



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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**MINUTES**  
**COUNCIL MEETING**  
**14<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2014**  
**AT 11:00 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM**

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

Council agreed that the President-elect, Professor Martin Barstow, should chair this meeting as the President, Professor David Southwood, was overseas.

**PRESENT:** Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Ian Crawford, Ms Mandy Bailey, Professor Richard Davis, Dr Andrew Norton, Professor Donald Kurtz, Dr Sheila Peacock, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Helen Fraser, Dr Geraint Jones, Dr Simon Mitton, Dr Sarah Matthews, Professor Barry Parsons, Professor Peter Coles, Professor Steve Miller, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor John Brown and Professor Gillian Foulger (afternoon)

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

**APOLOGIES:** Professor David Southwood, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Barry Parsons and Mr Charles Barclay

## 2. MINUTES

Council approved the minutes of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013 with some changes.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

The Executive Secretary updated Council on a number of matters arising from the minutes that would not be covered elsewhere in the agenda.

- It was noted that the A Secretary and the Deputy Exec. Sec. will draft a short note on NAM timing that will be cleared by Council members out of Committee and promulgated to the Fellowship with the Elections paperwork.
- A separate RAS policy on adoption had been drafted and will be appended to the RAS staff handbook.
- Dr Paul Murdin, Professor Mike Cruise and the Executive Secretary will review the byelaws to ensure that they reflect efficient management practices.

- The action on the Chairs of awards committees to provide short citations for NAM were outstanding and on completion the RAS website would be updated.
- It is not possible to provide a breakdown of membership categories prior to approval of nominations however the Membership Secretary will provide regular updates on numbers joining in various categories throughout the year.
- There was much discussion on the arrangements for the poster prizes at NAM that are sponsored by the RAS Publisher Oxford University Press. It was noted that Winton Capital had offered to provide additional sponsorship and that they should be approached to provide sponsorship for an alternative event such as a drinks reception after the RAS community session, sponsoring the 5 a side football or providing funding to assist students attend the banquet.

#### **4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

As the President was not in the chair, he had provided a report on the EAS Business and Policy meeting, Rolle, Switzerland, January 2014, and a summary of other activities he had undertaken since the December Council meeting

##### **4.1 Report on the EAS meeting held in Rolle, January 2014**

Council discussed the report on EAS Business and Policy meeting, noteworthy points included:

- Andreas Burkert, president of DAG, had made a presentation, reinforcing the message previously delivered by the RAS, that despite there being still a (dominant) national role in communicating and acting on policy which affects astronomy for the national societies, there is an increasing need to communicate at European political level and that the voice for astronomy needs to be coherent across as much of Europe as possible. He advised that the DAG and the RAS were considering working together on joint policy consultation and coordination and invited other societies to also participate.
- It was envisaged that the national societies would have a designated inter-society individual who would coordinate matters and that each society would have a point of contact on their Council (i.e. not necessarily the President) for European affairs.
- The reaction to these proposals had been positive from the other societies that were represented (France, Italy, Spain, Serbia, Czech Republic, Greece, and the Netherlands). The President of EAS was happy in principal; the EAS could serve as an umbrella organisation i.e. the work could be considered to be under the aegis of EAS. It was noted that in reality the work will effectively remain in the hands of the national societies.
- The President had met and briefed both Alvaro Gimenez (ESA) and Tim De Zeeuw (ESO) on the proposed way ahead and they both endorsed the approach.
- The DAG Council would consider this proposal at their meeting in March.
- In reciprocation, the President had advised that the RAS Council would also consider this proposal in March. It was noted that Andreas Burkert is planning

to visit the UK in the next few months and that, if agreed, this would be an opportunity to agree coordination arrangements between societies.

Council discussed how this approach could be implemented in the RAS. It was noted that there is no available staff effort to support this initiative and that whilst the President could initially serve as the RAS point of contact (as he has well established links in Europe) this is not a long term solution. Council noted that the President will bring a paper to Council in March 2014.

**ACTION: PRESIDENT**

#### **4.2 Other matters – President's business**

##### **a) AAS meeting, Washington, RAS lecture and reception**

It was noted that Roger Blandford had delivered the first RAS Gold Medal lecture at the AAS winter meeting in Washington, January 2014, under the new agreement whereby we exchange lectures between "A" RAS Gold and AAS Russell medallists at the AAS winter meeting and the NAM meeting. The lecture was very successful with good attendance.

The lecture had been preceded by a drinks party to which North American RAS fellows and the AAS Council had been invited. The President, a Vice President and a number of AAS Council members had attended and the North American fellows seemed delighted by the invitation.

It was agreed that these arrangements were very good for the Society and should continue as it provides the opportunity for the RAS to frame a central event at the largest national astronomy meeting in the world, a review of arrangements should be held after a further three years. It was agreed that in future the invitation should be extended to all overseas Fellows and that the drinks party should be advertised in RAS newsletter.

It was noted that the President had used the AAS meeting to talk to numerous contacts in the US and elsewhere. Overall, discussions with US colleagues had revealed the present parlous state of US space astronomy. He also had the opportunity to discuss European matters with Alvaro Gimenez from ESA and Tim De Zeeuw from ESO, as noted under agenda item 4.1.

##### **b) Visit to AGU HQ, Washington**

The President and Executive Secretary had visited the American Geophysical Union (AGU) with the intention of opening lines of communication and with the end view of finding possible useful forms of cooperation. They had met with the Chief Executive, Christine W. McEntee and Billy M. Williams, Science Director. They were certainly interested in the RAS but almost certainly had little prior knowledge. Options for possible cooperation were discussed and included: joint sponsorship of topical conferences e.g. the AGU puts on a series of "Chapman" conferences across the world. The Chapman in question was British (Sydney Chapman) and one of the two people behind the International Geophysical Year in 1957-8. Whilst this idea was considered worthy, the AGU had explained that their conferences are organised in a

bottom-up fashion in that proposals come from the community. Nonetheless, there was no objection in principle to joint sponsorship.

Other topics discussed included Open access, where we agreed we would remain in touch.

Council discussed possible next steps. It was noted that OUP have a stand at AGU meetings and some discussion on the cost/benefit of the RAS taking a stand. It was noted that the Editorial Manager attends the AGU winter meeting to attend various international editorial meetings.

Dr Geraint Jones noted that although "A" RAS Gold medal winners would be speaking at AAS meetings, the AAS also covers several RAS "G" areas, overlapping somewhat with areas covered by the AGU. He suggested that reciprocal lectures with the AAS's Divisions of Planetary Sciences and Solar Physics Division should therefore also be considered.

**c. Meeting with Prof. Barry Parsons, Vice President (G), to discuss Solid Earth Geophysicists.**

The President had recently met with Vice President (G) to discuss how the Society might increase the presence of Solid Earth Geophysicists (SEG). It was agreed that whilst a cross subscription reduction arrangement with the Geological Society (and the joint BGA) could be helpful it was essential to examine the economic impact of such a change. Professor Parsons had agreed to provide a business case for such an approach in a paper for Council in spring 2014.

**ACTION: VICE PRESIDENT (G), PROF. BARRY PARSONS**

Council discussed the problems of getting nominations for G positions (particularly SEG) on Council. It was noted that the G Secretary has an ex-officio position and engages with the work of the BGA.

**d. RAS representation at a review of ICSU**

It was noted that the President will represent the Society on a Royal Society review of the future of ICSU (the umbrella organisation of the international science unions like URSI, IAU, IUPAP and IUGG (and thus IAGA, IASPEI, etc.) at a meeting in late February.

Council was invited to send comments by email to the President prior to the meeting.

**ACTION: COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**5. TREASURER'S BUSINESS**

**5.1 Treasurer's Report**

**a. Membership Subscriptions for 2015**

Council discussed the proposed membership descriptions for 2015 including discussion on the use of the CPI, level of significance of membership income in regards to the finances of the societies, practicalities of changing direct debits, likely effect in membership numbers following a rise in subscription. As the Treasurer was

not in attendance it was agreed that this item should be discussed in March 2014.

**ACTION: TREASURER**

**b. Staff Remuneration Package**

The Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary left the room whilst this item was discussed. Council noted:

- that the Staff Salary Review, accepted by Council in October 2013, had recommended that the present pay structure should be maintained, including an annual increment based on a cost-of-living increase, rooted in the RPI, and subject to annual approval by the Council.
- that the RPI has been “de-designated” by the UK government on the technical basis that the method it used for aggregating data did not meet international statistical standards. A paper will be prepared for a future Council meeting analysing the options if the RPI index not used.

Council approved the following:

Effective date	RPI	% Increase in RPI	% Increase in Staff remuneration	MNRAS		GJI		Treasurer £/yr	A&G Production contract £/per issue
				Editor in Chief £/yr	Editors £/yr	Editor in Chief £/yr	Editors £/yr		
31/12/12	246.8	3.09	3.1						
Figures for 2013			3.1	7,710	5,140	1,305	870	5,140	3,110
31/12/13	253.4	2.67	2.67						
<b>Figures for 2014</b>			<b>2.67</b>	<b>7,916</b>	<b>5,277</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>5,277</b>	<b>3,193</b>

**c. Financial and legal status of the Society**

Council noted the paper by the Treasurer that had been tabled explained that there had been no significant changes to the financial and legal status of the Society over the period, December 2013 to February 2014.

It was noted that a review of the value of the heritage assets was ongoing and that Council should be informed when complete.

It was noted that the minutes of the Heritage Committee will be presented to Council at the meeting in March and that a summary of heritage asset loans could be provided.

**ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**5.2 Financial Governance Arrangements**

A short paper by the RAS Accountant had been tabled. Council approved the following arrangements for banking and other financial transactions arising from the retirement of John Struthers and the appointment of Anne Starrs as Accountant.

- John Robertson Struthers (former RAS Accountant) to be removed as signatory on all RAS bank accounts.
- Anne Starrs (current RAS Accountant) be added to the list of signatories to operate all RAS bank accounts at HSBC and be authorised to make the following transactions:
  - Purchase of foreign currency (not to exceed £1,000).
  - Encashment of cheques (not to exceed £4,000 per month).

Council noted that the limit on daily authorisation at HSBC for the Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary was raised to £250,000 on 4<sup>th</sup> February in Order to pay the Society's annual VAT liability.

### **Capital Expenditure**

Council noted that the accountant is carrying out a value for money assessment of existing contracts. The provision of photocopiers and printers was under review. It is anticipated that outright purchase (with a support package) will provide better value for money than a leasing arrangement. This will require a capital outlay of around £10,000 and would generate significant savings on quarterly operational charges. (The comparable 5 year leasing arrangement would be around £21,000 with higher operational costs.) The Executive and Treasurer will approve the new contract.

## **6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **6.1 RAS Council Elections 2014**

Council approved the ballot list for 2014 and the accompanying paperwork that will be sent out to Fellows.

### **6.2 Staff in Confidence paper**

Council approved an ex gratia payment in addition to the compulsory redundancy payment for the Facilities Manager and agreed on an appointment process for the Office, Events and Buildings Manager.

### **6.3 Astonishing Astronomy and Glorious Geophysics (AAGG) Green paper**

Professor Steve Miller introduced this item and thanked Dr Robert Massey for providing an excellent green paper for Councils consideration.

Council agreed the timetable for the project:

- February 2014: AAGG discussion paper considered at RAS Council.
- March and April 2014: RAS Executive to make preliminary approaches to key stakeholders and potential partners.
- May 2014: AAGG project launched at RAS AGM.
- AAGG announced at the Community Session and Outreach lunch at NAM.
- May – July 2014: targeted consultation of wider astronomy and geophysics communities.
- July 2014: 'Stakeholders meeting' to further develop overall shape of project; invitation to potential bidders to submit 'letters of intent'.
- Autumn 2014: Town hall meetings.
- Autumn 2014 – spring 2015: Call for proposals, followed by selection of 5 projects in first tranche of funding.

Council welcomed this enjoyable and optimistic paper. Council were asked to consider and suggest further possible stakeholders. The range of stakeholders should be very diverse and include communities with disabilities. It was agreed that the Executive would engage with potential stakeholders in the first instance, however Council members may assist in this with reference to the executive to ensure that the society is engaging in a coherent manner.

It was noted that the Geological Society has a subdivision for juniors called 'Rock Watch' and they should be added to the stakeholder list.

It was agreed that the Society needs to give further thought to how it may need to change in response to taking forward AAGG, for example, engaging with a wider variety of the public may generate a requirement for different membership types. The membership Committee should keep this under review.

#### **6.4 Progress report: improvements to the Electronic Infrastructure**

The Deputy Executive Secretary gave Council an update on the ongoing work to improve the electronic infrastructure at Burlington House. Since Council in December, the Society had (re)commissioned a team from Oxford University who have carried out further work on the wireless network. The Oxford engineers will make a further visit later in 2014 to complete this project.

Burlington House staff also requested further quotes from Whitwam Audiovisual for a basic videoconferencing and microphone system for the Council Room and a new system for recording presentations in the Lecture Theatre. As well as investigating hardware, staff installed WebEx and Skype Premium so that simple videoconferencing and sharing of meeting presentations is now possible.

#### **6.5 NAM 2014 update**

The Executive Secretary reminded Council that the dates for NAM 2014 are Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> June. The key events, relevant to Council members are:

##### **Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> June:**

- 10:30 to 12:30 RAS Community Session, talks by STFC and UKSA followed by Q and A
- Banquet in the evening

##### **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June:**

- Council meeting at lunchtime 12 to 1:15
- RAS Awards Ceremony 1:30 to 2:15
- Freeman lecture (AAS exchange lecture) 2:15 to 3:15

##### **Specialist Lunches**

Monday	Outreach Lunch	
Tuesday	Diversity Lunch	[plus UKSP Lunch (Private)]
Wednesday	Careers Lunch	
Thursday	RAS Council	[plus MIST Lunch (Private)]

##### **Council expenses**

It was noted that Council has for many years sought to encourage Council members to attend NAM both as senior members of the community and in order to help Council form an opinion as to how well the NAM has been received by attendees. The decline in departmental grants has progressively made such attendance more difficult. As such it was agreed that in order to facilitate attendance by Council members the Society will cover the following level of expenses if the Council member can confirm that they have no grant or departmental funding that could support these costs:

- a. Normal travel at RAS rates to and from the NAM venue
- b. Two days NAM registration.
- c. One (or exceptionally two in the case of Council members travelling from distant locations) days overnight expenses.
- d. Normal expenses for meals etc. as required by the travel arrangements.

## **6.6 RAS Annual Report planning**

Council noted that the Treasurer and Executive Secretary hope to streamline and modernise the RAS Annual Report, an early draft will be provided at March Council meeting and a final draft provided out of committee by email in April 2014.

It was noted that due to the very unfortunate demise of Dr Paul Ruffles that a replacement honorary auditor is required.

### **ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

## **6.7 RAS Research Fellowships**

Professor Barstow reported to Council that there had again been an extremely good field applying for RAS Fellowships. 80 applications had been received and 7 interviewed. The successful candidates are Dr Aurelie Guilbert-Lepoutre from the University of Kent and Dr Rowan Smith, the University of Manchester. He thanked Professor Richard Davis and Professor Andrew Norton and other Committee members for their invaluable help and experience in serving on the selection panel.

It was noted that an update on the Daphne Jackson Fellowship would be provided to Council in March 2014.

### **ACTION: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

## **7. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **7.1 Draft Geophysics impact booklets**

It was noted that publication of the Geophysics booklet was imminent. Council extended their thanks to Dr Sue Bowler for all her hard work in bringing together the Geophysics community and producing this report.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: The booklet was published at the end of February. Hard copies are available from Burlington House and a PDF can be downloaded from <http://www.ras.org.uk/publications/other-publications/2410-going-underground-geophysics>

### **7.2 House of Lords Science and Technology Committee: Inquiry into International STEM students**

It was noted that a few comments had been received from Council Members and these have been passed to the Science Council to include in their response. Council were encouraged to provide further comments to the Deputy Executive Secretary.

### 7.3 **House of Commons Science and Technology Committee: Women in scientific Careers**

Council were reminded that the Society had provided input to this consultation over the summer; a government response was yet to be issued. They discussed various possible ways that they could support women in scientific careers, including:

- Providing a crèche at NAM (previously tried with no uptake).
- Actively mentoring possible Council nominee.
- Celebrating the success of women in science, especially the recent success of Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock recognised as a leading communicator, Prof. Michele Dougherty as a leading investigator, Dr Becky Parker as one of the UK's best teachers, and Prof. Jocelyn Bell-Burnell for her co-discovery of pulsars and leadership in the scientific community, within the list of the UK's top 100 scientists.
- Reviewing diversity in the RAS Staff and Council Structure.
- Ensuring that Diversity is considered as part of generating the Scientific Programme at NAM.
- Considering alternative RAS membership options that allow flexibility during career breaks etc.

It was agreed that the Committee for Diversity in Astronomy and Geophysics (CDAG) should consider how best to promote role models and mentoring and that questions on what the Society could do to help Fellows with caring responsibilities should be added to the Diversity questionnaire.

**ACTION: CDAG**

### 7.4 **House of Lords Science and Technology Committee: Scientific Infrastructure Committee Report and Government and RCUK responses**

Council noted the report and responses.

## 8. **PUBLICATIONS**

Council noted the minutes of the GJI Editorial Board Meeting held in December 2013.

## 9. **OTHER**

### 9.1 **Officers Reports**

Council approved the following for Fellowship:

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Town/ University</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Ashley	Richard	Coventry	Tom Marsh
Banks	Timothy	Signature Park, Singapore	Frank Andrews
Barnett	Rhys	Imperial College London	Stephen Warren

Bhattarai	Santosh	UCL	Dr Kimberley Steed German
Black	Carol	Uxbridge	Prof. J.P. Emerson
Boquien	Médéric	Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge	Robert Kennicutt
Bours	Madelon	University of Warwick	T.R. Marsh
Bradshaw	Miranda	University of Birmingham	Trevor Ponman
Brandl	Christopher	Vienna, Austria	Johannes Stuebler
Caudill	Thomas	Ruislip	Lucie Green
Clarke	Alex	Manchester	Katherin Joy
Collier	Jenny	Imperial College London	Barry Eaton Parsons
Cooke	Elizabeth	Draycott	Evelyn Johnston
Cowton	Lawrence	Bullard Laboratories, Cambridge	Ross Parnell-Turner
D'Arcy	Ryan	Poole	Paul Roche
Davies	Caroline	Dunedin, New Zealand	Timothy J. Clark
Fairhurst	Ciaran	Brighton	Darren Baskill
Foulkes	Stephen	Hereford	Mark O'Dell
Goldberg	Sophia	Twickenham	Ellie Nalson
Gorman	Maire	London	Jonathan Tennyson
Gyurov	Petar	Egham	Membership Committee
Hambly	Nigel	Institute for Astronomy, Edinburgh	Robert G. Mann
Hill	Paul	Studley	Andrew Norton
Hornsby	Brian	Esher	I.A. Crawford
Hutchinson	Paul	Torquay	Membership Committee
Jew	Luke	Stourbridge	Jocelyn Bell Burnell

Johnson	Helen	Durham University	A.M. Swinbank
Kumar	N. Daniel	Cambridge	Mark David Hurn
Matsumura	Soko	University of Dundee	Dr Antonia Wilmot-Smith
McDonald	Francesca	University of Manchester	Katherin Joy
Muir-Brockett	Anthony	Hengoed	Martin Griffiths
Nottingham	Mark	University of Manchester	Dr Katherine Joy
Powell	Kerry Rachel	Sidmouth	D G Strange
Rimmer	Paul	University of St. Andrews	Jane Greaves
Rocchetto	Marco	London	Licia C. Ray
Sainsbury-Martinez	Felix	University of Exeter	Tim Naylor
Sargent	Mark	University of Sussex	Stephen Wilkins
Sharma	Rahul	University of Sheffield	Prof. Robertus von Fay-Siebenburgen
Stephen	Natasha	The Natual History Museum	Sara Russell
Sthalekar	Haren	Warrawee, Australia	Membership Committee
Tamosiunas	Andrius	Edinburgh	Rob Ivison
Vaccaro	Epifanio	Natual History Museum	Sara Russell
Verseux	Cyprien	Vaucresson, France	Sean McMahon
Villforth	Carolin	University of St. Andrews	Dr Kate Rowlands
Wright	Mark	Didcot	Dr Richard A. Beare
Yip	Alexandra	Hatfield	Martin Hardcastle

It was agreed that the terminology in this regular report should be changed from 'Letter of Resignation' to 'Notice of Resignation' and that Council should also be provider with a list of names of those that default on payment and therefore cease to be members.

## **9.2 Ordinary Meetings**

Council approved the minutes of the Ordinary Meetings from December 2013 and January 2014.

**10. AOB**

It was agreed that the President would send letters of congratulation to the winners in the Science Council 100 top scientists.

**ACTION: PRESIDENT**

Council rose at 14:45

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Professor D.J. Southwood

14<sup>th</sup> March 2014

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Professor M. Barstow