



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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COUNCIL MEETING **Held in the Business School South** **University of Nottingham** **30th June 2016**

1. INTRODUCTION AND ATTENDANCE

PRESENT

Professor John Zarnecki, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor Don Kurtz, Professor Christine Pierce, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Professor Martin Bureau, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Stacey Habergham, Professor Mike Bode, Dr Sara Russell, Dr Stephen Serjeant, Dr Paul Daniels, Professor Brad Gibson; Dr Sheila Peacock

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Pamela Mortimer (Executive Director) and Dr Robert Massey (Deputy Executive Director)

APOLOGIES

Dr Caitriona Jackman, Dr Nigel Berman, Professor Hiranya Peiris, Professor Giovanna Tinetti and Professor Michael Watson

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting held during the National Astronomy Meeting at the University of Nottingham and invited all present to introduce themselves as there were new Council members present for the first time. He noted with despair the result of the Referendum on the European Union result and commented that the result had negatively impacted on the mood of the NAM as the Astronomy Community tries to come to terms with what this will mean in reality.

Attention was drawn to the Trustee declarations and Conflict of Interest paperwork that had been emailed to Council members and were available in hard copy for completion. Council members were asked to pass completed forms to the Executive Director.

2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 13th May 2016 were approved with minor corrections. The Executive Director drew attention to a number of post Council notes provided in the minutes that provided updates on ongoing matters. The following updates were also provided:

- Professor Mike Bode had passed on the advice of Council regarding corporate sponsorship to the European Astronomical Society.
- Professor Christine Pierce reported progress in arranging a UK University Geoscience meeting that will be held on the 3rd week of February 2017 in the Geological Society.
- Professor Mike Edmunds had initiated discussions with colleagues on how the Society should best manage nominations for National Honours and Awards.
- The Executive Director advised that the Treasurer together with the Finance Committee would review the risk register at a later date once he had got up to speed with the plethora of work associated with the position.

3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President noted that he and a number of Council members, the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director had attended a Parliamentary Links day on Science in Europe on 28th June, following the Referendum result. This will be reported under agenda item 5.5

4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

The Treasurer had sent apologies to the meeting and had provided a report. Council noted the Financial and Legal Status:

RAS Financial and Legal Status	Level of Materiality	Report for June 2016
Transfers in and out of Reserves	£50k	None. Total investments at 31 May 2016 were £6,781,471
Unplanned changes in Cash holdings	£20k	Bank holdings were HSBC £3,688,473 Natwest £49,527 Both at 31 May 2016.
Heritage Assets	No change	No change
Lease	Any change	No change
Debts	£5k	No change
Legal Agreements	Any change	No change
Insurance	Any change	No change

Council noted the following:

- The signed financial statements for the Society and Norman Lockyer Memorial Trust were submitted to the Charity Commission in June, together with the Charity Annual Return.
- The Paneth return should also be completed by the end of June.
- The RAS Pension Accounts are near completion

Council approved revisions to the HSBC Bank Mandate to remove the details of the previous Treasurer and include the details of the new Treasurer. It was noted that the revised mandate will include the following: Pamela Mortimer, Michael Kyriakides, Mark Piper, Robert Massey, Ian Crawford and Nigel Berman.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Review of NAM 2016

The Executive Director introduced discussion on this item by summarising the arrangements that had been in place for managing the NAM in Nottingham: the Society had been approached by Nottingham Conference Services as a possible venue, the Treasurer and Executive Director had visited the facilities that are very good and had approached the academics from the School of Physics and Astronomy at Nottingham to see how involved they would like to be in carrying out the key roles of Scientific Organising Committee (SOC) and Local Organising Committee (LOC); they had agreed to provide both services, with a fee being provided for the work undertaken on local arrangements. The Conference Facilities could not provide a registration system so the Society's IT and Information manager provided an e-platform. Council had been advised of these arrangements in February 2016.

Council were reminded that NAMs are normally either hosted in totality by a University with the local academic team providing the LOC and SOC, managing the budget provided by the Society and retaining either a small profit or making good or a small loss incurred; these arrangements foster commitment. Recent alternative arrangements included the NAM held in a conference centre in 2015 where the Society provided a selection of academics to undertake the role of SOC and the conference organisers were responsible for providing local arrangements as directed by the NAM liaison Officer, who was a member of Council, although received a fee for the work. Council were reminded that the Society has an arrangement with the Charity Commission to be able to make such payments to Trustees.

The arrangements for the Nottingham NAM were unusual and sub optimal for all those involved in the management of the event. In the planning stages, the cost of NAM was expected to be higher than previous years as a consequence of the alternative management; funding from STFC was uncertain however a reduced sum of £20K was provided. Under the contractual arrangements a significant part of the contracted services were exempt from VAT which provided a significant saving, however the Society was committed to accommodation and food charges that were not utilised and so the Society was charged significant cancellation fees. A 10% reduction in cancellation fees was negotiated prior to the event and a further discretionary reduction provided by Nottingham Conference Facilities.

Council discussed the event that they felt had been successful for those attending which is the main objective which had been met, however there were concerns over alternative management arrangements that had by necessity taken place in 2016 and agreed that they were not successful and would not be repeated.

5.2 Arrangements for NAM 2017 and 2018

Professor Brad Gibson updated Council on plans for NAM 2017 that will be held in Hull; plans are progressing well, there is significant support for the conference from the Local Council and the management team at the University. Hull will be the European City of Culture in 2017 and NAM has been accepted as a key part of that

annual celebration. Plans are developing to hold a large public lecture in the town hall, it is hoped that Tim Peake may be able to deliver an address. The President agreed to contact Tim Peake via the European Space Agency to try and help secure his participation.

ACTION: President

Professor Mike Bode updated Council on the UK bid to host EWASS in 2018; a decision is expected in October 2016. A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed to fully support the Liverpool bid and co-host a NAM/EWASS conference if the UK is successful.

It was noted that UCL have offered to host NAM in 2018 and have indicated that they would be happy to host in 2019 instead if the UK EWASS bid is successful.

5.3 Update on Burlington House lease and rent

The Executive Director updated Council on recent deliberations on the arbitration on the lease for Burlington House and advised that briefing on this matter would be provided to new Councillors at the induction session.

5.4 Data cleanse and correspondence preference exercise

The Executive Director reminded Council of the issues arising at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2016.

There had been a low number of votes cast for Council Elections; it was noted that there had been a number of changes in the administrative process in 2016 which may have accounted for the lower numbers (for example a new e-voting platform had been introduced and correspondence with Fellows had been principally by electronic means.)

It was agreed at the AGM that Council would review the election process carried out in 2016 and take the findings into account when planning the elections for 2017.

In response to a proposal made from the floor at the AGM it had been agreed that the Society should contact all members by post and ask them to confirm their preference on method of correspondence from the Society (including for the ballot for the election of Council.)

Council agreed that a correspondence preference and data update exercise should be conducted over the summer period:

- All members should be contacted by post and asked to confirm their preferred method of correspondence from the Society (including for the ballot for the election of Council).
- The Fellowship should be encouraged to set up an account on the new e-platform and to check and update their personal data however Fellows who do not want to create an account will be able to send their current personal details to the Society by post or on the telephone and the membership officer will update the details held electronically by the Society.
- The Fellowship should also be asked to confirm if they are content for their personal details to be held by the Society and to be made available to other members of the Fellowship.

[POST COUNCIL NOTE: This activity has been delayed following significant discussion between staff and Officers on changes to be made to the membership database. An update will be provided in October 2016.]

5.5 Impact of EU Referendum on A&G

The President provided a summary of the discussion at the Parliamentary Links day that focused on Science in Europe; this event had been organised before the date of the Referendum had been set and as it was held five days following the announcement of the result of the referendum was very timely. There was a very good representation from learned Societies, including the RAS, and from parliamentarians. A summary of the event is provided at the link: <https://www.rsb.org.uk/news/14-news/913-parliamentary-links-day-a-success>

The discussion on the day had been wide ranging and speculative by necessity as Parliament was only just beginning to respond to the referendum result. Whilst the mood was sombre, there was agreement that the positive attributes to remaining in the EU, that are obvious to much of scientific community had not been made known, explained or appreciated by the general public, it was recognised that science funding was not a key driver in the general public's decision taking.

In her capacity as Chair of the Science and Technology Select Committee, Nicola Blackwood MP wrote to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP, stressing the need to protect and develop UK science in the aftermath of the leave vote. A copy of the letter is online at <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/science-technology/Correspondence/COE-protect-promote-science16-17.pdf>

The Deputy Executive Director agreed to send this link to Council for their information.

Council agreed that the Society should send out a note to the Fellowship stating the position of the Society on the referendum result, and asking Fellows to contact their MP to highlight our concerns.

ACTION: Deputy Executive Director

[POST COUNCIL NOTE: Council agreed the note on 5 July by email, out of committee.]

Council considered the position of the Society in regards to support for Veronika Raszler who was to have taken up post as an interlocutor for European Astronomical Societies and the European Commission. It was noted that the financial arrangements for this post had still not been provided to the Society. The EAS were supposed to be providing details to the Treasurer via Professor David Southwood or the President who attends EAS board meetings. Professor Mike Bode advised that Veronika was moving on and interviews for her successor were being carried out in the near future.

Council agreed that subject to review of the financial arrangements that the Society should continue to support this post for a discrete period, subject to review when the ramifications of the Referendum result become apparent.

The President apologised to Council as he had to leave the meeting early, as he had to host a session and asked Professor Christine Pierce to chair the rest of the meeting.

5.6 Award Committee membership

Council approved the membership of the ‘A’ awards Committee (the details of which had been tabled).

Professor Don Kurtz
Professor Hiranya Peiris
Dr Mandy Bailey
Professor Mike Bode
Professor Stephen Serjeant
Dr Carolin Crawford
Professor Andrew Collier-Cameron
Professor Haley Gomez

Professor Yvonne Elsworth had kindly agreed to take on the lead role in the ‘G’ Awards Committee, Council would be asked to approve the membership of the ‘G’ Committee by email.

[Post Council Note: the ‘G’ Committee are listed below.]

Professor Yvonne Elsworth
Professor Lyndsay Fletcher
Dr Rob Fear
Professor Alan Fitzsimmons
Dr Sheila Peacock
Dr Sara Russell
Professor Chris J. Scott (formerly Davis)
Dr Andy Biggin

6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Report of the Science and Technology committee on Satellites and Space

Council noted the report and thanked the Deputy Executive Director for the significant amount of work undertaken to respond to policy and public engagement reports.

7. PUBLICATIONS

7.1 Minutes of the MNRAS Editorial Board meeting

Council noted the minutes of the MNRAS Editorial Board meeting held on the 4th March 2016. Professor Don Kurtz noted his regret that MNRAS has not adopted the policy of the details of the referees being available.

7.2 Minutes of the Publications Management Committee meeting

Council noted the minutes of the Publications Management Committee meeting held on the 26th April 2016. There was some discussion on the continued provision of MNRAS in hard copy. Council were reminded that they had considered a paper by OUP on this matter at the May Council meeting and had agreed that this process should continue and is likely to die out naturally as readers switch to digital means.

8. OTHER

8.1 Officers Reports including a list of candidates proposed for Fellowship

Council approved the following candidates for Fellowship:

Last Name	First Name	Town	Sponsor
Lovell	Christopher	Deptford	Stephen Wilkins
Shelyag	Sergiy Ashwin	Ryton	Mihalis Mathioudakis
Braude	Sharma	London	Patrick Irwin
Kuchner	Ulrike Maximilian	Nottingham	Elizabeth Cooke
Gunther	Norbert	Cambridge	Samantha Thompson
Fuller	Ashley John	Nottingham	Daniel Brown
Devereux	Carolyn Kieran	Hatfield	Sean Ryan
Simcox	Adam Josephine	Derby	Daniel Brown
Peters	Amelia Anna	Oxford	David Cole
Green	Catriona	Birmingham	Alberto Vecchio
Barrow	Joshua Brian Bradley	Cardiff	Xing Li
Ramsey	David	Chelmsford	Xing Li
Cochrane	Rachel	Edinburgh	Ken Rice
Fraser	Wesley C Thomas	Belfast	Alan Fitzsimmons
Secull	David	Belfast	Alan Fitzsimmons
Lindsay	Navahra Louise	Harrow	Martin Ince
Devoy	Elizabeth	Watford	Ian Ridpath
Cottrell	Gareth John	Truro	Brian Sheen
Nall	Josh Nicholas	Cambridge	Michael Edmunds
Mellor	David Adam	Siddington	Xing Li
Wright	Joseph	Solihull	Matthew Pontefract
Daley-Yates	Simon Owain Llyr	Birmingham	Ian Steven
Walker	Tomos Michael	Aberystwyth	Xing Li
Goldsmith	John	Twickenham	Marcus Hope
Gomez	Edward Conor	Cardiff	Haley Gomez
O'Malley	Patrick Arthur	Cambridge	Simon Stephenson Membership committee
Schwab	MacKenzie	Germantown	Membership committee
Doyle	Matthew Stewart	Dublin	Membership committee
Aitkenhead	Neville John	Suzhou	Membership committee

Newnham	Lucy Luke Michael	Southsea	Karen Masters
Pratley	William	Dorking	Jason McEwan
Maltz	Maxwell	Torquay	Andrew Norton
Peach	Damian Cormac	Hamble	Ian Ridpath
Larkin	James Kevin	Macroom	Jorick Vink

8.2 Minutes of the A&G meeting of 13th May 2016

Council approved the minutes of the ‘Ordinary’ A&G meeting held on the 13th May 2016.

9. Any other business

9.1 Ethical Sampling

Dr Sheila Peacock advised that she is not content with the response that the GJI Editorial board had previously provided on ethical sampling and will be raising the matter again now that she is back on Council and is also a member of the Council of the Geological Society of London.

Council rose at 1.25pm



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Professor J. Zarnecki

14th October 2016