



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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## MINUTES COUNCIL MEETING 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2014

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

**PRESENT:** Professor David Southwood, Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Ms Mandy Bailey, Professor Barry Parsons, Professor Richard Davis, Dr Andrew Norton, Dr Sheila Peacock, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Helen Fraser, Dr Geraint Jones, Dr Sarah Matthews and Professor Peter Coles, Dr Simon Mitton

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

### APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Mr Charlie Barclay, Professor John Brown, Professor Steve Miller, Professor Don Kurtz, Professor Gillian Foulger and Professor Yvonne Elsworth.

### 2. MINUTES

Council approved the minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> March with minor changes.

### 3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President noted that two significant areas would be discussed under separate agenda items, Herschel House Museum (5.2) and European Matters (5.3). He advised that the recent meetings of the Astronomy Forum and the External Geophysics Forum had been successful. It was agreed that there would be benefit in the Chairs of these fora and of the Solid Earth Geophysics Forum to discuss format and share best practice.

The President and Executive Secretary had just come from a positive meeting with the Executive Secretary of the Geological Society where it was agreed that the two Societies would work together on possible shared membership options and closer working.

**ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

The President had met with Professor Mike Hapgood, Chair of MIST Council, who had provided reassurance that the MIST community were not considering withdrawing their attendance and meeting schedule at NAM.

#### **4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS**

The main item of business under this item was the production of the 2013 Trustees Report including the annual accounts. Council were reminded that the Society's financial year runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> and that the Society is required to present accounts to the Charity Commission within ten months of the financial year end. By the end of February most of the invoices and credits have been made and the audit is scheduled for March leading to the presentation of accounts for approval by Council and to inform the AGM in May.

It was noted that despite significant problems in the preparation of the accounts this year, that the deadlines have been met, the audit has been successful and the Society has a strong financial position.

It was noted that the text of the annual report had been considered by Council on a number of occasions however there had been significant problems in the generation of the annual accounts that are included within the Annual Report. This resulted in a three week delay in the process, with the external audit opinion being received on the 6<sup>th</sup> May and consideration of the accounts being undertaken by the Finance Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> May; as such Council members had received the final draft on the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> May.

Helen Haddock, from Buzzacott, the external auditors presented an overview of the accounts and the audit. The Society has received a clean and unqualified audit opinion. There was discussion on the detail of the accounts and problems encountered during the preparation of the accounts; the latter is not recorded in these minutes following best practice in managing Human Resource matters. The Treasurer and the Executive Secretary have kept the President and President-Elect informed of the evolving issues and the possibility of extra expenditure during these proceedings.

It was noted that this had been the first year with the auditors, Buzzacott, and that they had been unfailingly helpful and efficient. Having a new set of professionals analysing the accounts had naturally led to changes in style and presentation, the majority of which will be taken on board next year in preparation for some of the requirements that will become law in two years' time with the introduction of the new Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP.)

Council approved the Annual Report including the Society accounts for submission to the Charity Commissioners and the additional expenditure that had been incurred in the generation of the accounts this year.

The Executive Secretary outlined the internal HR/management actions that will be taken forward in response to the problems that had arisen this year. Council discussed and agreed a recovery plan that included providing significant delegated authority to the Treasurer and Executive Secretary to resolve the matter for the longer term. It was agreed that Council would receive regular confidential updates on progress.

#### **ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

In other business, the Treasurer advised that as both Monthly Notices and Geophysical Journal International continue to receive and publish more papers each year there is an impact on both the Editorial Board and on the editorial team at

Burlington House. To mitigate these pressures the manager of the Editorial Office, Dr Kim Clube, had reviewed the current loadings and suggested that one additional member for the MNRAS editorial board is necessary together with a small increase in the availability of one of the assistant editors from 40% to 50%. It was noted that the total cost would be approximately £9k annually and that this proposed increase had been supported by the Publications Management Committee. Council approved these proposals.

Council also noted the Operations Plan and the financial and legal status of the Society, it was noted that the total assets at Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 were £18,331,462 and not £17,758,274 as previously reported. These changes were related to the difficulties encountered in producing the accounts this year.

## **5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **5.1 Arrangements for AGM 2014**

Council were reminded of the arrangements for the 194<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Fellows that was scheduled to follow the Council meeting. It was noted that the AGM would be followed by a 30 minute session to launch 'Astonishing Astronomy and Glorious Astrophysics' and that the Presidential address (by Professor Southwood) has been postponed until October 2014.

It was noted that the Honorary Auditors report for 2013 would be presented at the AGM. There was some discussion on a comment made in their report on how well the Society is meeting its charitable objectives. It was agreed that there was no need to challenge the opinion of the honorary auditors as it is their objective opinion, however it was agreed that the Treasurer would provide further information on how the Society meets its charitable objectives in his report to the AGM.

### **5.2 Herschel House Trust**

Council were reminded that at the March 2014 Council meeting they had agreed in principle with the proposal for Bath Preservation Trust (BPT) to become the sole trustee of the Herschel House Trust and take on full responsibility for the governance of the Herschel Museum of Astronomy.

The President provided an update on his meetings with Tom Boden from BPT and with Professor Francis Ring from the William Herschel Society. He reported that he had been encouraged by the management proposals made by BPT. Professor Ring has been concerned that the future of the HHT might be in jeopardy if it were in the hands of only one trustee, the President had discussed this matter at some length with Professor Ring and reassured him that the charitable objectives of the HHT will remain the same and BPT will be held accountable to deliver against these objectives.

In a letter, dated 28<sup>th</sup> April 2014, addressed to the President, BPT had asked the Society to consider making a five figure donation towards paying outstanding bills for essential capital works at the Herschel Museum of Astronomy, the governance review, legal fees to enable a change of governance and other transfer of responsibility costs.

Council voted and agreed to this proposal. It was agreed that the Executive Secretary should reply on behalf of the Society saying that the RAS is willing to consider a grant in the order of the contribution indicated subject to confirmation that other

trustees would also be making contributions and that a programme for the transfer was agreed.

### 5.3 European Matters

The President reminded Council of the background to and key elements within the joint proposal formulated between the Deutsches Astronomisches Gesellschaft (DAG) and the Society to formulate and provide coordinated political advice by national astronomical societies at the highest European level.

Background:

- The proposal originated in discussions held between RAS and DAG at a joint scientific meeting in Manchester in April 2012.
- The President addressed the DAG 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting in September 2013.
- RAS and DAG introduced the proposal at the business meeting of the European Astronomical Society in January 2014.
- The proposal will be discussed in more detail at the EWASS meeting in July 2014.

Key elements:

- There will be a single coordinator appointed by the participating national astronomy societies.
- Each society will nominate a point of contact (PoC) on their council, board or governing body for European affairs and the coordinator would communicate with societies through the PoC.
- Most consultation with PoC's would be electronic. A regular reporting meeting where the coordinator would report to national societies would be held under aegis of the European Astronomical Society (EAS) most likely at the EAS Business meeting or EWASS.

The President advised that he had made progress in taking this matter forward over the last few months:

- In late March, he and the Deputy Executive Secretary had met ESA and EC officials, most importantly Anne Glover, Chief Scientist attached to Commission President Barroso's office. She had welcomed the initiative.
- A potential candidate to act as the coordinator had been informally approached and had appeared suitable and interested in the post, although no firm commitment had been offered or made.
- In late April, the President had discussed the proposal with Professor Serena Viti who is the EAS secretary, she was supportive of the proposal and will brief the EAS President on progress to date and agreed that DAG and RAS should attend the EAS Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> July (held during EWASS) to present the proposal and to formally request that the activity be placed under EAS aegis.

It was noted that whilst Professor David Southwood will hand over the Presidency of the Society later on that day he would continue to act as the Society's interlocutor on European matters until a more permanent solution is agreed. He will provide a paper for consideration by Council at the October meeting.

**ACTION: PROFESSOR DAVID SOUTHWOOD (outgoing President)**

#### 5.4 Daphne Jackson Fellowship, (President-elect)

The President-elect advised that a sub group of the RAS Fellowship Selection Committee (Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Andrew Norton and Professor Richard Davies) had considered the two candidates nominated for the RAS sponsored Daphne Jackson Fellowship and agreed that the preferred candidate is Dr Maria Marcha. It was noted that STFC have decided to sponsor the other candidate, Dr Matt North.

The Daphne Jackson Trust had informed the Society that STFC have decided, in consultation with their Women in Particle Physics Group that all Daphne Jackson Fellowships that they sponsor from now on will be for duration of three years rather than two. The rationale is that the three years part time Fellowship gives a far higher likelihood of success post Fellowship. The Daphne Jackson Trust had subsequently asked if the Society would consider providing for the same arrangement.

The Selection Committee, Treasurer and Executive recommended that Council should also consider providing funding for a three year part time Fellowship as it will be more beneficial to the recipient and that it is essential that the STFC and RAS sponsorship arrangements are aligned.

Dr Helen Fraser explained that she was aware of occasions where the part time nature of the Daphne Jackson Fellowship had not been appreciated by the mentors APPROVED by the Trust and emphasised that deliverables should be set relevant to a part time position. This is often because the research drivers of the mentor (who is usually appointed by the HOST institution) may not actually match the needs of the fellow. It was agreed that the Society should not be a silent partner and should offer support to our chosen candidate, and their HOST institution mentor.

Council agreed that the Society will sponsor a three year part time Daphne Jackson Fellowships rather than the previous arrangement that was for two years. The Executive Secretary would inform the Daphne Jackson Trust.

#### **ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

#### 5.5 Improvements to the RAS reception

The Executive Secretary briefly introduced a proposal to create an improved Reception by installing a new window in the wall separating the entrance lobby/hallway from the administration office/reception, to replace the current audio visual system, to give a better degree of direct contact with visitors.

It was noted that two quotes had been sought from architects for designing and overseeing the work (£25/26K) and that the next stage would be for architect to seek quotes from contractors. It was agreed that the Executive and Treasurer would continue to work on this proposal.

Improvements to the boilers in Burlington House are also required. It was agreed that the Executive would provide an options analysis for consideration in the first instance by the Treasurer.

#### 5.6 Friends of the RAS

Council supported the idea of establishing regional chapters of the Friends of the RAS and agreed that further consideration should be given to carrying out a regional trial.

It was noted that the Office, Awards and Buildings Manager would meet with individuals interested in establishing a West Country chapter on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014 to discuss options.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: The Office, Awards and Buildings Manager met with the interested parties from the West Country; however it appears that they would prefer a solution that sees the RAS providing lecturers to their local societies. Whilst this is an initiative that can be supported through the Societies' commitment to partake in regional outreach activities it would not bolster Friends of the RAS numbers or serve as the establishment of a Regional Chapter.

## 5.7 Committee on Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics

Dr Lyndsay Fletcher provided an oral update on the Committee on Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics that had met on the previous day, Thurs 8<sup>th</sup> May. She provided an update on four key areas:

- Council had previously approved the PhD student career intentions survey that was conducted with the Institute of Physics, the survey had been completed and data was being analysed. 900 students had responded and approximately 300 had been identified themselves as studying subjects relevant to the Society.
- The RAS web based diversity questionnaire would be issued in late June for completion by the end of July.
- The Diversity lunch at NAM is scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014.
- The 100 year anniversary of women being admitted to the Society in their own right is in January 2016. CDAG will present a paper on how the Society should mark this occasion to Council for approval.

Council were reminded that Sheila Kanani, the new Outreach, Education and Diversity Officer will be starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014.

## 6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The agenda items 6.1 Scottish Independence and Science and 6.2 Consultation on Proposals for Long-Term Capital Investment in Science & Research were taken together.

The President thanked the Deputy Executive Secretary for these two useful papers but that unfortunately there was little time to discuss to any great extent.

It was agreed that Council members should provide comments to the Deputy Executive Secretary who should draft a response on agenda item 6.2.

### **ACTION: DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

## 7. PUBLICATIONS

Council noted the Managing editor's report for MNRAS and the Managing editor's report for GJI.

## 8. OTHER

### 8.1 Officers Reports

Council approved the following candidates proposed for Fellowship:

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Town/ University</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Accurso	Gioacchino	London	Ian Howarth
Alexander	Roy	Gateshead	Graham Darke
Alzate	Nathalia	Aberystwyth	Huw Morgan
Argyle	Joshua	University of St. Andrews	Vivienne Wild
Baker	Mark	Adstock	Professor Nalin Chandra Wickramasinghe
Beckmann	Ricarda	Oxford	Jocelyn Bell Burnell
Bowyer	Jude	London	Prof Andrew H Jaffe
Bresnahan	David	Lancaster	D Ward-Thompson
Buchan	Stewart	University of Southampton	Ian McHardy
Caleo	Andrea	Oxford	Steven Balbus
Clay	Scott	Brighton	Stephen Wilkins
Connolly	Samuel	University of Southampton	Prof. Ian McHardy
Dagleish	Hannah	St. Andrews	E.R. Priest
Daneekar	Ashkbiz	Macquarie University	Membership Committee
Davies	Christopher	Leeds	Richard Holme
Dimitriadis	Georgios	University of Southampton	Dr Mark Sullivan
Dodd	Matthew	Barnstaple	I.A. Crawford
Doody	Stephen	Newcastle Under Lyme	R.C. Maddison
Farrell	Enda	Milton Keynes	Andrew Norton
Frohmaier	Christopher	University of Southampton	Dr Mark Sullivan
Garth	Thomas	University of Liverpool	Richard Holme
Gray	Steven	Broxham	Membership Committee
Green	James	Kirkliston	Membership Committee

Hansen	Norman	London	W.B. Somerville
Henry	Conal	London	Francisco Diego
Hurst	David	Poynton	Andrew Norton
Jenkins	Jennifer	Cambridge	Richard Holme
Keith	Michael	University of Manchester	Ian Browne
Kennedy	Rebecca	Beeston	Michael Merrifield
Magadi	Ranganath	University of Nottingham	Bruno Rodriguez Del Pino
Margalef Bentabol	Berta	The University of Nottingham	Alfonso Aragon-Salamanca
Mather	Kenneth	Derby	C.T. Pillinger
Mercieca	Kayron	Harbour Views	Steven James Rose
Morello	Giuseppe	London	Giovanna Tinetti
Mound	Jonathan	University of Leeds	Richard Holme
Nunn	Ceri	Cambridge	Elizabeth Day
Pascoe	David	University of Warwick	Prof. V. Nakariakov
Quinn	Terry	London	Membership Committee
Redman	Matthew	National University of Ireland Galway	Serena Viti
Richens	Andrew	Spalding	Andrew Norton
Rost	Sebastian	Leeds	Richard Holme
Rumble	Damian	Exeter	J. Hatchell
Sagnières	Luc	Imperial College London	Joshua Chadney
Samuels	Toby	Edinburgh	Dr Claire Cousins
Sheridan	Simon	Biggleswade	Ian Wright
Simmons	Brooke	Oxford	C.J. Lintott
Smethurst	Rebecca	Chorley	C.J. Lintott

Smith	Rebecca	Leeds	Philip Livermore
Solomon	Adam	Cambridge	John D. Barrow
Srisawat	Chaichalit	Brighton	Ilian Iliev
Stewart	Mark	Bosham	Dr Francisco Diego
Sullivan	David	University of Sussex	Ilian Iliev
Sylvest	Matthew	Fayetteville, AR, USA	V.K. Pearson
Taylor	David	Whimble	Philip Livermore
Veitch	John	University of Birmingham	Dr Matthew Pitkin
Walker	Andrew	Preston	Daniel Brown
Zhang	Keke	University of Exeter	Richard Holme
Zhao	Dongyao	The University of Nottingham	Alfonso Aragon-Salamanca

## 8.2 2013 RAS Thesis Prizes

A paper on the 2013 RAS Thesis Prizes had been tabled. Professor Andrew Norton introduced this item and advised that 5 high quality theses had been received and a selection panel had agreed the winners. Council approved the winners:

### **RAS Keith Runcorn Thesis Prize for 2013**

Dr Richard Walters (University of Leeds)

Runner up: Dr Alex Chartier (Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory)

### **RAS Michael Penston Thesis Prize for 2013**

Dr Joseph Elliston (University of Sussex)

Runner up: Dr Emma Chapman (University College London)

It was noted that the number of submissions was quite low and that it should receive more active publicity at NAM and elsewhere.

## 8.3 Minutes of the A&G meetings of March & April 2014

The Minutes of the A&G meetings of March & April 2014 were approved by Council.

## 9. AOB

The outgoing President, Professor David Southwood, thanked Council for working with him over the time he had been President. He had very much enjoyed his time as President and had found the work of Council to be very interesting and diverse, adjectives that he felt he could also apply to the Councillors, who he admired for being very committed to the Science of the Society and he was proud to have been part of the RAS Council.

Council rose at 15:10.

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Professor M. Barstow

26<sup>th</sup> June 2014