



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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**MINUTES
COUNCIL MEETING
8th MARCH 2013
AT 11:00 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM**

1. INTRODUCTION AND ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: Professor David Southwood, Professor Farideh Honary, Professor Barry Parsons, Dr Simon Mitton, Professor Clive Tadhunter, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Martin Barstow, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Lyndsay Fletcher, Ms Mandy Bailey, Professor Richard Davis, Mr Charles Barclay, Professor Donald Kurtz, Dr Andrew Norton, Dr Sheila Peacock, Professor Yvonne Elsworth, Dr Helen Fraser, and Professor Steve Miller

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

APOLOGIES: Professor David Hughes, Professor Ralph Spencer, and Dr Geraint Jones (who was hosting the RAS Specialist meeting)

It was noted that Professor Steve Miller would arrive around midday.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 8th February 2013 were approved with minor amendments and the addition of a sentence under agenda item 6.1 to explain that Professor Martin Barstow had left the room for this discussion owing to a conflict of interest, as a Presidential candidate.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There was brief discussion on the following matters arising:

- Under agenda item 5.5, it was agreed that use of a pre-publication repository by the Geophysics Community should be considered at the Geophysics forum. The date of the solid earth geophysics forum was confirmed as 15th May 2013.
- Under agenda item 6.4 – the Deputy Exec Sec confirmed that the annual cost of the RAS Community Server would be £1980.
- Under agenda item 10.1, it was noted that Professor Barry Parsons and Dr Sheila Peacock are seeking to provide additional names as RAS Points of Contact.

4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

a. Political engagement

The President advised that he will be attending two events with MPs in the next couple of months. On the 30th April he and the Deputy Executive Secretary will attend a cross-party debate on science policy hosted by the Institution of Engineering and Technology. The panel will include Science Minister David Willets, Lib Dem science spokesperson Julian Huppert and Labour Shadow Science Minister Shabana Mahmood. On the 15th May the President and Deputy Exec Secretary will meet with Julian Huppert and then Shabana Mahmood. This timely meeting should serve as a useful follow up to the debate.

b. Astronomy Forum

The President advised that the minutes of the Astronomy Forum have been posted on the RAS website.

https://www.ras.org.uk/images/stories/ras_pdfs/Astronomy_Forum/astro_forum_minutes_feb13_final.pdf

c. Review of A Secretary position (reference agenda item 6.1)

The President thanked Council for their out of committee deliberations on filling the position of A Secretary and thanked Ms Mandy Bailey for accepting the position.

d. Ordinary meeting in April

The President thanked Dr Lyndsay Fletcher for agreeing to host the Ordinary meeting on the 12th April in his stead.

e. Open Access in Europe

The President drew attention to a response from Giles Chichester MP on Open Access Policy in the EU that had been tabled.

5. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

5.1 Treasurer's Report

There was no formal report this month. Significant financial matters were dealt with under agenda item 6.2, the 2012 Annual Report and in the following agenda item.

5.2 RAS Staff remuneration and structure

The Treasurer reminded Council that a review of the RAS staff salary levels had been planned for 2014. He proposed that this was brought forward to take into account the significant potential changes to the management of the Society including;

- A potential significant change to the administrative arrangements (the details of which are confidential at the moment)
- The need to find a replacement for the accountant; this will require consideration of the allocation of book keeping, accountancy and financial policy tasks and responsibilities between the incoming incumbent, possible bought in accountancy skills and the Treasurer
- The forthcoming Science Council review of salary and benefits in the organisations that they represent.

It was agreed that the Treasurer and Executive Secretary would undertake a review of the structure/allocation of tasks and salary levels over the spring and summer.

6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

6.1 RAS Council Elections 2013

Professor Martin Barstow was not present for agenda item 6.1 as he had a conflict of interest, being one of the Presidential candidates.

a. Update on A secretary position

It was noted that Council had taken a vote on the A Secretary position, that Ms Mandy Bailey is willing to serve and that her name will appear on the ballot paper as unopposed.

b. Explanatory note and letter to Fellows

Council had been provided with draft copies of a note to explain the arrangements for the 2013 ballot (including changes to be made in future years to length of appointments and the arrangements for the Presidential elections in 2013) and a letter to Fellows to accompany the ballot paper.

The Executive Secretary summarised previous Council deliberations on the election of President:

- There had been a significant amount of well intentioned deliberations aimed at achieving a level playing field for the three Presidential candidates. It was acknowledged that pragmatism in the interpretation of the bye laws may be required to ensure that a sensible way forward can be found for the unprecedented situation that has arisen this year.

- Council had voted and agreed that only the names of the three candidates would be displayed on the ballot paper with no reference to who nominated them or their discipline, i.e. A or G.
- The lead scrutineer, Dr Quentin Stanley had been aware of the ongoing deliberations. However on fuller scrutiny he had advised that as a consequence of Bye law 12 the same criteria need to be applied to how the election of President is presented on the ballot sheet as for the other Officers. As such he advised that the ballot paper would need to show the names of the nominators for the two candidates nominated by the Fellowship and the words “The Council” attached to the candidate suggested by the Presidential Election Committee (PEC). Also that the annotation A or G be attached to the three candidates.
- It was noted that Officers had been considering this matter in advance of Council and had proposed that as Bye law 27 allows the words ‘The Council’ to be added to each of the three names, this could be considered. Whilst not an ideal solution it was felt to be in keeping with the bye laws and presented a level playing field for the candidates. Dr Stanley was not supportive of this approach as his interpretation of the bye laws differed to that of the Officers.

Dr Helen Fraser suggested an alternative whereby the names of the proposers and seconders for all three candidates are shown. As the PEC consisted of three Council members who are entitled by Bye law 27 to add names to the balloting list at the February meeting this was a viable alternative that Dr Stanley agreed with.

As such the names of the three Presidential candidates and their proposers and seconders will be shown on the ballot sheet with their designation of either A or G.

The President thanked Dr Fraser for her proposal and Dr Stanley for all his efforts and advice on this subject.

Professor Barry Parsons requested that the results of the ballot be made available to allow analysis of voting patterns, including the relative standing of G candidates, particularly those in Solid Earth. The President suggested that the scrutineers are approached and asked to not destroy the voting forms for the 2013 election to allow analysis.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: Following discussion between Professor Parsons and Dr Stanley it has been agreed that analysis of candidates’ scientific discipline and their vote counts from previous elections could be undertaken and shared with Council, providing an anonymous way to interrogate the data.

6.2 2012 Annual report

[Professor Steve Miller was present for agenda items 6.2 to AOB.]

The President reminded Council that as trustees of the Society it is important for them to approve the annual report that will be presented to the AGM for approval in May 2013.

The Executive Secretary explained that as the annual report needs to be finalised in advance of the strategic deliberations planned for the Away Day in June then the text in the main sets general direction planned for 2013 rather than making specific commitments. During the year Council had agreed specific actions for the library and annexe. Meetings with the Education Committee and International Committee are planned to discuss potential development in these areas.

The Executive Secretary introduced sections 1 through 4 and 6. Council suggested presentational changes and a few additional inputs; these changes will be made to the final report.

ACTION: Executive Secretary

The Treasurer introduced Section 5, the financial review and the supporting financial data. Key points were:

- The voluntary income averages around £50K a year but is very variable. Last year it was more than £100K, in 2012 it is around £3K
- Incoming resources fell by £120K
- Resources expended increased from £300K to £600K, this was because of increased grant expenditure (more travel grants to the IAU meeting held every three years) and a result of accountancy policies that dictate in which year expenditure is shown. With respect to Fellowships 2012 saw the award of the Daphne Jackson Fellowship and the Norman Lockyer.
- Total Resources expended has increased by £400K.
- The Cash in hand is shown to be double that held in the previous year; this is because of the advance payment received from the publishers; this will be placed in fixed interest bonds.

Mr Charlie Barclay asked if the accounts prepared by the investment managers could be made available to Council. The treasurer hopes to be able to do so and will discuss with the investment managers, he suggested that an extraction of the key data may be a more suitable document to circulate.

ACTION: Treasurer

Council discussed the management of RAS heritage assets. It was noted that the librarian was taking forward a plan to improve the preservation and security of these assets as well as drafting a salvage plan (that would be included in the RAS Fire Plan).

The Treasurer agreed to provide notes to explain the terminology used in the Annual Report in regards to various funds supporting Burlington House.

ACTION: Treasurer

6.3 Progress report: Improvements to the Electronic Infrastructure

The Deputy Executive Secretary advised that the switch over to broadband was going well, the new line had been connected and testing was ongoing. The final switchover is planned for the week commencing 11th March. The hearing loop has been ordered.

Meetings with the IT providers for the Geological Society, Antiquities Society and Institute of Mathematics had been arranged to receive quotes to allow comparison with that received from Larch, the current IT provider.

Council expressed their thanks to the IT working group.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: The hearing loop was installed on 12th March 2013. Subject to minor testing, the broadband switchover was successfully completed by 1st May 2013.

6.4 RAS Away Day

The Executive Secretary introduced the illustrative programme for the RAS Away 'Day' and asked Council to consider the range of discussion topics that have been agreed at previous meetings.

Council noted the following arrangements:

DATES: 13th and 14th June 2013

LOCATION: Sandbanks Hotel, Poole, Dorset

WEBSITE: www.sandbankshotel.co.uk

ARRANGEMENTS: The RAS will provide travel costs to/from the hotel, the cost of an evening meal on Wednesday 12th, 2 nights accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner (with wine) on Thursday 13th, breakfast and lunch on Friday 14th.

A new Councillor induction session will be hosted by the Treasurer and Executive Secretary on the afternoon of the 12th June.

It was agreed that presentation of RAS Accounts (including the officers report) and Outreach Activities should also be discussed at the away day. Session chairs will be asked to provide introductory reading material in advance. The programme will be finalised by the end of May 2013.

6.5 2012 AGM minutes

Council noted the 2012 AGM minutes that will be presented to the AGM in 2013 for approval. Previous convention has been to provide hard copies of the minutes to those present at the subsequent years AGM. In the interest of increased transparency and improved communication it was agreed that the draft minutes will be posted on the RAS website to allow a wider readership. Hard copies will also be made available on the day.

It was agreed that the agenda for the 2013 AGM should also be placed on the RAS website.

ACTION: Executive Secretary

6.6 NAM 2013

The Deputy Executive Secretary noted the early deadline of 19th March for abstracts. It was agreed that an email would be sent to the Fellowship to advise them of this early date.

ACTION: Deputy Exec Sec

It was noted that there is a Council meeting on the Friday lunchtime and that expenses, including registration costs for Council members will be paid if necessary.

The 'early bird' registration deadline is 29th April 2013 and the deadline for reduced rate accommodation is 1st April.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: The abstract submission deadline has been extended to 1st April.

7. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

7.1 House of Lords Science & Technology Committee: The Implementation of Open Access

Council noted the report, which criticised RCUK guidance. It was noted that this issue was addressed in part at the recent meeting on Open Access held at the Royal Society. RCUK have issued revised guidance that provides more clarity in the expected process to be implemented from 1st April 2013. It was noted that the management of papers from mixed nationality collaborations has not yet been addressed.

7.2 RAS response to the Triennial Review

Council noted the response that the RAS had provided on the 27th Feb to the Cabinet Office led review of Research Councils. The Deputy Executive Secretary advised that this had been the focus of the recent Astronomy Forum. It was noted that STFC seem to have a better public profile than NERC. Professor Miller suggested that the STFC document on outreach and education could be provided to NERC. The President agreed to discuss the NERC profile with the Chief Executive of NERC when he meets him at the external Geophysics Forum, scheduled for 15th March.

ACTION: President

7.3 Impact booklets

The Deputy Executive Secretary tabled a proof page from the draft Astronomy booklet. It was noted that whilst the editor had made many efforts to secure material for the Geophysics publication very little material had been provided.

POST COUNCIL NOTE: Professor Barry Parsons and Dr Sheila Peacock have been encouraging input from the G community. Suggestions for the title for the A booklet are in circulation.

7.4 House of Commons Science & Technology Committee: Inquiry into the European and UK Space Agencies

The Deputy Executive Secretary advised that responses are required by the middle of April. The paper has been circulated to Council members and members of the Astronomy Forum. Professor Martin Barstow explained that whilst the Government provides a significant capital expenditure budget for telescopes etc, this did not allow for putting instruments into space. It was agreed that this anomaly should be mentioned in the RAS response.

Professor Steve Miller said that there are many positive elements in the review including the potential for Horizon 2020 and the opportunity to engage with the European Science Council and Parliament, however, he proposed that the Society should be opposed to the proposal of the European Commission taking over ESA; this was supported by many around the table.

It was noted that the requirement to have two industrial partners for projects funded through EU Framework programmes can be difficult and that ESO and ESA approach this differently. Dr Sheila Peacock advised that earth observing systems also needs to be considered in the RAS response and agreed that she would circulate the paper to the Geophysics Community via the JISC mail list.

ACTION: Dr Sheila Peacock

The inquiry documents are available on the Committee website at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/european-and-uk-space-agencies/>

Council members were asked to provide comments to the Deputy Executive Secretary who would draft the RAS response.

ACTION: Deputy Exec. Sec.

8. PUBLICATIONS

8.1 Information of New Editors (Exec. Sec.), for information

Council noted the following three new editor appointments:

- Professor Omer Blaes (UC Santa Barbara), MNRAS (joined January 2013)
- Dr Kosuke Heki (Hokkaido University), GJI (joined February 2013)
- Professor Michael Ritzwoller (University of Colorado), GJI (joined February 2013)

9. OTHER

9.1 Patrick Moore Commemoration

Dr Helen Fraser advised that the RAS had contacted the BAA, SPA and the Executors of Patrick Moore's will and it had been agreed that the RAS could play a lead role in an event that is being organised at the National Space Science Centre in Autumn 2013. The event will be open to members of the public, amateur and professional astronomers.

In addition the IAU may consider naming a moon feature after Patrick Moore, they will consider this 3 years posthumously.

9.2 Harrison Clock Regulator

The minor amendments on the agreement proposed by the National Maritime Museum have been forwarded to Richard Thomas, Chairman of the British Horological Institute for his, and his Council's, comment. Further negotiation will be undertaken if necessary, but they are very unlikely to be substantial or controversial. Professor Mike Edmunds is arranging a short meeting in the late summer or early autumn to review progress on the project and the publication of the results, involving the BHI and NMM. Jonathan Betts, the NMM (and World) expert on Harrison clocks, has agreed to give a brief illustrated account of the project at an RAS Ordinary Meeting. It is hoped that this can be scheduled for late 2013. It may be possible to combine the talk with a formal "hand-over" of the research documents from the BHI to the RAS.

9.3 Officers Reports

Council approved the following for candidates for Fellowship:

Surname	First Name	Town/ University	Sponsor
Aird	James	University of Durham	John Lucey
Armitage	Matthew	Oxford	Alan Buckman
Bodénan	Jean-David	The Open University	Euan Monaghan
Bond	Charlotte	University of Birmingham	Chiara Mingarelli
Brown	Daniel	Oldbury	Chiara Mingarelli
Costa	Michele	Stoke-On-Trent	Mandy Bailey
Cousins	Claire	Edinburgh	Charles Cockell
Day	Frances	Stroud	A.J. Norton
Elsden	Tom	St. Andrews	Prof. Alan Hood
Fender	Rob	University of Southampton	P.A. Charles
Fox-Powell	Mark	Edinburgh	Charles Cockell
Haster	Carl-Johan	University of Birmingham	Chiara Mingarelli
Hine	Nancy	Wokingham	Martin Hardcastle
Hodgson	Jonathan	St. Andrews	Alan Hood
Houghton	Isobel	Bristol	Dr K.L. Aplin
Jans	Francis	University of Sussex	Dr Darren Baskill
Kessler	Helmut	Isle of Man	Christopher Stott

Liggins	Florence	Imperial College London	Joshua Chadney
Matzeu	Gabriele	Keele University	Mandy Bailey
Naqvi	Syed Hasan	Croydon	I. Crawford
Nwaokoro	Emenike	University of Bristol	Andrew Young
Payler	Samuel	Southampton	Charles Cockell
Pettitt	David	Carlisle	Ronald James Livesey
Rauscher	Thomas	University of Hertfordshire	Sean Ryan
Rigby	Andrew	Liverpool	David Eden
Rodriguez- Barrera	Maria	St.Andrews	Pasquale Galianni
Russell	Ian	OUP	A.M. Cruise
Sandquist	Patrick	St. Andrews	Chistiane Helling
Smith	Roger	Pembrokeshire	Andrew Norton
Smithies	Mark	Ross-on-Wye	Andrew Young
Stackhouse	Duncan	Glasgow	Lyndsay Fletcher
Varley	Ryan	UCL	Ian Howarth
Wakeford	Hannah	Exeter	Tim Naylor
Zieleniewski	Simon	Oxford	Ryan C.W. Houghton

10. AOB

Professor Barry Parsons requested the provision of a sandwich lunch for attendees at the forthcoming Solid Earth Geophysics forum. It was agreed.

Council rose at 15:20.

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D. J. Southwood
President

08 May 2013