



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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MINUTES COUNCIL MEETING 14th MARCH 2014

1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

It was noted that the President had been delayed as he had a medical appointment. Council agreed that the President Elect should chair the meeting until the President arrived. Agenda items would be taken out of order as required. It was noted that Professor Steve Miller would also arrive late (as he was attending a funeral.)

PRESENT: Professor David Southwood, Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Ms Mandy Bailey, Professor Barry Parsons, Professor Gillian Foulger, Professor Richard Davis, Mr Charles Barclay, Dr Andrew Norton, Professor Donald Kurtz, Dr Sheila Peacock, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Helen Fraser, Dr Geraint Jones, Dr Sarah Matthews, Professor Peter Coles, Professor John Brown and Professor Steve Miller.

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

APOLOGIES: Dr Simon Mitton

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 14th February 2014 were approved with minor amendments.

3. MATTERS ARISING

It was agreed that matters arising were covered elsewhere in the agenda.

4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

a. Telescopes for schools (session at parliament)

The President, (together with a number of Council members, Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary) had attended the 'Inspiring Young People with Science: Telescopes for Schools' Event in the House of Commons on the 25th February. It was a well attended and encouraging event with speeches from Andrew Miller MP, Lord Rees, Professor Mike Bode representing the Liverpool John Moores University and Dr Becki Parker, the first winner of the RAS Patrick Moore Medal.

b. Research Council Budget delayed announcement

The President noted that respective Astronomy and Geophysics fora had been rescheduled to accommodate discussion on the Research Council budget announcement that has been delayed. The Astronomy Forum will be held on April 8th and the external Geophysics forum will be held on May 2nd.

c. Royal Society meeting on the International Council for Science (ICSU)

The President advised that ICSU is undergoing an independent review, led by Sir Peter Knight. He had attended a review group, set up by the Royal Society, to assist in these deliberations.

The President reminded Council that the Society actively participates in IAU and URSI and that members routinely attend assemblies of several of the IUGG associations (IAGA, IASPEI, IAG, IAVCEI and maybe others) as well as the space research organisation, COSPAR (itself technically an ICSU interdisciplinary committee). There is a specialist regard for the role of URSI in representing frequency allocations for science at the World Radio Conference, for COSPAR's role in interfacing to UNCOPUOS and the United Nations itself regarding space science and international cooperation, as well as for IAU's work in the developing world and in many other areas of international cooperation but these things would seem likely to happen independent of the existence of ICSU. There is little appreciation in the Society of ICSU or what it delivers therefore a review as being undertaken by the Royal Society seems timely.

d. Government response to House of Commons Report on UKSA/ESA

This was covered under agenda item 7.1

e. Visit with Anne Glover EU Commission chief scientist

The President and Deputy Executive Secretary plan to visit Anne Glover, the EU Commission Chief Scientist, to discuss options for ensuring astronomy matters are considered cohesively in Europe including the DAG-RAS proposal for national learned societies interfacing to European level societies.

f. The Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering

The President encouraged Council to propose nominations for the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering, a copy of the commissioning email had been provided. He reminded Council that the Liverpool telescope had won the Queens Anniversary prize for further and Higher education in 2006.

Council discussed many possible worthy nominations, including the GAIA spacecraft, the ALMA collaboration and the ATSR (Along Track Scanning Radiometer) instruments that produce infrared images of the earth, the data from which is useful for scientific studies of the land surface, atmosphere, clouds, oceans and the cryosphere.

ACTION: ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS

5. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

a. RAS Operations plan

The Treasurer introduced the RAS Operations Plan that provides a mechanism for the Council to understand the short-term financial development of the Society over the next four or five years. He thanked Dr Sheila Peacock for her useful analysis on an earlier draft of the plan and advised that a second version had been issued in response to those comments.

Council discussed the plan and agreed the following:

- The operations plan is a working document for Council's information and should not become a public document.
- It should be extended by a year to show likely financial position after the contract with OUP comes to an end.
- Open Access publishing could impact on predicted income streams and should be carefully monitored.

Council approved the Operations plan.

b. RAS Risk register

The Treasurer introduced the draft RAS risk register and reminded Council that an important duty of Trustees is horizon scanning for risks that could cause the Society serious problems. Once identified, mitigating actions should be identified and implemented where possible.

It was noted that the register had been updated to improve the transparency of the language and that in future years an additional measure of change in risk assessment would be included.

Council considered the risk register analysing its completeness, realism and proposed mitigation strategies. Dr Sheila Peacock identified a low probability high impact risk that may materialise when the Society becomes more involved in outreach and education activities, working with children and vulnerable adults, for example as the Diversity Ambassador and AAGG projects are taken forward. It was agreed that this risk should be added to the register and that potential mitigation measures include ensuring that DBS screening is carried out on the Deputy Exec Sec and the Education, Outreach and Diversity Officer, in first instance and others as identified whilst the policies start to be implemented.

It was noted that the risk register will be revised following the discussion at Council and reissued for out of committee approval in April.

It was noted that the risk register will also go to the Finance Committee in April.

ACTION: TREASURER

[POST COUNCIL NOTE: the Finance Committee has been rescheduled to the 7th May 2014.]

c. Membership Subscriptions 2015

It was noted that discussion on membership subscriptions had been postponed at the meeting in February and as a number of issues had been raised and the Treasurer had not been in attendance. A question had been raised about the cost of changing the direct debit instructions for member's subscriptions. Analysis has shown there was no cost to the Society for this except staff time that was negligible.

It was noted that for many years it has been the practice to uplift the membership subscriptions in line with inflation. Council agreed to inflate the membership subscriptions by 2.0% (relating to the inflation figure calculated by the Consumers Price Index during the period December 2012 to December 2013.)

Council approved the following rates for proposal at the AGM in May.

	2014	2015 Proposed
Rate 1	£28	£28
Rate 2	£70	£71
Rate 3	£106	£108

The reduced rates for the first year of membership would be:

Rate 1R	£1	£1
Rate 2R	£46	£46
Rate 3R	£70	£71

d. Financial and Legal State of the Society

The Treasurer introduced a table summarising the Financial and Legal State of the Society and highlighted that the Society has agreed to allow OUP to place our journals in a 3rd party online facility called Deep Dyve. This will allow members of the public to read (but not save or print) any journal article at a charge of £4.99 for 24 hour access.

It was agreed that this is an interesting development in the spirit of giving the public greater access to publicly funded research.

Council noted the financial and legal state of the Society as at March 14th 2014.

e. Update on the 2014 grants round

The Treasurer advised that 85 applications had been received in the current grants round, requesting a total of £135,880. Of these applications 40 were for Summer Bursaries (maximum grant award of £1200.). There were six requests to support meetings outside the normal RAS meetings programme, many of these at venues outside London. Since it has long been a Council policy to encourage out of town meetings and because there is a real difficulty tensioning a single student visit to a conference against a meeting with 50-100 participants he proposed that meeting proposals should be taken outside the grants line and funded separately, the grants panel should be empowered to scrutinise and make awards to them in line with the previously agreed policy of awarding £2k per one day meeting and £1k per additional day. This proposal was agreed with an annual budget of £15K a year; thereafter Council permission will be sought.

ACTION: TREASURER

e. Membership of the Finance Committee

Council agreed that Professor John Zarnecki should be extended for a second three year term on the finance committee and that Mr. Jose Gonzalves should be appointed for a three year term to the Finance Committee.

The Treasurer and Council would like to formally thank Dr Nigel Burnham for serving two terms on the Finance Committee and for his relentless enthusiasm and help, providing significant and essential input throughout.

6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

6.1 First draft of Annual report

The Executive Secretary introduced the first draft of the text for the 2013 Annual report and advised that the process of generating the accounts is ongoing and that the annual audit process with the new auditors Buzzacott was due to start on the 17th March.

It was noted that:

- whilst the format is similar to that used in previous years, the report has been shortened by referring to information that will be made available on the RAS website.
- The Charity Commission sets specific guidelines on what information has to be included in an annual Trustees Report and that the Society's report meets those criteria and in some instances provides more detail.

The following key additions were agreed:

- text on future plans should include a substantive paragraph on AAGG
- more detail should be provided on diversity matters (in 2013 and planned for the future)
- a reiteration of text on the Society continuing to deliver its regular set of high quality outputs should be included
- the change in membership criteria, agreed in 2013 to be implemented in 2014 should be mentioned.
- The Fellowship should be advised that a full review of the byelaws will be carried out during 2014.
- A number of typographical and minor changes will be incorporated into a further draft.

It was noted that the text of the annual report will be revised following the discussion at Council and reissued for out of committee approval in April.

ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Executive Secretary advised Council that Dr Silvia Zane had kindly agreed to act as Honorary auditor for 2013. She and Dr, David Waltham will be meeting with staff in the following weeks.

6.2 Review of Byelaws

Dr Paul Murdin advised Council that he had been working with the Treasurer and Executive Secretary to review the byelaws. After initial analysis this team had agreed that as substantial review is required this work will take place over the summer/autumn with the aim of seeking Council agreement in late 2014/early 2015 to present to the Fellowship for approval at the AGM in May 2015. It was agreed that legal advice should be sought as his process progresses. This plan should be announced at the AGM 2014.

ACTION: DR. PAUL MURDIN/TREASURER/EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

6.3 European matters

The President introduced this item which followed up on the paper he had provided to Council in February. In summary, the aim is to initially set up coordination activity between DAG and RAS and then to invite other societies to join in by nominating a point of contact (PoC) on each national society's Council. Whilst the PoC's need to be on the respective Councils the coordinator should not necessarily be a Council member in any of the participating national society and should take on the task in the long term in an executive capacity. The President believes that in the long term a professional solution would be required but that requirement (level and number of hours) was not clear; he felt it was likely to require a part-time position. Following discussion with and a proposal from the President of DAG, the President volunteered to take on the coordinating function in the interim (in an honorary capacity) to get things set up and assess the likely work load for a coordinator. It was noted that the president of DAG was also due to meet with his Council and discuss this matter and that a teleconference was planned in the following week to report to each other the respective Councils' views and to agree next steps.

Council agreed that the president should proceed on the lines outlined and that he would report in May.

ACTION: PRESIDENT

6.4 Heritage Committee Minutes

Council noted the minutes of the RAS Heritage Committee held on 12 December 2013.

6.5 Troughton Transit Telescope

Council discussed options for the future of the Troughton Transit telescope that had been on loan to the Science Museum but that they wish to return.

It was noted that:

- the telescope had previously been valued at £60,000.
- The telescope has been offered for loan to the Royal Observatory Edinburgh, the Herschel House Museum, Bedford Museum, the Royal Observatory Greenwich, the Museum for the History of Science Oxford and the Museum of London, but none have offered to take it.
- Except where required for a particular exhibition, museums are becoming increasingly unwilling to have items on loan. This is particularly so where an item is large, not on display, and has insurance and conservation cost implications.

It was suggested that consideration could be given to finding local connections to the telescope, such as Dolland and Atchison who produced the optics, perhaps they would like to display the telescope.

Council agreed that the Troughton Transit telescope exemplified a larger problem in that the Society does not have a policy on how it manages or makes best use of its heritage assets (including possibly as part of an exhibition celebrating the 200 year anniversary of the Society.) It was agreed that the Treasurer would invite a couple of Councillors and the Chair of the Heritage Committee to work together to develop a policy.

ACTION: TREASURER

It was agreed that if required the Society should pay for Commercial storage for the Troughton Transit Telescope.

6.6 Daphne Jackson Fellowship

Council noted that applications from two strong candidates for the fellowship have been received by the Daphne Jackson Trust. It was agreed that a sub set of the RAS Research Fellowship panel (consisting of the President elect and two Councillors) would scrutinise these two applications. Clarity on the selection process thereafter would be sought from the Daphne Jackson Trust.

[POST COUNCIL NOTE: the Daphne Jackson Trust have confirmed that they want the RAS scrutiny panel to select their preferred candidate.]

6.7 NAM timing – consultation with Fellowship

Dr Mandy Bailey introduced this item and thanked Council for their previous comments that had been reflected in the final draft of the questionnaire on timing of the National Astronomy Meeting (NAM). Council approved the questionnaire that will be posted on the RAS website. It will be promoted in a short note accompanying the 2014 elections paperwork that will be sent to the full Fellowship, as such all members will have an opportunity to participate. If they do not have access to a computer to complete the questionnaire they can feed their views in directly by contacting the Deputy Executive Secretary.

6.8 Solid Earth Geophysics Representation

Council discussed the proposal presented by Professor Barry Parsons, Vice President (G) to offer reduced subscriptions to those who are Fellows of both the Royal Astronomical Society and the Geological Society.

Council agreed that the President and Executive Secretary should open discussions with the Geological Society on this and report back to Council in May

ACTION: PRESIDENT / EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

It was proposed that it would be useful to have a glossy flyer to promote the benefits of joining the RAS to prospective G members.

ACTION: DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

6.9 Astonishing Astronomy and Glorious Geophysics

Professor Steve Miller reminded Council to provide their suggestions for potential stakeholder to the Executive.

ACTION: ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Treasurer reiterated his concern that the Society plans for possible ramifications on AAGG such as the need for additional types of membership, for example under 18 membership, teacher membership etc.

Council thanked Professor Miller for all his work on developing the AAGG project to date and requested that he continue to lead this project after this term in office as a Councillor ceased in May2013; he was happy to do so.

6.10 Herschel Museum of Astronomy

The Executive Secretary introduced this item and reminded Council that the Society is a Trustee of the Herschel House Trust (HHT) that is responsible for the Herschel Museum of Astronomy (the Astronomers' House) in Bath. Other trustees of HHT are the Royal Society, the University of Bath, the Bath Preservation Trust and the William Herschel Society.

In response to a governance review Bath Preservation Trust (BPT) have offered to take on full responsibility for the governance of the Herschel Museum of Astronomy by becoming the sole trustee of the Herschel House Trust.

Council has been provided with a letter from BPT seeking agreement to this approach and a letter from the William Herschel Society who are not supportive of the museum being transferred to BPT as the sole Trustee.

Council deliberated on the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed approach and agreed that in principle they were content with the proposal that BPT become the sole trustee. The Society should respond to BPT saying that they are in agreement in principle subject to their being a simple way to make the changes.

ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

It was noted that the expected next steps thereafter would be for BPT to proceed to establish the legal background and how the change might be made and would return to the other HHT trustees with a proposal, including any request for funding. Council would be asked to approve any associated costs to enable these arrangements when know/if required.

7. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Science and Technology Select Committee inquiry into the Work of the European and UK Space Agencies: Government Response

Council noted the paper.

8. OTHER

8.1 Officers Reports

Council approved the following for Fellowship:

Surname	First Name	Town/ University	Sponsor
Ashall	Christopher	Liverpool John Moores University	Prof. M.F. Bode
Barnsley	Robert	Liverpool John Moores University	Iain Steele
Bourke	Tyler	Jodrell Bank Observatory	Professor Derek Ward-Thompson
Burns	David	Manchester	Philippa Browning
Chan	Jacky	Preston	David Ronald Cole
Collins	John	Welwyn Garden City	Martin Hardcastle
Desoisa	Kevin	Gibraltar	Membership Committee
Donaldson Hanna	Kerri	University of Oxford	Neil Bowles
Earp	Samuel	Preston	Victor Debattista
Greis	Stephanie	Leamington Spa	Elizabeth Stanway
Holgate	Jeffrey	West Lothian	Paul A. Campbell
Hourihane	Anna	University of Cambridge	Gerard Gilmore
Hunt	Gregory	University of Leicester	Prof. SWH Cowley
Kautzmann	Frank	Springboro, Ohio, USA	Shannon Bohle

Key	James	Bournemouth	Victor Debattista
Li	Zhenhong	University of Glasgow	Barry Parsons
Mac Niocaill	Conall	University of Oxford	Barry Parsons
Magueijo	Joao	Imperial College	Prof. Alan Heavens
Polito	Vanessa	St. Edmund's College, Cambridge	Dr H.E. Mason
Riaz	Basmah	University of Hertfordshire	Mark Thompson
Sheikh	Shamim Akhtar	Dagenham	G.Q.G Stanley
Sridhar	Sarrvesh	Kapteyn Astronomical Institute, Groningen	John McKean
Stimson	Rebecca	March	Karl Webb
Tarduno	John	University of Rochester, USA	Richard Holme
Thomas	Megan	The University of Liverpool	Andrew Biggin
Tiley	Alfred	Oxford	Martin G. Bureau
Vickers	Doris	Vienna	Membership Committee
Wainwright	Milton	University of Sheffield	Professor N.C. Wickramasinghe
Watts	Christopher	Bristol	Andrew Norton
Wright	Timothy	University of Leeds	Barry Parsons
Youd	William	Exeter	D.G. Strange

8.2 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held in February 2014

Council approved the minutes

9. AOB

- Professor Andrew Norton opened a short discussion on possible RAS engagement in efforts supporting the International Year of Light and Light-based technologies that is happening in 2015. It was agreed that the Society should be involved. The Deputy

Executive Secretary advised that he is in discussion with the Institute of Physics on this.

- Council would like to formally express their thanks to Colin Foster, the Facilities Manager, who is leaving in April, for all his work over the years.

Council rose at 15.40

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Professor D.J. Southwood

9th May 2014