



*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

C(2018/07) 2.

Minutes of the RAS Council Meeting held on Friday May 11th 2018

1. Attendance, Apologies & Introduction

Present: Professor John Zarnecki (JZ) (Chair); Dr Nigel Berman (NB) Treasurer; Professor Mike Cruise (MC); Professor Lyndsay Fletcher (LF); Professor Mark Lester (ML); Dr Paul Daniels (PAD); Professor Steve Miller (SM); Mr Charles Barclay (CB); Dr Sheila Peacock (SP); Professor Stephen Serjeant (SS); Dr Clare Watt (CW); Professor Giovanna Tinetti (GT) via Skype; Dr Megan Argo (MA) via Skype; Professor Brad Gibson (BG); Mark Woodland (MW), Dr Caitriona Jackman (CJ); Dr Mandy Bailey (MB); Professor Ian Crawford (IC); Professor Mike Bode (MB), Michael Watson (MWa)

Apologies: Professor Brad Gibson; Professor Yvonne Elsworth

In Attendance: Philip Diamond (PD), Executive Director; Dr Robert Massey (RM) Deputy Executive Director; Eddie Finch (EF) Auditor, Buzzacott; Sue Bullivant (SB) Independent note taker . JZ welcomed all and pointed out that this would be the last meeting for some attendees including himself.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

- The cost of the lift repair to be added to the minutes.
- Hiranya Peiris to be added to the attendance list.
- 5.4 Solicited candidates approval and permission
- MR: An enquiry had been received from John Hearnshaw of the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand regarding participation in the 2020 celebrations– a reply has been sent.

3. President's Business

JZ had given a talk at the British Physics Olympiad and Astronomy and Astrophysics Awards at the Royal Society, and commented that this project should be monitored and supported by the RAS.

JZ had been invited to and attended the Society of Antiquaries AGM.

JZ attended the ESA's *Space Rocks* event run by Mark McCaughrean, which is a regular event that features arts and culture etc. as well as science, with an evening music event. He attended the morning session where Tim Peake, an astronomer and

a doctor were panellists, and Brian May also attended. JZ believed it could be a good outreach opportunity.

JZ and PD met with Mrs Meg Weston-Smith her daughter Lucinda Bell, the daughter of E.A. Milne. Mrs Weston's family had generously funded the Society's E.A. Milne travelling fellowships.

JZ attended a RAS event to mark International Women's Day. The event was introduced by RAS Education and Outreach Officer Lucinda Offer, and the talks were given by female Fellows. MB also attended.

JZ said that EWASS had gone very well. The session on Friday morning had Directors from ESO; ESA; SKA and Virgo interferometer. He wanted to formally thank Liverpool John Moores University and RAS staff who put a lot of work into the smooth running of this event.

Action: PD

PD to have a debrief with staff. It was noted that the awards ceremony, which was longer than usual as it was a combined event, and could be shortened if summary citations were written. MB suggested it might be timely to conduct a review of the NAM.

4. Treasurer's Report

Eddie Finch (EF) from Buzzacott joined the meeting to summarise the Annual Report and Accounts for 2017, the Post Audit Report from Buzzacott, and the Letter of Representation.

- i) EF said that Buzzacott had checked that the **Report and Accounts** were compliant with the relevant regulations and he would leave this document with the Council. He said the RAS was managing the risks highlighted in the report. Buzzacott were content with the accounts. In response to a query from CB, EF said that Heritage Assets do not need to be re-valued for accounting purposes.
- ii) **Post Audit Report:** EF took Council through the post-audit report. He advised Council that it should consider its total returns policy each year and the amount of funds it wishes to set aside.

Action: NB

He asked Council to note that rent accrual was necessarily an estimation.

- iii) **Letter of representation:** EF said this was a standard letter.

In response to a question about matters Buzzacott would highlight for Trustee consideration, EF referred to the new Governance Code for charities. The RAS should consider if they wished to adhere to it. RM said the Council had agreed last year to adhere to the Governance Scheme. Regarding Data Protection; SP raised the question of data sharing with external organisations, in light of the new GDPR regulations. It was commented that this question would be addressed as part of the process of achieving compliance with the new regulations. JZ pointed out that Council members are collectively responsible and liable for the Report and Accounts although only he is required to sign.

Formal approval of the Annual Report and Accounts was given. The Letter of Representation was approved.

Correction: It was noted that a reference to UCL in the report should read University of Central Lancashire.

Council expressed its thanks to the auditors and also to Mark Piper the RAS accountant.

4.3 Risk Register

The Risk Register will be discussed in detail at the December or February Council meeting.

4.4 Treasurer's Report – other matters

NB said that pensions Trustees are renewing life assurance. This could cost up to £20, 000 but is necessary.

5. Organisation and Structure

5.1 Arrangements for AGM

JZ to Chair this meeting until Item 8. then MC to take over.

5.2 Honorary Auditors Report

JZ said the report had suggested there was a lack of transparency in Council election outcomes and order of rank of nominees. He suggested we should provide these numbers in future – the number of votes for each candidate to be published and declared at the AGM. Council agreed this proposal.

It was suggested that those applicants who had been unsuccessful should be contacted to see how they might serve RAS in other ways.

Action: PD

PD to ensure that Council Meeting minutes are posted on website in a timely manner and easy to find.

Action: PD

RM said the new website could feature pictures and profiles of Council members.

Action: RM

An action list for Council from the Honorary Auditors report to be drawn up.

Action: PD

5.3 Lease and rental negotiations

PD said a rent demand had not yet been received. The Presidents of RAS and Geological Society are due to meet on June 4th to discuss a common approach to the lease issue. MC will attend and report back.

Action: MC

5.4 Progress on RAS Website

RM said the new website will be launched at the end of May and will be compatible with tablets and phones.

5.5 GDPR

RM reported that the priority is to add a privacy notice to the website before 25th May. The Society had been advised that it will not be necessary to send an opt-in email for RAS communications. We have to demonstrate by the 25th May deadline that we are making progress towards compliance. RM and PD were asked to review 2016 minutes in order to redact confidential items.

Action: PD/RM

5.6 Finance Committee Membership

Council approved Jane McCarthy joining the Finance Committee.

5.8 International Committee Membership

Membership of the Committee was approved.

LF asked that in future primary affiliation for new members of the committee to be indicated, e.g. "A" or "G"

Action: PD

5.9 Fowler Award Analysis

JZ said that data had been gathered by Helen Klus, an assistant editor in the RAS office. MB had asked Helen provide an analysis of the nominations for the 'A' category back to 2014. MB was of the view that there was not sufficient evidence to warrant splitting the award into separate theory and observation categories.

It was proposed that the number of nominations for the Fowler 'A' award should continue to be monitored and that a general discussion of the RAS awards including how best to promote them should be part of a strategic review of activities.

Action: PD

6. Policy & Public Engagement

6.1 Minutes of RAS Sky and Earth steering group

SM said all was going well although there were some concerns that the Workers Education Association were not involving Fellows. The Sky and Earth committee's concerns were strong and it expected a revised plan/timeline from the Worker's Educational Association. There will be a budget reconciliation.

LF asked that full names always be included in these minutes.

Action: RM

6.2 Press Office report for European Week of Astronomy and Space Science

Clare Moody MEP for South of England attended, as did Chi Onwura, MP, Shadow Business Secretary. There was a representative from the European Research Council and the new Chief Executive of STFC attended.

7. Publications

7.1 PMC Summary

Processing charges for papers grow with the number of pages, therefore the longer a paper the more it costs the RAS. It was proposed that papers exceeding twenty pages should incur a charge of £50 per page for each page over the twenty page limit. It is the advice of the PMC to introduce this system. **Council agreed this proposal.**

7.5 MNRAS

The MNRAS Editor-in Chief and Editorial Office manager had produced a paper in response to the discussion at the December 2017 Council meeting. The issue of anonymity was reconsidered at a meeting of the MNRAS Board in March 2018. At that meeting serious concerns were expressed by many, but not all editors regarding the possibility of harassment by some authors in the course of the review process were editorial anonymity to be waived. The continuing success of MNRAS requires the full co-operation of the Editorial panel. Therefore, the proposal was put to Council that Editors, like referees, should be given the option of waiving their anonymity when accepting the handling of a submission. Trustees reported their memberships of the editorial boards of other journals, prior to the discussion of this item.

Council voted on the Proposal and approved it.

The consequences of this change would be monitored and considered at the 2019 Board meeting. If concerns that had been expressed were proved to be unfounded the removal of anonymity of all Editors might be reconsidered.

Action: MNRAS, Editor-in-Chief

8. Other

8.1 Officers Report March, April, May

PD to ask the Membership Committee for guidance on the issue of individual sponsors endorsing multiple candidates.

Action: PD

Council approved the candidates for election.

8.2 Monthly A & G Open Meeting

Correction: text in brackets to be removed.

8.3 RAS Thesis Prizes

Thesis prize winners were approved.

Runners up receive a £50 book token.

JZ thanked the relevant committees for their hard work

9. Any other business

JZ noted that the late Derek Fry had been a recipient of the Service Award in Astronomy. His obituary had appeared in the Guardian.

MB reported that a strong and diverse programme had been planned for the Specialist Discussion meetings.

PD reported that JZ had received the Harry Massey Award which will be presented to him in the US.

JZ offered formal thanks to the Council members who are now stepping down. He thanked Council and said he had enjoyed his time as President.

Council rose at 3.30 pm.

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Professor A.M. Cruise

6th July 2018