



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Burlington House, Piccadilly  
London W1J 0BQ, UK

T: 020 7734 4582/ 3307

F: 020 7494 0166

info@ras.org.uk

www.ras.org.uk

Registered Charity 226545

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## Minutes of the Council Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017

### **PRESENT:**

Professor John Zarnecki, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Nigel Berman, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Professor Hiranya Peiris, Professor Christine Peirce, Dr Mandy Bailey, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Martin Bureau, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Stacey Habergham, Professor Mike Bode, Dr Paul Daniels, Professor Giovanna Tinetti, Professor Michael Watson, Dr Sheila Peacock, and Professor Sara Russell.

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

**APOLOGIES:** Professor Don Kurtz and Dr Caitriona Jackman

## **2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

Professor Yvonne Elsworth requested that the minutes from the February meeting be amended to include the number of votes cast when Council took a vote on whether or not endowed funds, present and future, should be treated on a total return basis; this change will be made prior to publication, (for the record, there was two abstentions and the rest of Council were in favour.)

The Executive Director updated Council on the following matters arising that were not covered elsewhere in the agenda.

- The Treasurer and Executive Director had received a proposal on extending the contract from OUP; this matter will be discussed at the Finance Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> April.
- The meeting between the President, the Executive and Lord Taylor on lease matters did not happen 9<sup>th</sup> March and will be rescheduled.
- Appointment letters to the two successful candidates for RAS Research Fellowships had been issued. The Treasurer will provide a policy paper on Fellowships, including terms and conditions to Council, at a later date.
- The Executive Director had received a holding reply from Professor Serena Viti, who will endeavour to determine the EAS proposed approach on establishing and appointing an EU position including the fiscal arrangements.
- Professor Jim Wild from the University of Lancaster is discussing with colleagues the possibility of hosting NAM 2019.
- Council were reminded that they have an opportunity to provide input to the consultation on the Industrial Strategy and should provide any comments to the Deputy Executive Director.

- Council were invited to consider the proposal to support the ‘Voices of Science’ project by email out of Committee.

### 3. PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

The President advised that he had been invited to a meeting with Graham Turnock, the new Chief Executive of the Space Agency and that he hoped he would be able to attend the Community Session at NAM. A short note on Graham Turnock’s experience and past positions would be circulated to Council.

The President and the Deputy Executive Director had had a successful meeting with Chi Onwurah MP, Shadow Science Minister, on the 9<sup>th</sup> March, where they discussed science funding cuts, migration issues and the Industrial Strategy and she had said she would be happy to consider questions to be raised in the house.

### 4. TREASURER’S BUSINESS

#### Subscription Rates

The Treasurer reminded Council that subscription rates had been left unchanged last year, he noted that as subscriptions contribute significantly to the income of the society they must be incremented from time to time to protect the value of that income, whilst at the same time keeping the amounts affordable.

Council approved the proposed rates for 2018 (2017 rates are in brackets):

<b>Rate 3 Fellows</b>	£ 115	(£110)
<b>Rate 2 Fellows</b>	£75	(£72)
<b>Rate 1 Fellows</b>	£30	(£28)
<b>Rate 3R Fellows</b>	£75	(£72)
<b>Rate 2R Fellows</b>	£50	(£47)
<b>Rate 1R Fellows</b>	£1	(£1)

and noted that Fellows who exercised their rights under Byelaw 38 (as was in 2003) before January 2003 will remain at nil costs and Fellows exercising their rights under Byelaw 39 will be charged £30 (£28).

#### NAM 2017

##### a. Registration Rates

Council approved the following rates for registration at NAM 2017 that will be held in Hull.

	<i>Full conference (early bird)</i>	<i>Full conference (late)</i>	<i>Daily (early bird)</i>	<i>Daily (late)</i>
<b>Non RAS members</b>	£265	£340	£110	£130
<b>RAS members</b>	£225	£290	£90	£115
<b>Student non RAS</b>	£150	£210	£65	£80

## members

<b>Student RAS members</b>	£115	£165	£50	£65
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### b. RAS financial support

Council discussed the level of financial contribution that the Society should make to NAM 2017 and agreed that this should be £25K. It was noted that STFC has also provided support of £25K.

### c. Council Members attendance at NAM

The Treasurer advised that the Society will cover the following costs for Council members to attend the Council meeting at NAM and also to attend and host a table at the conference dinner, which is held on the same day:

- Return travel to Hull (subject to normal rules, i.e. second class rail travel or equivalent)
- One day's Registration
- Conference dinner
- One night's accommodation

The President encouraged Council members to attend NAM and to encourage their staff, colleagues and students to attend.

## Bank Balances

Council noted the following bank balances:

### a. Statement of Bank Balances at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017

#### HSBC BANK

<b>Account Name</b>	<b>Account Number</b>	<b>Balance £</b>
Deposit/Money Manager Account	21664522	3,450,217
Restricted Funds Account	21664530	32,329
Pension Fund Account	51665456	23,138
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,505,684</b>

#### NATWEST

<b>Account Name</b>	<b>Account Number</b>	<b>Balance £</b>
Current Account	60671688	54,802
<b>Total</b>		<b>54,802</b>

### b. Statement of Investment Holdings at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017

#### BNY MELLON/NEWTON INVESTMENTS

<b>Account Name</b>	<b>Price (1 = par)</b>	<b>Balance £</b>
Newton Growth and Income Funds for Charities (RAS)	1.1876	6,958,536
Newton Growth and Income Funds for Charities (Paneth)	1.1876	351,025

<b>Total</b>		<b>7,309,561</b>
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### **Small Grants**

The Treasurer noted that the small grants budget for 2017 has been reduced to £110K from £130K last year and that the number of applications continues to increase. There was some discussion on the need to review eligibility for small grants, it was noted that some organisations restrict grants to Fellows and limit the individual level of award available for travel grants. It was agreed that Officers would consider this further and make recommendations to Council at a later date.

**ACTION: Officers**

## **5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **5.1 First draft of Annual report 2016 and risk register**

The Executive Director introduced the first draft of the text of the annual report for 2016 and explained that the generation of and approval of the annual report is an iterative process and is aligned with the process for the external audit of the Society's accounts. Council noted the following key dates and points:

- The Treasurer is preparing the text on the financial section of the report.
- The second draft of text, incorporating changes/additions suggested by Council at the March meeting, will be issued to Council by 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017.
- The third draft, incorporating any further changes suggested by Council, will be made by 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017.
- Audit field work will commence on 20<sup>th</sup> March; the audit clearance meeting will be held on the 19th April.
- The collation of main text, financial text and accounts will be made after the audit clearance meeting and a near final draft issued to the Finance Committee who will consider the report on 27th April.
- The final draft of the full report and accounts will be sent to Council as a paper for the May meeting and posted as a draft on the Fellows website.

Council were asked to provide substantive comments on the content of the report. Council members asked for more information on the Society's key and regular deliverables to be added to both the executive summary and the main body report. There was some discussion over the difficulty that arises because the report is required to serve two purposes; as a report to the Charity Commission that requires evidence of the Society undertaking its charitable objectives on an annual basis (hence the focus on new work undertaken in year) and as a report to the Trustees of the Society, who may want to see more information on regular, yet important, activities. It was agreed that the Executive Director will add information to address the needs of the latter to the second draft of the text.

### **5.2 RAS Council Elections 2017**

The Executive Director introduced the paper that had been tabled and thanked Professor Lyndsay Fletcher for kindly agreeing to be the Officer who signs the covering letter to the Fellowship; this is a task that is normally undertaken by the Senior Secretary, but as the current incumbent, Professor Ian Crawford, is on the ballot list this task has fallen to another Officer.

Council noted the paper had been tabled on the forthcoming Council elections; this was the first opportunity that Council had had to read the biographies of the candidates. The Executive Director advised that the letter and ballot list would be emailed and posted out at the start of April.

The President encouraged all Council members to vote and to encourage their colleagues to also do so.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Council were advised by email on the 13<sup>th</sup> April that there was an error in the published version of the candidate biographical notes. Unfortunately there was a ‘cutting and pasting’ error in the candidate biographical notes for two of the candidates for Councillor positions, Steve Miller and Clare Watt. The final paragraph from Steve Miller’s biographical note had been added in error to Clare Watt’s biographical note. The mistake was noticed and a corrected email sent out on the day that the e voting opened. The revised versions of the biographical notes for the two candidates were also posted out to those Fellows who receive ballot papers in hard copy. Steve Miller and Clare Watt have confirmed that they are both content with the action taken to address the mistake and for the ballot to proceed as planned. All candidates for Councillor positions have confirmed that they are happy for the ballot to proceed.]

### **5.3 Burlington House lease**

The Executive Director advised that there had been little progress since the last Council meeting in February. The Arbitrator was yet to issue his opinion on allocation of costs and there had been no further political activity undertaken most likely because Parliament has been focused on Brexit matters.

### **5.4 International Committee paper**

Council considered a report from the International Committee that contained recommendations to improve engagement with and involvement of Overseas Society Fellows (OSF.)

Council noted that the International Committee had recently conducted a survey of the OSF in order to assess the impact and relevance of the OSF membership. In summary, the key issues raised were that:

- The membership rate did not represent value for money for Overseas Fellows (OSF) and should be reduced.
- The On-line platform/data base should be used to facilitate contacts.
- Greater communication and recognition of the overseas membership is required.
- Higher profile for OSF, e.g. with Council is required.
- Better access to video recordings of meetings is required.
- Increased RAS presence at international meetings and with regional bodies would be beneficial.

Council considered the recommendations made to address the issues raised and agreed the following:

- They were not supportive of a reduced membership rate for OSF but advised that they like to know how other similar societies address this issue.
- A Council member should be designated to represent the OSF. Dr Paul Daniels volunteered to be the OSF member.

Council noted the following:

- The Fellows database has been set up to allow Fellows to search for other Fellows (who have given their permission for details to be shared) and that this data can be filtered by, for example, institution, specialism or country of residence. Care should be given to ensure that Data Protection legislation is adhered to.
- A&G is available as a PDF and the Editor of A&G has agreed that a tag on the Blog Post can be set up for OSF, OSF will be invited write articles for the A&G forum and magazine and space on the A&G website can be made available to highlight OSF activities including research projects.
- A small budget (£3K annually) already exists for overseas RAS lecture visits, this should be promoted and utilised at events such as the recent Astronomical Society of India conference, which would have been an ideal opportunity to host exchange lectures.
- As part of 2020 planning, consideration could be given to holding an RAS meeting overseas.

## **5.5 Diversity Questionnaire**

Dr Stacey Habergham introduced a paper from CDAG that proposed that candidates for RAS Council positions to be invited to complete a diversity questionnaire and to make their responses visible as part of the election process.

There was significant discussion and mixed views on this item, ranging from full support to significant concerns. Council discussed the timing of this proposal and it was agreed that this would not be implemented for the forthcoming elections.

In regards to the possibility of implementing the proposal for the 2018 elections it was agreed that the Executive Director would work with CDAG over the summer to include proposals on this matter as part of a paper for Council in October 2017; this paper will consider how to improve the process for the selection of Council positions in the round.

## **5.6 Bullying and Harassment Survey**

Dr Stacey Habergham, Chair of CDAG, introduced a paper that sought Council's approval to undertake a survey on bullying and harassment in the fields of astronomy and geophysics.

Council considered the draft questionnaire and made a number of comments on the presentation of the questionnaire and suggestions for improving the content, including:

- As drafted, the questionnaire focuses more on sexual harassment so this bias needs to be addressed in a further draft.
- The timescale of the questions could be tightened to reporting incidents that had occurred in the last 5 years rather than at any time.
- The questionnaire should be revised to be able to report on multi incidents across various timeframes.
- Data security is imperative and before this questionnaire is issued this should be checked.
- It was noted that the results of this survey would provide the Society with an understanding of the prevalence of bullying and harassment in the Astronomy & Geophysics community, this would be presented to the Fellowship in an article in A&G.

It was agreed that CDAG would take the points raised into consideration and redraft the questionnaire. The President volunteered to act as a fresh pair of eyes to review the revised draft prior to distribution.

### **5.7 IAU membership**

Council noted the outcome of the IAU consultation on introducing a new category of membership, the "IAU Junior Member" category will be open to PhD Students and/or early career post-Doc researchers in Astronomy/Astrophysics and had been well received by the majority of the National Members.

It was noted that to implement this change a modification of the IAU Statute would be required. Council noted the proposed process to achieve the change and that the process appears to be cumbersome. The Society will wait for further direction from the IAU as to what is required from individual member states.

### **5.8 Eligibility for the Patrick Moore and Annie Maunder medals**

Dr Mandy Bailey introduced her paper that sought Council endorsement of the policy on eligibility to apply for the Patrick Moore and Annie Maunder medals. Council agreed that neither the Patrick Moore medal nor Annie Maunder medal should be considered for anyone who is currently sitting on the RAS Council or named as part of the Education and Outreach committee in any capacity.

Council noted that a related paper on eligibility criteria for the Patrick Moore Medal, that had been tabled, had been withdrawn as it had not been formally approved by the Education and Outreach Committee. It will be (re) presented to Council in due course.

### **5.9 Eduroam and Wi-Fi upgrade**

The Deputy Executive Director introduced a paper that proposed the introduction of Eduroam as part of the upgrade to Wi-Fi provision at Burlington House (BH), it was noted that Council had considered this matter in February and the paper presented responded to the questions they had posed. It was noted that the IT and Information Manager had sought advice from the IT Working Group on the proposal and that they were fully supportive.

Council discussed some of the practical and technical matters to making this change and future use of Eduroam in BH. They sought reassurances that a reliable service

could be provided for all visitors to BH who do not have a Eduroam account and that this service would be easy to use and reliable, also that there would be no reduction (and hopefully an improvement) to staff access and use of the Internet, as it is essential that staff provision is not affected by spikes in visitor numbers to BH.

Subject to confirmation that the above points could be addressed satisfactorily, in principle Council approved the installation of Eduroam at BH, at a capital cost of £13.1K and a support contract for 3 years of £6.3K.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The IT and Information Manager, in discussion with the supplier, confirmed that the upgraded Wi-Fi system will remain open to all visitors, and that staff access should be improved through a dedicated allocation of Internet bandwidth. The work to upgrade to Eduroam has therefore now commenced.]

### **5.10 Website upgrade update**

Professor Mike Watson introduced a paper that provided a summary of progress on the redevelopment of the RAS website. He noted that the IT and Information Manager would prefer to undertake the website upgrade in house, it was noted that Council had discussed the various options, e.g. in house, outsourcing, a combination thereof, at the Council meeting in February and that, mainly in acknowledgment of competing and on-going work priorities for the IT and information manager, the in house option was not preferred; there is also a need for significant project management skills to take this project forward in totality as opposed to just the design phase.

Council discussed various options including recruiting another staff member (permanent or short term contract, e.g. a student). They agreed that the decision on resources required to undertake this project would follow the next step which is to agree an outline specification, including expected timelines (project plan) and receipt of tenders from outsource companies; the IT and info manager could tender for an in house approach as part of this process.

Council noted that a small number of Web and Graphic design companies who might like to tender for this work had been identified.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The IT and Information Manager has invited three companies to bid for the web contract and extended the invitation to the existing provider. A panel made up of the Deputy Executive Director, the Office, Events & Buildings Manager, IT and Information Manager, and Professor Watson, the designated Council member with oversight of this project will meet the tendering companies on 17 May.]

### **5.11 Arrangements for the AGM and 2016 AGM Minutes**

Council noted the arrangements the AGM and Ordinary Meeting that will be held on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The AGM will start at 4pm. The Ordinary Meeting will start at 5pm. The President will issue standard notices and then introduce Professor Steve Miller, Chair of the RAS 200: Sky and Earth Steering group, who will provide a brief update on RAS 200: Sky and Earth programme, thereafter he will give his Presidential address.

The Executive Director asked Council to provide comments on the draft minutes of the AGM from last year that had been provided as a paper. She thanked Dr Sheila Peacock for helpful comments already received.



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

### **6.1 Stonehenge questionnaire: response from the Royal Astronomical Society**

Council noted the Society's response to the Highways England consultation on the proposed changes to the A303 road, including the construction of a tunnel, near Stonehenge. The Deputy Executive Director acknowledged with thanks that the response had been based on feedback from members of the Astronomical Heritage Committee and in particular from Professor Clive Ruggles who had drafted a similar response for the International Astronomical Union. It was noted that the way that Highways England had approached this consultation had been less than satisfactory.

## **7. PUBLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Minutes of the GJI Editorial Board Meeting**

Council noted the minutes of the GJI Editorial board held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Professor Elsworth sought clarity on the statement made on author contributions.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Dr Kim Clube, the Editorial Office Manager has confirmed that the GJI board agreed that the Society should ask authors to include an author contributions statement, stating for example: who analysed the results, who processed the data, who wrote the paper. It was noted that while some journals require authors to do this the Society would start by encouraging GJI authors to provide the statement and will monitor this issue and reconsider the policy at a future date, if required.]

## **8. OTHER**

### **8.1 Officers Reports**

Council noted the Officers Reports and approved the following candidates that had been proposed for Fellowship:

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Janna	Goldstein	Birmingham	Alberto Vecchio
Augustine	Mavor-Parker	London	Membership committee
David P	Frucht	Valencia	Membership committee
Indrani	Roy	Harrow	Membership committee
Gordon	Barrett	North Vancouver	Membership committee
Deepesh	Tailor	Leicester	Simon Ebo
Sara	Lukic	London	Kevin McNulty
Derek	Cowey	Durham	Ralph Spencer
Joanna	Ramasawmy	St Albans	Martin Hardcastle
Matthew	Rickard	Bedford	Martin Hardcastle
Alexander	Bennett-Forshaw	Preston	David Sobral

Julian Mark	Singer	London	Mathew Page
Charles	Weiner	Cookham	Stephen Serjeant
Shiroman	Prakash	Agra	Pranav Sharma
Gareth	Williams	Llandudno	Andrew Norton
Anthony	Meijer	Sheffield	Martin
			McCoustra
Huw John	Goodall	Leeds	Timothy Wright
Catherine	Johnson	Vancouver	Dan McKenzie
Indranil	Banik	Folkestone	Vivienne Wild
Andreu	Font-Ribera	London	Donnacha Kirk
Helena	Bates	London	Sara Russell
Aristides	Zenonos	Aberdeen	David Cornwell
Panayiota	Sketsiou	Aberdeen	David Cornwell
Ryan	Cutter	Norwich	E.R Stanway
Isobel	Hook	Lancaster	Jim Wild
Jessie	Durk	London	Viraj Sanghai
Michael	Moltenbrey	Munich	Stacey
			Habergham
Christopher	Wallis	Dorking	Jason McEwen
Michael	Franks	London	Ian Crawford
Matjaz	Vidmar	Edinburgh	John Peacock
Jonathan	Westcott	Hatfield	Martin
			Hardcastle
Norma	Foster	Cirencester	Brian Sheen
Hazhir	Teimourian	Wadhurst	Membership committee
Chariton	Christou	Edinburgh	Membership committee
Nicholas	Joannou	London	Simon Bennett
Christopher	Nelson	Sheffield	Rahul Sharma
Abigail	Rymer	Corwnsville	Sheila Kanani
Martin	Ward	Durham	Kim Clube
Daniel	Verscharen	Durham	Robert Wicks

Professor Yvonne Elsworth asked if a record is kept of where the candidates come from and whether they are students or not as this may be helpful to inform membership drives.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** the requested data will be added to future Officers Reports.]

Council again briefly discussed the funding allocation for small grants. The Treasurer confirmed that the value of requests received in the first tranche of grant awards is in excess of the annual budget and it was noted that the diversity of institutions that apply for grants is not very wide. As mentioned under agenda item 2, it was agreed that the Officers who are members of the grants panel should review the criteria for small grants and provide a paper for Council to consider in October.

**ACTION: Treasurer, A & G Secretaries**

## **8.2 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held in February 2017**

Council approved the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

**9. AOB**

**a) Voices for Science**

As mentioned under agenda item 2 Council were asked to provide comments on the Voices for Science proposals by email out of Committee.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The consensus was that whilst the Voices for Science Project could be worthwhile doing, it is rather expensive and external funding should be sought. Professor Mike Edmunds and Dr Sue Bowler have been advised of the decision of Council.]

**b) Pro-Am collaboration**

Dr Paul Daniels advised that he was keen to develop proposals for how the Society could work better with the amateur astronomical societies and that he would bring forward proposals to Council at a later date. The Deputy Executive Director volunteered to help with this project. The President requested that this should be expanded to include consideration of increased collaboration with amateur geophysics groups.

**c) Update on Specialist Discussion meetings**

The A & G Secretary updated Council on applications received for specialist discussion groups, as ever they had been very oversubscribed.

**d) Retiring members of Council**

Three Council members, Ms. Jane McArthur, Dr Stacey Habergham and Professor Martin Bureau advised that this was their last meeting as they are unable to attend the meeting in May. On behalf of Council the President thanked them all for their valuable contributions as Trustees during their term of office.

Professor Bureau expressed his thanks to the Executive and advised that prior to becoming a Council member he had been unaware of the inner workings of the Society and the important roles and essential contributions that the staff make and thanked them for all their hard work, he also thanked all the members of Council for being successful ambassadors for the Society.

These sentiments were echoed by Dr Habergham and Ms McArthur.

**Council rose at 15:18**



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**Professor J. Zarnecki**

**12<sup>th</sup> May 2017**