



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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AGENDA ITEM 2

ATTACHMENT C(2007/08) 2 (1)

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2007 AT 1030 IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY BURLINGTON HOUSE

1. PRESENT: Professor M. Rowan-Robinson (President), Professor R.L. Davies, Professor D.W. Hughes and Professor E.R. Priest (Vice-Presidents), Professor P.G. Murdin (Treasurer), Dr M.A. Hapgood, Professor I.D. Howarth and Dr H. J. Walker (Secretaries), Professor M.E. Bailey, Dr A.J. Ball, Professor M.A. Barstow, Professor A.M. Cruise, Professor M.G. Edmunds, Dr L. Fletcher, Professor J.H. Hough, Dr J. Mitton, Professor E.I. Robson and Professor I.P. Wright

APOLOGIES: Professor D. Gubbins (Vice-President), Mr I.W. Ridpath and Professor M.J. Rycroft

IN ATTENDANCE: D. Elliott and R. Massey

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 8 March 2007 were approved and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The President drew attention to the communication from Professor Gubbins about his meeting with HEFCE to argue the case for including Geophysics among the subjects eligible for additional funding on the grounds of their vulnerability. He reported that HEFCE will be sending out a general invitation to apply for the last £2M that has been set aside for such special cases and that he had contacted all 7 universities engaged in geophysics teaching.

3.2 The submission to the BNSC Consultation on Space Strategy compiled by Professor A.M. Cruise was noted. Professor Cruise was thanked for his efforts.

3.3 The President reported that he had yet to receive a satisfactory response from STFC concerning the attribution of ESA subscription to RAE. He agreed with the suggestion of sending a copy of his letter to Professor Mason to the Head of the RAE Physics Panel.

3.4 The Geophysical Secretary apologised that he had been unable to make a submission on 'Galileo' before the deadline. He added that funding was still to be decided and by no means a foregone conclusion.

3.5 The Geophysical Secretary spoke to a previously distributed paper on the European Research Programmes and emphasised the importance of personal lobbying of EC officials responsible for managing the 7th Framework Programme.

3.6 The Treasurer drew attention to the 2008 prices of RAS journals, following Council's approval in March of a 2.5% average increase.

4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

4.1 The President referred to the letter from the Minister of Science, Malcolm Wicks, which dealt in detail with the concerns raised by his letter of 16 March to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He added that, during a reception a fortnight before, he had been able to discuss both with Mr Wicks (who had volunteered his interest in visiting a UK telescope, which Council agreed the Society, together with STFC, should offer to arrange). Notwithstanding, the President was inclined to send a further letter to the Minister, to emphasise that the science budget should never be 'raided' to fund spending in other parts of the DTI.

4.2 The President rehearsed the consultations arising from STFC's new grants procedures and noted, with satisfaction, that the new Council appeared to be responsive to community concerns.

Note: As an example of this, Professor Priest subsequently made available a copy of the letter sent by STFC's Education, Training and Careers Committee to its Fellows following comments made at the RAS NAM clarifying that Fellowships were portable and flexible and emphasising that postdoctoral and advanced fellowships could be held on a part-time basis to accommodate people with caring responsibilities.

5. BURLINGTON HOUSE

The Executive Secretary reported that the refurbishment project was within budget, though the in-built £100,000 contingency reserve would be needed, and that the forecast completion date was 5th October, a month later than originally planned (the result of delays caused principally by the discovery of asbestos, as well as the need to make modifications to the design of the lift shaft). Following completion, there would be a period for fit-out and the removal of furniture, books and equipment back to Burlington House which might require a short extension to the lease taken on Hallam St.

6. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

6.1 The Library Committee's Report was noted.

6.2 The Astronomical Heritage Committee's Report was noted.

6.3 The Chair of the Membership Committee, Dr. J. Mitton highlighted a key point from their recent meeting concerning categories of membership. She explained that the Committee could, still, see no case for having any category other than the single one of Fellowship. However, it recommended exploring the potential for a new category of affiliation, open to the public at large, that might be called 'Friends of the RAS'. This, though, would require the Society to adapt existing and develop new services including popular lectures, for which the new theatre in Burlington House would be well suited, a modified 'A&G' and organised visit to observatories. Council was intrigued by this suggestion, though not necessarily by the suggested name, which it saw as a powerful way of enhancing the Society's outreach and profile, though apprehensive about its financial viability, as well as its impact on existing societies, particularly the British Astronomical Association (BAA) and the Society for Popular Astronomy (SPA). It was emphasised that the fees for any new category of membership would have to be set at a level which generated rather than consumed revenue, given the need to plan against the time when income from publications could decline as a result of open access competition. Council wondered if the BAA and SPA could be affiliated to the Society in some way. It concluded by asking the Membership Committee, following discussions with the Education Committee, to present a business plan for further consideration at its meeting in October.

6.4 The Finance Committee's Report was introduced by the Treasurer who corrected the impression in it that any action on the management of the Society's investments would be postponed until after the refurbishment of Burlington House; rather, while implementation of agreed changes would occur then, the appropriate actions would be decided in the intervening months.

6.5 The Revised risk assessment was approved.

6.6 The 2006 Accounts and Letter to Auditors were approved. Council noted that a decision would have to be taken next year on whether expenditure on the Burlington House refurbishment project should be recorded as an investment or a debit. Until then it was recorded as 'assets in the course of construction'

6.7 The Report of the Honorary Auditors was noted and the suggestion made for an Away Day in 2008 welcomed.

6.8 Council paid tribute to the organisation of the NAM 2007 by the University of Central Lancashire and asked the Executive Secretary to write a letter of appreciation to Professor Gordon Bromage. It was noted that there had been a record number (521) of registrations, the result of the successful combining of the NAM with the meetings of the MIST and the Solar and Solar Terrestrial Physics communities who, it was agreed, had made a significant contribution to proceedings. Press coverage had been excellent with 190 media mentions. The Education and Outreach Day had been extremely lively, as had the Young Astronomers sessions, though by naming the latter as such, a misleading impression had been given that senior scientists were not welcome (where the reverse was the case).

Council urged the organisers of the next NAM to consider how a greater number of professors could be persuaded to attend, since the NAM provided such a good opportunity for them to see potential younger colleagues 'in action'. Some felt that by organising more parallel sessions, it would be possible to accommodate better the wider range of specialisms which were now represented at the NAM. There was concern that the balance between plenary and parallel sessions should allow more opportunities for participants to present papers, rather than posters. Noting that the current NAM abstract management system placed a heavy burden on convenors, it was suggested that an improved system might be provided, and run by, the RAS Office. Indeed Council felt the time was opportune for taking a strategic view about the division of responsibilities between Burlington House and local organisers, including the provision of registration and web site services.

7. POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

7.1 The Policy Officer, Dr.R.Massey, explained that the, rather anodyne, tabled document outlining the case for a separate Ministry of Science and Innovation, headed by a cabinet level minister, had been assembled by the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE), of which the Society was a member, in the hope of achieving consensus among the scientific community. Council agreed to endorse it though added that the Society would want to include more specific information when lobbying government about this issue.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting CaSE reported that it had not succeeded in securing sufficient support to go forward

7.2 The Policy Officer reported on the status of the Institute of Physics Review of PhD and PDRA training with which Council had earlier expressed a wish to be associated. A reviewer had been appointed and a budget of £25,000 agreed. People occupying their first lectureships in the UK, and in a sample of institutions in 3 overseas countries, would be sent a questionnaire to elicit data on their education and career histories. On the basis of this, it was hoped it might be possible to verify, or otherwise, the impression of the authors of the *International Perceptions of UK Research in Physics and Astronomy* report, that UK trained PhD students were at a disadvantage in competing for posts with their overseas educated peers. Council agreed the Society should offer to contribute £5,000 and in return secure representation on the management of the project. It was noted that Professor Hough (Glasgow University) had agreed to represent the Society and that the report should be debated thoroughly at the 2008 NAM.

8. PUBLICATIONS

8.1 The Treasurer introduced a short discussion paper which distilled the outcome of a meeting held at the Society's publishers, Blackwell, attended by himself, the editors in chief of *MNRAS* and *GJI*, the Executive Secretary and the senior management of Blackwell. Its purpose was to consider the challenge posed by open access publishing to *MNRAS/GJI*. It had been agreed that Blackwell would produce business plans for each journal for the five years 2008-12 in order to provide a financial basis on which to decide what to do. This would include planning for a so-called hybrid model under

which authors or subscribers could elect to pay for immediate open access publication. It was noted that in the case of *MNRAS* it was hoped that it might be possible to charge substantially less than £1,000 per article which would make it competitive with wholly open access journals. The plans would incorporate a move to electronic-only versions of the journals, since librarians' concerns about the permanency of e-archives were fast disappearing, which would achieve savings of the order of 10-20%. That time could be an opportune moment to rationalise subscription pricing in the light of the take up of the author-pay option.

The plans would be brought for further discussion in Council when they had been prepared.

8.2 The report of the MNRAS Editorial Board was noted.

8.3 The report of the GJI Editorial Board was noted.

9. AWARDS

9.1 Professor Bailey requested and obtained the agreement of Council to invite the following fellows to constitute the 'G' awards committee which he would chair (*confidential*). In the event that some refused he was authorised to make alternative arrangements. The Geophysical Secretary would serve on the committee in an *ex officio* capacity.

9.2 Professor Davies requested and obtained the agreement of Council to invite the following fellows to constitute the 'A' awards committee which he would chair (*confidential*). In the event that some refused he was authorised to make alternative arrangements. The 'A' Secretary, Dr.H. Walker, would serve on the committee in an *ex officio* capacity.

10. OTHER

10.1 Council approved the following Candidates for Election to Fellowship listed in OR/04/07 and posted on the RAS web site.

Archontis	Vasilis
Bargery	Alistair
Blom	Jan Johannes
Buchlin	Eric
Burningham	Ben
Byrne	Jason
Carter	Martin J.
Chapman	Robert
Clack	Christopher
Conselice	Christopher J.
Corbett	Jason
Coveney	Tim
Darnley	Matthew
Dolan	Graham
Fogarty	Lisa
Fritze	Uta

Giannantonio	Tommaso
Gladstone	Jeanette
Hampshire	Damian Peter
Harvey	John Robert
Helling	Christiane
Hindmarsh	Mark
Katsampoukas	Konstantinos
King	Christopher
Lewis	Fraser
Majerotto	Elisabetta
Mao	Shude
Miller	Thomas
Parsons	Harriet
Poplavsky	Alexander
Purver	Mark
Robotham	Aaron
Schafer	Bjorn Matte
Sheehan	Christopher
Smith	Anthony
Snaith	Owain
Strain	Kenneth
Stroud	Vanessa
Sutton	David
Thompson	Samantha
Thomson	Matthew
Waldram	Elizabeth M.
Walker	Emma
Wise	Peter

10.2 The minutes of the A&G Meeting of 8th March 2007 were approved and signed

10.3 The dates of Council meetings over the next 12 months were noted

11. AOB

The President thanked the retiring members of Council viz D.Gubbins; D.Hughes; E.Priest; I.Ridpath; M.Rycroft and I. Wright

Council rose at 1315

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M. Rowan-Robinson
President

1st August 2007