as celebrating the history.

It was agreed that CDAG should work up both proposals and thereafter present detailed proposals to Council for approval.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: The next meeting of CDAG is on 21st November 2014, detailed proposals will be presented to Council in December 2014.

6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Public dialogues: Space weather and leap seconds

The Deputy Executive Secretary advised that there were two consultation exercises ('public dialogues') running that relate to the research interests of astronomers and geophysicists and invited members of Council to respond as individuals. The consultations can be found at <http://leapseconds.co.uk/> and <http://talkspaceweather.com>

7. PUBLICATIONS

7.1 Minutes of the MNRAS Editorial board meeting

Council noted the minutes of the MNRAS board meeting held on the 25th March, 2014.

7.2 Appointment to the MNRAS editorial board

In May 2014 Council approved the appointment of an additional editor to the MNRAS Editorial Board. Council approved the appointment of Professor Joop Schaye (Leiden) to the new position, and he will join the MNRAS editorial board in October 2014.

8. OTHER

8.1 Officers Reports.

Council approved the following as Fellows:

Surname	First Name	Town/ University	Sponsor
Angus	Charlotte	Sheffield	Elizabeth Stanway
Attfield	Paul	Verwood	Membership Committee
Broadbent	Stephen	Portsmouth	Graham Bryant
Brown	Gregory	Eythorne	Elizabeth Stanway
Carter	Philip	Leamington Spa	Hugh Osborn
Clarricoats	Peter	Elmswell	Richard Hills
Cooper	Darryl	Huntingdon	Andrew Norton
Davies	Damon	Edinburgh	Robert Bingham
Frost	Daniel	University of Leeds	William Brown

Hadley	Lee	Tonbridge	Andrew Norton
Hernandez		University of	
Santisteban	Juan Venancio	Southampton	P.A. Charles
Holmes	Jonathan	Reading	John Miller
		Liverpool John Moores	
Hyder	David	University	Mandy Bailey
Kanani	Sheila	Lytham	Robert Massey
		University of St.	
Lee	Eon Jui	Andrews	Dr Vasilis Archontis
Lindsay	Sam	Wembley	Mahesh Mohan
McDonnell	Ciaran	Co. Dublin	Barbara Hassall
		University of	
Middleton	Hannah	Birmingham	Dr Ilya Mandel
Morice-Atkinson	Xan	Southsea	Claudia Maraston
Robertson	Andrew	Durham	Miss Helen L. Johnson
Rogus	Victor	Jadwin, Missouri, USA	Membership Committee
Sanderson	Helen	Wirral	Andrew Norton
Shetye	Juie	Armagh	M.E. Bailey
Swan	Anthony	Golborne	Andrew Norton
Tucker-Hood	Kimberley	University of Reading	Matthew Owens

8.2 Minutes of the A&G meetings of 9th May 2014

Council approved the minutes of the A&G meetings of the 9th May 2014.

Council rose at 13:45.