



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING JULY 2015

**Held during the National Astronomy Meeting,
Venue Cymru, Llandudno**

12 noon to 13:30

1. ATTENDANCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

PRESENT

Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Mike Cruise, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor Christine Peirce, Professor James Wild, Professor Paul Murdin, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Joanna Barstow, Dr Caitriona Jackman, Dr Stephen Serjeant, Professor Don Kurtz; Professor John Zarnecki
Dr Sara Russell (attending the meeting via Skype.)

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms Pamela Mortimer (Executive Director)

APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Dr Simon Mitton, Professor Ian Crawford, Professor Mike Bode, Professor John Brown, Professor Martin Bureau and Dr Stacey Habergham and Dr Robert Massey who were hosting the Careers lunch.

INTRODUCTION

The President extended a warm welcome to Venue Cymru, Llandudno and welcomed new members of Council to their first meeting:

- Professor John Zarnecki (President-Elect)
- Professor Don Kurtz (Vice-President 'A')
- Professor Christine Peirce (Vice-President 'G')
- Dr Caitriona Jackman (Councillor)
- Dr Stephen Serjeant Councillor)
- Dr Joanna Barstow (Councillor)
- Dr Sarah Russell (Councillor)

The Executive Director invited all members of Council to complete the Conflict of Interest and the Trustee declaration forms and advised that induction training would be arranged for new Council Members.

2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 8th May 2015 were approved. The following in regards to matters arising were noted:

- The President had written to the member of the Finance Committee who had raised reservations over how the financial business of the Society was being managed, to summarise the discussion and decisions taken at Council in May 2015; no response had been received. (May 2015 minutes, paragraph 4.2)
- An RAS 200: History Working Group had been established. This will be considered under agenda item 3 (May 2015 minutes, Presidents Business)
- The Treasurer planned to meet with Professor Phil Charles, Chair of the International Committee during NAM, to discuss options for international engagement to be approved by Council. (May 2015 minutes, paragraph 5.8)
- Arrangements for future NAMs will be considered under agenda items 5.2 (May 2015 minutes, paragraph 5.9)
- Dr Jo Barstow (Oxford) and Dr Stephen Serjeant (OU) have joined the RAS 200 steering group (May 2015 minutes, paragraph 6.1)

3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President updated Council on proposals for books to celebrate the bicentenary. A preliminary teleconference had been held on the 23rd June 2015. Three options were discussed:

- a) Scholarly bicentenary book to be published through a professional publishing house.
- b) Popular 'Coffee table' book celebrating the History of the RAS through objects and images. This book could be presented to every Fellow in 2020 as a commemoration of the bicentenary.
- c) Commission a cartoonist/illustrator to work alongside a writer and generate a children's book on the history of Astronomy and Geophysics using the RAS history as a backdrop (via Presidents etc.), this could tell the story up to modern day astronomy and end with Philae (who is already displayed in cartoon form.) The children's book could be either a commercial entity (in partnership with the publisher) or self (funded) published. If the former, the book could be sold 2016/2017/2018,(market at Christmas) and then order a further print run that the Society could buy and make freely available to schools (particularly those with a lower socio economic status) at Christmas 2019 in celebration of 2020 as an education, diversity and outreach tool.

Council were supportive in principal of all three options and will be provided with more detailed proposals in October 2015.

The President advised Council that he and the Treasurer would attend the General Assembly of the IAU to be held in Honolulu in August 2015. Council noted the considerable concern over the IAU management and planning for this event, for example papers were yet to be provided for any of the formal meetings. Council agreed that the President and Treasurer had their collective mandate to act on behalf of the Society at the event.

4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

The Treasurer reminded Council that he had been preparing to place £2.5 M of the existing reserves (much earmarked for RAS 200: Sky and Earth expenditure in coming years) in investment banks offering rates of one or one and a half percent over various short term deposit periods. He advised that whilst an investment company had been selected and due diligence checks carried out as the current financial climate has shown considerable volatility since the start of the year, triggered mainly by the Euro/Greek financial crisis, that we should not transfer cash at this point.

Council agreed with this decision to defer movement of funds to interest bearing accounts until markets have stabilised.

The Treasurer advised that Prof Jorge Renner of Bochum had agreed to take over as Editor in Chief of GJI. The Treasurer advised that he would seek formal agreement from Deutsche Geophysikalische Gesellschaft for this appointment and then an announcement would be made.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The announcement has been postponed at Professor Renner's request as he would like to announce the appointment of his Deputy at the same time.]

Council noted and expressed their gratitude to Dr Claire Foullon who had stood down from the Finance Committee after three years in post as result of her move to Exeter. They approved the appointment of Dr Nigel Berman to the Finance Committee for a three year term. Dr Berman is a finance professional working in the City he is long time Fellow of the Society and served two previous terms on the Committee.

4. Trustees of the RAS Pension Fund.

Council noted that Prof Barstow has been a Trustee of the Pension Fund for several years and that his present position as President requires that he step down and a replacement sought. Council agreed to the appointment of Ms Jane MacArthur, a Council member with financial qualifications as a trustee to serve for the next three years, during which time the Society will consider options in regards to winding up the defined benefits pension and providing a comparable auto enrolment complaint pension scheme to the current stakeholder scheme.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Review of NAM 2015

Council agreed that the National Astronomy Meeting 2015 had been a success and that the Venue Cymru (VC) provided a service at least equal to that provided for the previous NAM held there in 2011. The following key points were made:

- VC had provided excellent support throughout the Conference
- There had been some problems with (speed of) internet access; VC had responded promptly to make arrangements to improve the service
- The poster session had been very successful and a separate session should be included in all future NAM programmes if possible. It was noted that there were less posters this year over previous years (110 in Llandudno, 180 in Portsmouth)
- That registration arrangement had been different from previous years where attendees were required to pay before the full programme was available. Whilst regrettable VC had been very accommodating in allowing people to cancel after the programme was issued.
- The one page personalised programme was very useful and should be used in future NAMs.
- The merits of generating a consistent registration platform that could be reused each year were considered.

Council thanked Dr Mandy Bailey and Professor Mike Edmunds for their superb efforts in managing the Local Organisation and the Scientific Organising Committee.

5.2 Arrangements for NAM 2016, 2017 and 2018

Proposal for NAM 2016

The Executive Director reminded Council that whilst many universities had been approached to host future NAMs few were forthcoming and no volunteer obtained to host NAM 2016. Therefore an Umbrella Conference Organising entity (De Veres) had been approached and had proposed that the conference facilities at Nottingham University met the NAM requirements and were available the week of the 27th June to the 1st July 2016.

The Executive Director and Treasurer had visited the facilities on 16th June 2015. The conference facilities at Nottingham are of a high standard. The plenary lecture hall can seat over 500 and there are three more lecture halls seating 100, 200 and 300 in close proximity. There are also many breakout rooms some seating 150 people as well as smaller rooms for press and administrative functions. An attractive feature of the Jubilee Campus is the availability of on-site accommodation at reasonable rates.

Central facilities include foyer space for registration, coffee breaks and poster sessions as well as dining facilities for lunch time and evening meals. The conference dinner could be held in the main eating area.

Council noted the following:

- Estimates of the cost of the conference based on two scenarios, both where STFC support is continued with either the Society being able to reclaim VAT or not.
- As the initial enquiry by the RAS was made to the Umbrella Conference Organising entity and not through the Physics and Astronomy Department, contact was made with Professor Salamanca-Aragon.
- The Physics and Astronomy Department seems unlikely to offer to “host” NAM in the usual way, which implies taking both organisational charge and financial

responsibility. They may however agree to form the Scientific Organising Committee and supply student volunteers to assist with the running of NAM.

- It is very likely that Burlington House will have to provide considerable management support as it has in the interactions with Venue Cymru at an extra expenditure of about £4k.

Council noted that it is increasingly difficult to organise NAM along the traditional lines with a university “hosting” the event and taking financial and management responsibility and that as a consequence the Society will have to allocate additional funds to underpin NAM. These costs are likely to be in the region of £45K in the case where STFC support continues or £70k in the case that this does not happen, compared to the £15k currently provided.)

Council briefly discussed the wisdom of running NAM annually. It was agreed that as the Society has the funds to cover the potential increased NAM costs and NAM is a major component in the Society’s interaction with Fellows, especially for engagement with PhD students and that the activity is firmly in line with our charitable objectives that annual NAMs should be continued.

Council noted that plans were being developed for NAM 2017, that would be held in Hull (probably during the week of the 2nd to 7th July) and for 2018 that will be held in London organised by UCL.

There was some discussion on the merits of hosting NAM at the same location each year and conversely the merits of NAM being hosted at different venues across the UK. The Executive Director advised that the American Astronomical Society has a multiyear contract with a US wide hotel/conference provider allowing similar format meetings in different locations across the US and agreed that she would explore a similar option for NAMs.

ACTION: Executive Director

5.3 Diversity, Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy

Professor Jim Wild VP (G) and Board level diversity champion introduced the Diversity, Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy. Council discussed a few drafting points and approved the policy subject to the required wordsmithing. The final version can be found at

<https://www.ras.org.uk/ras-policy/2697-diversity-equality-and-inclusion-policy>

5.4 Minutes of the CDAG meeting held on 11th May 2015

Council noted the minutes of the CDAG meeting held on 11th May 2015. Council discussed the provision of payments for child minders; it was noted that IOP has a system to support this and that CDAG should be asked to consider the requirements and make a recommendation to Council.

5.5 Update on RAS 100 years of women

Dr Sarah Russell updated Council on plans to celebrate the centenary anniversary of women Fellows in the Society. The 100 years of women sub-committee met on the 24th April 2015 and the RAS CDAG met on the 11th May 2015.

In summary:

a) **Photography exhibition:**

- Council agree that CDAG should choose a photographer willing to create the photography exhibition and should compile a list of names of women Fellows for the photos.
- The intention is for photographs to be taken during the daytime of the November 2015 specialist meeting.
- Council agreed that a digital poster board (approximate cost of £5000) should be purchased to display the pictures at conferences and events at Burlington House and elsewhere.
- It was noted that Dr Sheila Kanani, the Educations, Outreach and Diversity Officer will establish and manage an unofficial social media “selfie” competition.

[POST COUNCIL NOTE: Following out of committee correspondence over the summer, Council agreed CDAG’s recommendation that Maria Evans be commissioned to take the photographs.]

b) **Re-enactment of first signing**

Council had previously agreed the proposal to host a theatre re-enactment of the first female Fellow signing at a cost of £2550. The play will follow the specialist discussion meeting in January 2016.

c) **A&G articles**

It was agreed that special pages are dedicated to women in the Society in each issue in 2016. These articles will also be available to view together online as a special edition.

Dr Sara Russell (Chair of CDAG) and Dr Sue Bowler (Editor of A&G) are developing this option and will consult the A&G Editorial Board. They will provide an update to Council in October.

Council considered a proposal that the Society sponsorship Ada Lovelace Day that is on the 18th October 2016. Ada Lovelace Day (<http://findingada.com>) is an international celebration of the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering, and medicine.

It was agreed that further information on sponsorship options would be provided to Council out of committee over the summer.

[POST COUNCIL NOTE: Following out of committee correspondence over the summer, Council agreed that the Society should be the Platinum sponsor for Ada Lovelace day at a cost of £7500.]

5.6 Infrastructure update

The Executive Director updated Council on recent and planned infrastructure improvements:

- The Reception window had been installed and has greatly improved the welcome to Fellows and visitors at Burlington House.
- A modern telephone system has been installed.
- The new boiler would be installed over the summer.
- The door entry system, CCTV provision and intruder alarm would be replaced in the next few months.

Council noted that there had been significant improvement in the management of the building and facilities over the last year and asked that their thanks be passed onto Annette Webb, Office, Events and Building Manager who has led on these issues.

6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Council noted the [RAS response to the BIS consultation on postgraduate funding](https://www.ras.org.uk/images/stories/ras_pdfs/Policy%20Papers/BIS_consultation_on_postgraduate_funding.pdf).

(https://www.ras.org.uk/images/stories/ras_pdfs/Policy%20Papers/BIS_consultation_on_postgraduate_funding.pdf)

7. PUBLICATIONS

Council noted the Minutes of the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (MNRAS) Editorial Board Meeting held on Friday 20th March, 2015

8. OTHER

8.1 Approval of Candidates for Fellowship

Council approved the following candidates for Fellowship:

Surname	First Name	Town/University	Sponsor
Ahmad	Fraz	London	I A Crawford
Alharthi	Noura	Nottingham	Martin Barstow
Bakx	Tom	Cardiff	Matthew W L Smith
Bentley	Sarah	Biggleswade	Clare Watt
Binks	Alexander	Staffordshire	Pierre Maxted
Bullard	Mark	London	Michael Dworetzky
Cleary	Michael	East Sussex	Dr Fransico Diego
Collingwood	Steven	Kent	Nicholas Howes
Cooke	Peter	Oxon	Mandy Bailey
Davies	Claire	St Andrews	Scott Gregory
Frew	David J	Pok Fu Lam Rd	Quintin Parker

Gezahegn	Berhe	Bristol	Keith Smith
Glass	David	Windermere	Donald Kurtz
Glasse	John	London	Roger G Clowes
Hickey	James	Bristol	Keith Smith
Hollands	Mark	Coventry	Thomas Richard Marsh
Hooper	Andrew	Leeds	Barry Parsons
Idrees	Muhammad	West Sussex	Membership Committee
Ioppolo	Sergio	Milton Keynes	Dr H J Fraser
			Roy
Jenkins	Sophie	Tyne and Wear	Alexander
Jones	Sadie	Southampton	Malcom Coe
Ktorides	William	Surrey	Daniel Brown
Le Cras	Claire	Portsmouth	Robert Crittenden
Macartney	Adrienne	Glasgow	Martin Hendry
Mooley	Kunal	Oxford	Jocelyn Bell Burnell
Nightingale	James	Nottingham	Simon Due
Papaleo	Elvira	Aberdeen	David Cornwell
Paris	Joseph	Cambridge	Gordon Ogilive
Parker	Amy	Bristol	Keith Smith
Rae	Richard	Windermere	Donald Kurtz
Scudder	Jillian	Brighton	Stephen Wilkins
Seabroke	George	Surrey	Daisuke Kawata
Shah	Jay	London	Elizabeth Day
Sharma	Pranav	Mau Road	Membership Committee
Stevenson	Simon		Alberto Vecchio
Tisdale	Richard	Shrewsbury	Peter Williamson
Warren	Joshua	Oxford	Marin Bureau
Wilson	David	Coventry	E R Stanway
Yeung	Wai Wing	Cardiff	Dr Enzo Pascale
Zou	Siwei	Bristol	Rhys Morris

8.2 Minutes of the A&G meetings

Council noted the minutes of the A&G meetings of 8th May 2014.

9. AOB

There were no matters arising under any other business.

Council rose at 13:25

MBarstow

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Professor M. Barstow

9th October 2015