



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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C(2014/12)/2.2

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING TO REVIEW RAS BYELAWS AND ROYAL CHARTER

**14th NOVEMBER 2014
AT 11.00 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM**

PRESENT

Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor Gillian Foulger, Professor James Wild, Professor Andrew Norton, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Helen Fraser, Mr Charlie Barclay, Dr Sarah Matthews, Professor Martin Bureau, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Sheila Peacock, Dr Simon Mitton and Dr Stacey Habergham

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Professor John Brown, Professor Richard Davis and Dr Geraint Jones.

1. Introduction

The President welcomed everyone to the special Council meeting to review the RAS byelaws; he thanked the drafting group (Professor Paul Murdin, the Treasurer and Executive Secretary) for their hard work on this important project. He explained that Council would be asked to review every byelaw sequentially; Council would not be asked to wordsmith in any detail at this meeting rather make comments and proposals for the drafting group to incorporate into a further draft that would be considered by Council in December.

Before starting their analysis of the byelaws, Council took an AOB item out of order. The Treasurer reminded Council that it had delegated the responsibility of appraising grants proposals for education and outreach projects to the Education and Outreach Committee. The Education and Outreach Committee has an annual budget of £5K for such projects. A sub group had considered the grants proposals and recommended support for a number of projects totalling £12,340. Council agreed to fund the additional £7,340.

The following proposals were agreed:

£3,750	Charlie Barclay on behalf of Gregory Watson: Deep Space High – Earth Watch - <i>A series of 10 audio features to promote astronomy amongst children aged 6 to 12</i>
£2,250	Paul Denton, BGS: Earthquake Myths and Legends, developing a storytelling educational activity
£4,840	Prof. Paul Roche, Univ. of South Wales: AstroCymru+: Community outreach via 3D astronomy and space shows

2. Byelaw and Royal Charter Review

The Treasurer explained the background to and approach the drafting group had taken in the byelaw review. In summary:

- a “de minimis” approach had been adopted;
- the revised byelaws now include important issues such as the Society’s our status as a charity, the role of trustees and the president-elect;
- changes have been made in response to several discussions at Council in 2013 and 2014;
- the role of the Executive Secretary has been clarified and defined in a more realistic, effective and modern way and the term Executive Director proposed to reflect the role and responsibilities of the position.

The drafting group had taken advise from Keith Lawrey, the Learned Societies’ Liaison Officer for the Foundation for Science and technology, this organisation has much experience in working with learned Societies as they review their governance documents and has good links to the Privy Council. Mr. Lawrey had advised that the Society does not need to take formal legal advice on the byelaw changes as he considers the changes to be low risk.

The drafting group had identified that the Royal Charter may need to be amended to include the position of President-elect as an Officer and Council member.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: Mr. Lawrey discussed whether or not the Charter should be amended to include the position of President-elect as an Officer and Council member with an Officer from the Privy Council and confirmed that there is no need to make a change to the Charter, it will be sufficient to introduce the changes to the Byelaws. He also confirmed that there is no need to seek approval from the Privy Council on the proposed byelaw changes.

3. Review of Byelaws

Substantive comments on the revised byelaws had been received in advance from Dr Sheila Peacock; the Treasurer thanked her for her very helpful input.

Council considered each byelaw sequentially. The paper supporting agenda item 5.1 for the December 2014 Council meeting provides the latest draft of the revised byelaws incorporating Council’s comments from the October meeting.

4. Timetable

Council agreed the following timetable:

- Extraordinary Council meeting November 2014 with the bye-law revisions as the sole agenda item.
- Revision by the working group through December.
- Any outstanding issues are addressed at the December Council meeting.
- A final draft will be agreed out of Committee in January 2015.
- Proposals for the revised byelaws issued to the Fellowship in February 2015, inviting comments by the first week in March.
- The byelaw working group will hold a couple of open door/drop in sessions (e.g. 2 hours in late Feb, 2 hours in early March) for the Fellowship to discuss the proposed changes in more detail.
- If issues raised by the Fellowship are significant and require further revisions then a revised paper could be issued to the Fellowship in April.
- The length of AGM could be extended by up to an hour to allow discussion on the byelaws.

5. Any other business.

- The President mentioned that a process to seek and scrutinise nominations for IAU membership had been agreed and was underway.
- The Deputy Executive Secretary advised that the process to refresh the RAS Points of Contact arrangements was underway.

Council rose at 15:02

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Professor M. Barstow

12th December 2014