



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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Registered Charity 226545

## MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING 13 MAY 2016

### 1. PRESENT

Professor Martin Barstow, Professor John Zarnecki, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor James Wild, Professor Don Kurtz, Professor Christine Pierce, , Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Simon Mitton, Professor Martin Bureau, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Stacey Habergham, Professor Mike Bode, Dr Sarah Matthews, Dr Stephen Serjeant

### IN ATTENDANCE:

- Ms Pamela Mortimer (Executive Director) and Dr Robert Massey (Deputy Executive Director)
- Helen Haddock from Buzzacott was in attendance for agenda item 4.1

### APOLOGIES

- Dr Sara Russel had sent apologies as she would be late and would attend the Council meeting after lunch.
- Apologies had been received from Professor John Brown and Dr Caitriona Jackman.

### 2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016 were approved with minor changes.

Council noted the very sad news about the death of radio astronomer Professor Richard Davis OBE who had been a member of Council from 2012 to 2015 and was on the ballot list for the 2016/2017 Council elections.

The Executive Director updated Council on the decision taken following an electronic vote out of committee on how the Society should manage the election process given this unforeseen circumstance. It was noted that there were five Councillor positions available, four for the standard term of three years and one for a two year term; the elected candidate with the lowest number of votes would take up the two year term. Council had agreed that voting and scrutiny of the ballot would continue as normal and that in the event that Professor Davis was allocated enough votes to be appointed as a Councillor then the candidate who would have been in sixth position will be allocated the Councillor position for the two year

term. The four other individuals in positions one to five will be allocated the three year terms. It was noted that all candidates had been informed of this before the ballot closed.

### **3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

The President expressed his thanks to everyone on Council for their support during the eleven years that he has served on Council in various roles and noted that he had enjoyed serving and was very pleased to have seen enormous change in the outlook of the Society during that time, from an inward looking organisation to one with more outward engagement.

He briefly discussed overall scientific and REC funding (the latter of which received a flat cash funding settlement), whilst overall scientific funding was increasing with new initiatives such as the Grand Challenge Fund providing possible sources of funds there is restrictions on use by the requirement for an element of the work carried out to be ODA compliant and so perhaps difficult to get a hold of. He encouraged scientists to look positively at the ODA compatibility rules and to consider how A&G projects could access this source of funding.

The President advised that John Wormesley (Chief Executive of STFC) has been appointed as Director General of the European Spallation Source in Sweden, and noted that he would be very sorry to see him leave the STFC position as he had been very supportive of astronomy projects.

**under 3. President's business it says 'grant challenge fund' but this should be 'Grand Challenge Fund' (as it is the name of a particular initiative).**

**Also 2 lines below it says 'get a hold off' -> 'get a hold of'**

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

#### **4.1 Auditors report**

Helen Haddock from Buzzacott update Council on the audit for 2015. In summary the Society had received a clean audit opinion and the audit process had gone well.

There was discussion on the following points:

- Grant expenditure (see the explanation under agenda item 4.4)
- Structuring of the Society's bequests, donations and endowments (see the explanation under agenda item 4.4)
- Increased Trustee expenses that arose because of the necessary attendance of the President and Treasurer at the IAU General Assembly in Hawaii.
- Specific text in the post audit report; there was a request to modify the text to explicitly state that no evidence of fraud had been detected. Helen Haddock confirmed that they had found no significant deficiencies in the accounting and internal control systems during the audit.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Helen Haddock has confirmed that in auditing the accounts Buzzacott had not found any evidence of material fraud.

#### **4.2 Formal approval of 2015 paperwork**

Council approved the following documents:

- a. Annual Report and accounts for 2015
- b. Post Audit Report from Buzzacott
- c. Letter of representation

#### 4.3 Risk register

The Treasurer introduced the revised risk register that had a new format. It was noted that the previous format had been very wordy and long and had not differentiated between management risks (that are managed by the Executive Director) and specific strategic risks. The new format includes a traffic light system to show the level of threat and an indicator to show whether the risk is increasing, remaining stable or decreasing. It was confirmed that the risk register is not a public document it is a management tool for the Trustees and Executive. Council were content with the revised format although suggested that the risk owner should be articulated in future versions.

**ACTION: Treasurer**

#### 4.4 Treasurers report – other matters

**NOTE:** This item was taken out of order, before item 4.1, as such detail on discussion points also raised under item 4.1 are provided below.

Council noted the Financial and Legal Status of the Society:

RAS Financial and Legal Status	Level of Materiality	Report for May 2016
Transfers in and out of Reserves	£50k	None. Total investments at 31 March 2016 were £6,814,092
Unplanned changes in Cash holdings	£20k	None. Bank holdings were HSBC £3,300,505 Natwest £41,148 Both at 29 April 2016
Heritage Assets	One heritage item	A careful review of the heritage asset register took place during the Audit and cases of double counting and one of asset loss were uncovered. This is shown as a reduction in our heritage assets by £140k
Lease	Any change	No change
Debts	£5k	No change
Legal Agreements	Any change	No change
Insurance	Any change	No change

The Treasurer advised that the Finance Committee had met on April 28<sup>th</sup> and discussed the audit findings and the risk register. He briefly explained the background to a few issues that this year affect the presentation of certain of figures in the accounts; these changes arise because of the introduction of the new SORP for charities. The key change was in the handling of grant funding. It was noted that while, historically, grants were funded from

specific bequests made for this purpose, the overall spend on grants and Research Fellowships now greatly exceeds the income from these bequests. Operationally this is overcome by transferring the necessary amount from the General (unrestricted) Funds to the grants line in a planned way. Buzzacott would have preferred to present this outcome by declaring the grant funds “in deficit” by £590k. Given that the way in which the Society handles grant expenditure had been carefully planned (i.e. Council made its decisions on the level of the grants round and on the funding for RAS 200: Sky and Earth, in the knowledge that these would be found mainly from the reserves) it was not felt appropriate to declare a fund “in deficit”. Buzzacott accepted this approach.

It was noted that Buzzacott had raised a query over how best to handle the structuring of the bequests, donations and endowments the Society holds but had agreed that this matter should be addressed in the accounts for 2016. In summary, the position taken by the Society has been that these are “capital funds” in the sense that only the income from the invested donations are used to fund specific activities (set out in the annual report.) The auditors have questioned whether the funds should really be seen as non-capital in nature and therefore run down by planned expenditure. The exact status of each fund will need to be investigated to enable the Society to be able to provide a clear statement in the run up to next year’s audit on each of these separate funds. This will be a significant piece of work to be carried out over the coming year; it was noted that there are uncertainties over the availability of the historical data on the bequests, donations and endowments. It was noted that Council had considered this matter in 2002 and that Council minutes may serve as a useful starting point.

The Treasurer explained that in the accounts for 2015 show a reduction in total assets from £19,303k in January, to £19,140k at the end of December. The Society had spent £261k on the RAS 200: Sky and Earth grants during 2015 so without that expenditure the Society would have generated a working surplus of £98k.

The Treasurer also advised that the Publications Management Committee (PMC) had met on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and that the financial projections for next year had been presented along with the standard request to agree the subscription rates for the various journals in the different geographical markets. It was noted that a paper by OUP entitled ‘Publication policy review (Rest of the World journal costs)’ was presented under agenda item 7.4; this paper was considered out of order as part of this agenda item.

Council were reminded that part of the financial plan for the journals included the downward revision of the prices for countries ( titled “Rest of the World” or “ROW”) outside of the UK, US, Europe, Australia and Canada. This policy was accepted by Council in 2012 after it was revealed that the under the previous contract with Wiley Blackwell the Society had been charging ROW subscribers more than those in the US. It had been agreed that the reductions were to be applied gradually, bringing the prices level after five years and four years of these increments have taken place. The Treasurer advised that:

- for a variety of reasons, mainly to do with the increased take up of our journals in ROW countries, this policy is having a larger negative effect on publishing income than planned.
- most of the subscribers experience a rise of about 4-5% per annum, while the content in published articles rises by 10-11%
- The PMC had asked OUP to model the effect of omitting the last year of reductions for ROW countries and allow them to see a small rise in absolute cost, after four years of absolute reductions, reflecting the increased journal content (detail is contained in the paper supporting agenda item 7.4)

Council discussed the outcome of the modelling and agreed to the proposed alternative pricing plan proposed by OUP for the years 2017–2019; the revised plan will

- slow the rate of reduction on RoW subscription rates.
- re-introduce moderate price increases on the RoW subscription rates from 2017 (<1% price increase on Online Only subscriptions),
- postpone the objective of bringing RoW subscription prices in to line with UK prices until 2019.

The Treasurer had tabled a paper on the expenses claimable by Trustees for attendance at the NAM Council meeting.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The Executive Director reissued this paper with further explanation on claimable allowances on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016.]

## **5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **5.1 Arrangements for AGM 2016**

Council noted the arrangements for the Annual General Meeting and Ordinary meeting to be held later that day.

### **5.2 Honorary Auditors report**

Council noted the report of the Honorary Auditors, Professor Paul Crowther and Dr Euan Monaghan with thanks.

### **5.3 Lease and rental negotiations**

The Executive Director updated Council on the ongoing arbitration between the landlord and the learned Societies around the courtyard. An outcome of the arbitration is not expected before the Autumn.

### **5.4 NAM update**

Council noted an update on NAM provided by Dr Julian Onions the Chair of the LOC at Nottingham University.

It was noted that registration numbers were low in comparison to last year. The Deputy Executive Director advised that around 450 abstracts had been submitted.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** At the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016 the number registered was 542, which is in line with attendance at Llandudno in 2015.]

### **5.5 Bicentenary planning**

The Executive Director and Dr Simon Mitton advised that no progress had been made on the proposals for books to celebrate the bicentenary. Updates will be provided to the working group set up to consider bicentenary planning that will meet over the summer.

### **5.6 Education and Outreach Grants**

Dr Mandy Bailey introduced a paper on the allocation of Education and Outreach grants by the Education and Outreach grants panel; this had been requested by Council. It was noted that submissions for outreach grants is increasing substantially, the ratio of submissions received to funding allocated is now higher than that received through the traditional grants route. There was some discussion on whether telescopes can be purchased as part of a grant. It was noted that the guidance states that the Society will not pay for telescopes in normal circumstances. It was agreed that the guidance should be revised by the 2016 grants panels.

## **6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Update on RAS 200: Sky and Earth**

The Deputy Executive Director gave an update on RAS 200: Sky and Earth. The Chair of the Steering Group had announced the timetable for the second round of grants at the AGM in May. Key milestones are:

13 July 2016:	London stakeholder meeting
September – December 2016:	‘Town hall’ meetings around the UK
10 October 2016:	Applications for Outline Proposals open
9 December 2016:	Deadline for Outline Proposal applications
8 February 2017:	Grants Panel meets to consider Outline Proposals
7 April 2017:	Deadline for Full Proposals
19 April 2017:	Grants Panel meets to consider Full Proposals

The winners will again be announced at the AGM, in May 2017.

The six projects funded in the first round are all up and running, and the Prince’s Trust, Care for Carers, the Eisteddfod and the Workers’ Educational Association have all now run activities. Jenesys, who are responsible for evaluating the programme, are reporting on progress in each case, and the Education, Outreach and Diversity Officer is liaising with the project leads.

Council were reminded that they agreed in March 2016 that the cost of the evaluation of RAS 200: Sky and Earth projects would be met from the £1M allocated to the programme.

For more details see <http://www.ras.org.uk/200>

### **6.2 Science and Technology Select Committee: Inquiry into Science Communication: RAS response**

The President thanked the Deputy Executive Director for doing a thorough job in collating responses and drafting the RAS response to the inquiry. It was noted that feedback on the responses submitted by the Society was only occasional and normally informal, however when received it had been constructive with the Society being seen as an authoritative organisation providing balanced input.

## **7. PUBLICATIONS**

### **Agenda items 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3**

Council noted the PMC Summary and reports from the Editors in Chiefs for MNRAS and GJI (under agenda items 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3). It was noted that the risk of the policy move towards Open Access publishing adversely affecting the income stream had not materialised, whilst both journals offer publication via Gold and Green Open Access only a very small percentage of articles are processed via the Gold route.

Professor Don Kurtz noted that he would prefer that the editors were not anonymous; this request will be passed to the Editorial Office Manager to bring to the attention of the Editorial Boards.

#### 7.4 Publication policy review (Rest of the World journal costs)

Council had considered this item under the discussion of agenda item 4.4 and had agreed to a revised pricing policy.

### 8. OTHER

#### 8.1 Officers Reports including the approval of candidates proposed for Fellowship

Council approved the following candidates for Fellowship:

Hillyard	Benjamin	Coventry	Ann E. Mills
Barojas	Monica	London	Ignacio Ferreras
Wilson	Thomas	London	Marco Rochetto
Schooneveld	Anna	Cambridge	Mark Hurn
Turner	Owen	Edinburgh	W.K. Rice
Henson	Rachel	Torfaen	J. MacArthur
McNulty	Kevin	London	Roger O'Brien
Perks	Simon	Somerset	Roger Steer
Loi	Shyeh	Cambridge	Henrik Latter
Parikh	Taniya	London	Daniel Thomas
Doubtfire	Anthony	Leeds	Kevin Read
Mawdsley	Benjamin	Portsmouth	Robert G Crittenden
Wilkinson	Julia	Rochdale	Christopher Scott
Davies	Cheryl	Wolverhampton	Andrew Norton
Imrith	Shailee	London	R. Nelson
Fairhurst	Stephen	Cardiff	Enzo Pascale
Bonato	Enrica	London	Sara Russell
Weimer	Carla	Nurenberg	Andrew Norton
Von Harrach	Sebastian	London	Roger Wood
Halabi	Ghina	Cambridge	Robert Izzard
Ashraf	Femma	London	Francisco Diego
McCaul	Kieran	Camberley	Andrew Norton
Davies	Ian James	St Albans	Andrew Norton
Trapnell	Mark William	London	Francisco Diego
	Adam		
Knowles	Thomas	Preston	Roger Clowes
Alvarez	Javier	Santa Cruz	Chris Benn

	Mendez		
Riccardo	Carlo	London	Joao Magueijo
	Derek		
Buckley	William	Chiswick	Francisco Diego
	Denis		
Caniulef	Gonzalez	Dorking	Silvia Zane
	David		
Mason	William	Grimsby	Fraser Lewis
	Andrew		
Rodger	Stewart	Glasgow	Nicolas Labrosse
Green	Jane Amanda	East Sussex	British
Culkin	Sarah Louise	Wirral	Ian Howarth
	Matthew		
Bayliss	Peter	Yeovil	Mark Birkinshaw
Al-Dakkak	Kelly Lynn	Hitchin	Don Kurtz
Suddell	Stephen John	Bristol	Roger Clowes
Chen	Siyuan	Birmingham	Alberto Vecchio
Milanese	Lucio Maria	London	Robert Forsyth
Sciortino	Francesco	London	Robert Forsyth
	Garrett		
Martin	William	Brighton	Martin Hardcastle
Poppenhaeger	Katja	Belfast	Alan Fitzsimmons
Ball	Patrick	Cambridge	Kathryn Gunn
Singh	Alok	Hatfield	Martin Hardcastle
Lucie - Smith	Luisa	Vauxhall	Serena Viti
Alexander	Emma	Manchester	Robert Massey
Lawes	Andrew	Bexhill on Sea	Paul Money
Graham	Mark	Oxford	Michele Cappellari
Mitchell	Howard	West Sussex	Andrew Norton
Foxell	Emma	Coventry	Hugh Osborn
Howson	Thomas	Scotland	Ineke De Moortel
Rahimi	Najibolah	Leicester	Robert Massey
Allsop	Paul	Staffordshire	Andrew Norton
Jacob	David Joseph	London	Robert Kennicutt
Liow	Kong You	London	David Clements
			David Shaun
McCloskey	Aoife	Dublin	Bloomfield
Benson	Philip	Portsmouth	Peter Grindrod
Spriggs	Thomas	Petworth	Elias Brinks
	Susan	Kingston Upon	
Pyne	Elizabeth	Thames	Benjamin Joachimi
Waite	Thomas Ian	Bolton	Benjamin Fernando
	Karim		
Ababakr	Mahmood	Leeds	Rene Oudmaijer
	Gregory		
Feiden	Alexander	Uppsala	James Silvester
Adams	Nathan	Kettering	Robert Massey
Quenzer	John David	Livingston	Andrew Norton
Dacie	Sally	Dorking	Sarah Matthews
Duara	Angaraj	Leicester	Robert Massey

Stott	Matthew	London	Membership Committee
Pearson	Richard	Nottingham	Membership Committee
Koronczay	David	Hungary	Membership Committee
Cool	Andrew	Australia	Membership Committee
Barnaby	David	New Zealand	Membership Committee
Pace	Matthew		

## 8.2 History of Astronomy Medal

Professor Mike Edmunds introduced this item and thanked Dr Simon Mitton for his proposal for naming the History of Astronomy Medal that was fully supported by the Astronomical Heritage Committee. Council agreed that the newly established History of Astronomy Medal is named after Agnes Mary Clerke.

Agnes Mary Clerke was one of the greatest historians of astronomy in the Victorian era. She had a prodigious output of biographies of mathematicians and astronomers, and was elected to Honorary membership in 1903 on the strength of her History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century. A biography can be found at: <http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/Biographies/Clerke.html>

It was noted that awards committee should review the criteria for eligibility to clarify whether the medal should be limited to award for lifetime achievement or if nominations are possible from a wider pool.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Council approved a revised version of awards criteria earlier in the year. The current text states ‘An individual who has achieved outstanding personal research into the history of astronomy or geophysics. This allows flexibility in interpretation by the awards committees.]

## 8.3 Minutes of the A&G meetings of March & April 2016

Council approved the minutes of the A&G meetings for March and April 2016.

## 8.4 2016 RAS Thesis Prizes

A paper on the 2016 RAS Thesis Prizes had been tabled. Professor Don Kurtz and Professor Jim Wild reported that the standard had been very high for both the A &G thesis prizes respectively, with the runner up in both cases also being of outstanding quality.

## 9. Any Other Business

### 9.1 EAS Corporate Sponsorship

Professor Mike Bode summarised a request from the European Astronomical Society (EAS) for the Society to encourage OUP to become a corporate sponsor of EAS. It was agreed that this presents a conflict of interest for the Society but that the name of the relevant point of contact could be shared with the EAS.

### 9.2 Community meeting focused on geoscience research in the UK.

Professor Christine Peirce volunteered to be the Society representative on an organising committee of the National Oceanography Centre that intends to hold a community meeting focused on geoscience research in the UK in November 2016. Prof Peirce will use the conference to convene a forum for discussion between NERC and the geosciences community.

### **9.3 National Honours**

Professor Paul Murdin and Professor Mike Edmunds explained their concerns that the Government generated timescales for making applications for National Honours was far too tight to respond to in year and suggested that a small group is established to make considered recommendations in advance that are ready to be submitted to the national process. It was agreed that the group should be chaired by Professor Mike Edmunds and should also consist of the Vice Presidents from 2015/2016 and the current VPs that should report to Council.

Council rose at 13:15

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Zarnecki".

.....  
Professor J. Zarnecki

30<sup>th</sup> June 2016