



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

# ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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## MINUTES COUNCIL MEETING 11<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2016

### 1. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

#### PRESENT

Professor Martin Barstow, Professor John Zarnecki, Professor Mike Cruise, Professor Ian Crawford, Dr Mandy Bailey, Professor Lyndsay Fletcher, Professor Mike Edmunds, Professor James Wild, Professor Don Kurtz, Professor John Brown, Professor Paul Murdin, Dr Simon Mitton, Professor Martin Bureau, Miss Jane MacArthur, Dr Stacey Habergham, Professor John Brown, Professor Mike Bode, Dr Sarah Matthews, Dr Sara Russel, Dr Stephen Serjeant

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

#### APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Professor Christine Pierce and Dr Caitriona Jackman.

### 2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016 were approved.

The Executive Director updated Council on the following matters arising (not covered elsewhere in the agenda for the meeting):

- a) **Bicentenary planning** – a working group to consider ways to celebrate the bicentenary will be established over the summer, a number of Council members had agreed to serve on this group including Professor Mike Bode who had recently been approached by Professor John Hernshaw, President of the Royal Astronomical Society New Zealand, that is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and is keen to consider some combined activities. Professor Bode noted that the South African Observatory will celebrate 150 years in 2020 so there may also be opportunities for combined celebrations with that organisation.
- b) **Scrutiny of the ballot** – Ms Candice Mansell, Mr Marcus Hope and Reverend Garth Barber had been approached to serve as scrutineers.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** At the request of the above scrutineers Professor Ian Ridpath was appointed as a fourth member of the panel.]

c) **Code of Conduct** – as agreed at the March Council meeting the Code of Conduct will be finalised following the inclusion of drafting amendments from Dr Stephen Serjeant and Professor Martin Bureau; the amendments had been received.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** the Code of Conduct will be posted on the RAS website alongside the documents for the AGM.]

d) **RAS Research Fellowship** – The Executive Director had written to the Charity Commission on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016, they had responded with a few questions on how involved Dr Jo Barstow had been in the decision of the Society to award Research Fellowships, seeking clarity on whether or not she could be considered a ‘connected person’ and a query on a relevant byelaw. It was noted that the byelaw in question had been revised as part of the full review carried out in 2015. The Executive Director had replied answering the questions and is waiting for a response from the Charity Commission.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** On the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016, the Charity Commission confirmed that the Society can offer Dr Jo Barstow a Research Fellowship position without their further involvement as they were reassured that she had taken no significant role in the development of the role, had participated in an open and fair competition process and had resigned before the offer was made. Dr Barstow has been offered and has accepted the Research Fellowship. ]

e) An invitation to Tim Peake to offer him an **Honorary Fellowship** of the Society will be sent as soon as the contacts at ESA are confirmed.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The invitation was sent on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> March via Jules Grandsire, PR & Communications, European Astronaut Centre, who confirmed that the invitation will be passed onto Tim Peake.]

## 2. PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

The President had attended the Science and Technology Committee to present evidence to the inquiry into satellites and space on the 23 February 2016; he advised that he had been the only academic asked to present evidence amongst mainly industrialist presentations and that his testimony was seen as an independence voice.

The transcripts from the hearings are all available online as follows:

**15 March:** Jo Johnson and Dave Parker (CEO, UK Space Agency), then to Professor Ian Boyd, Chief Scientific Adviser, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Philip Marnick, Group Director (Spectrum), Ofcom, and Neil Ackroyd, Chief Operating Officer, Ordnance Survey  
<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/satellites-and-space/oral/30854.pdf>

**23 February:** Martin Barstow (as discussed at Council), Richard Peckham, Business Development Director, Airbus Group, and Ruy Pinto, Group Chief Operations Officer, Inmarsat, then Patrick Wood, Group Managing Director, Surrey Satellite Technology Limited, Ross Marshall, Head of Operations, Clyde Space, and Mark Thomas, Managing Director, Reaction Engines

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/satellites-and-space/oral/29543.pdf>

**9 February:** Stuart Martin, Chief Executive Officer, Satellite Applications Catapult, Andy Green, President, UKspace, and (for the first time in this inquiry) Dave Parker, then Joanne Wheeler, Partner, Bird & Bird, Professor John Remedios, Director, National Centre for Earth Observation, and Dr Christopher Mutlow, Director, STFC-RAL Space

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/satellites-and-space/oral/28803.pdf>

The President briefly summarised the recently announced Research Councils' grant settlements. It was noted that further discussion will be held at the Astronomy Forum on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Details of the allocations can be seen at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/science-and-research-funding-allocation-2016-to-2020>

It was agreed that further consideration should be given to promote opportunities other than REC funding, such as available funding lines for education, telescopes, undergraduate funding etc.

**ACTION:** Deputy Executive Director to add this item to the agenda for the Astronomy Forum.

#### 4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

4.1 Council noted the Financial and Legal Status of the Society as set out in the table below:

RAS Financial and Legal Status	Level of Materiality	Report for March 2016 (February figures in Brackets)
Transfers in and out of Reserves	£50k	No unplanned transfers BNY Mellon £6,554,355 (£6,689,763)
Unplanned changes in Cash holdings	£20k	No unplanned transfers HSBC £3,211,876 (£3,343,032) Natwest £42,524 (£43,417)
Heritage Assets	One heritage item	During the preparations for audit staff have been unable to locate the Pearson Clock.
Lease	Any change	No change
Debts	£5k	No change
Legal Agreements	Any change	No change
Insurance	Any change	No change

It was noted that a late paper had been provided that explains the background and current status of the investigation into the loss of the Pearson Clock.

The Treasurer explained that during the last 8 months the financial team has conducted a detailed analysis of the Society's spend in every category of our activities. This enabled the production of an updated Operations Plan that predicts the financial headroom and allows Council to consider possible new investments.

He reminded Council that at the February Council meeting a number of requests for increased funding were made and a couple of additional request had arisen since then. The financial requests are summarised below, with those approved in February by Council marked as approved.

Item	Initial Cost	Annual Cost	Status
RAS 200 Evaluation	£100k	£0k	
Media Fellowship	£5k	£5k	
2020 Children's book	£3k*	£0k	Approved
2020 Historical Research	£40k*	£0k	
2020 Coffee Table Book	£70k*	£0k	
IT maintenance costs	£5k	£5k	Approved
Documentation Officer	£3k	£3k	Approved
Demographic study	£14.7	£0k	Approved
Staff salary discretionary allowance	£5k	£5k	
Additional MNRAS Editor	£5.5K	5.5K	

It was noted that some costs (those marked by an “\*”) are initial payments on projects which may generate a net income, perhaps significantly exceeding the initial investment.

### **The Operations Plan 2016-2021**

Council considered the Operations Plan from 2016 to 2021 and the following key assumptions:

- That Publication Income stays roughly the same as currently.
- Inflation stays relatively low- in the region of 1-2%.
- Burlington House accommodation costs stay below £100k p.a.
- That the Society's basic activities remain more or less unaltered.
- That membership income remains more or less unaltered.

### **The Major Risks**

Council considered the two major risks that are publication income and future accommodation charges. Agenda item 5.3 was taken out of order at this point; the Executive Director briefed on the recent developments on the lease. In summary, the rental costs are expected to increase significantly in the coming years. An estimate of the increased rental charges has been added to the operations plan.

### **RAS Research Fellowships**

The Treasurer invited Council to consider the committed expenditure to support existing RAS Research Fellowships and consider alternative funding profiles for future years.

It was noted that:

- the current spend on Research Fellowships will exceed £330k in 2016 which is more than a quarter of the Society's income.
- in 2021 (when the RAS 200 expenditure has expired) the predicted net surplus is about £200k per annum before any of the new requests have been provided for.

- if the Society only generated the “guaranteed income” from its publications, there would be no surplus.

Council discussed the contribution that the RAS Fellowships make to the total number of fellowships available in the UK and the philosophical issue as to whether the Society should continue to work to replace government research funding.

### **Options for the Research Fellowships**

Council voted on the following options:

- Option A, current Council strategy. Two Fellowships supported annually. This sets future financial commitments for three years and could be reviewed annually.
- Option B, reduce the number of Research Fellowships

The result of the vote was as follows: 13 Council members voted for Option A, 6 Council members voted for Option B.

### **Other financial proposals**

Council agreed to the following other financial proposals that have a recurring annual spend:

- £5.5K annually for an additional MNRAS Editor
- £5K for a staff salary discretionary fund (allocated to the Executive Director)

Dr Stephen Serjeant introduced the paper written by Dr Jo Barstow on sponsoring a media fellowship, (this paper had been briefly considered by Council at the meeting in February.)

The President declared a conflict of interest and abstained from the discussion and vote. Council discussed and voted on this proposal. The majority vote was against supporting this proposal.

Council agreed that the options for bicentenary books would be considered fully when full commercial proposals were available.

Council considered options to fund the £100K evaluation cost for RAS 200: Sky and Earth. A vote was taken on three options:

- a) Provide £100K as additional expenditure to the £1M committed to RAS 200: Sky and Earth
- b) Provide £50K as additional expenditure to the £1M committed to RAS 200: Sky and Earth
- c) The £100K to be found from within the £1M committed to RAS 200: Sky and Earth

The result of the vote was a majority support for option c.

The Treasurer proposed that the Society issues a press release to explain the serious deliberations that the Society undergoes to allocate limited funding.

**ACTION:** Deputy Executive Director

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Following deliberations it was agreed that issuing general press releases on Council decisions would not be appropriate or likely to attract much interest. However, there is a strong case for publicising new initiatives such as the

progress achieved in the projects supported by the RAS 200: Sky and Earth programme.]

### **RAS Pension Scheme**

The Treasurer asked Council to confirm the Society's position in regards to supporting the Defined Benefits Pension Scheme that was being revalued. Council agreed that they were content to provide an 'average covenant' of support for the pension scheme as in previous valuations.

### **Membership Subscriptions for 2017**

Council agreed with the Treasurer's proposal that membership subscriptions for 2017 are held at 2016 levels.

### **Pearson Jupiter Clock**

Council note the known background of the Pearson Clock that has been reported as lost/stolen to the Metropolitan Police Art and Antiques Unit Police and the actions taken to date, that include searches of Burlington House and the Annexe, contacting previous staff members and reviewing the Astronomical Heritage Committee minutes and loan documentation. It was noted that the loss will also be registered with a private art recovery database.

In February 2016 Council approved the appointment of a temporary documentation officer to update the Society's inventory of objects and to improve documentation and procedures for storing objects on the premises.

## **5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **5.1 First draft of 2015 Annual report**

The Executive Director introduced the first draft of the text of the annual report for 2015. She noted that the revised financial reporting requirements allow more flexibility in how the information is presented. As such a new format has been adopted this year including an Executive Summary and a focus on case studies; RAS 200: Sky and Earth was chosen as a showcase for the Society's efforts to engage more widely.

Other changes (required by the new reporting standards) include providing more detail on the risks that the Society manages, making reference to events that were less successful in year and providing more information on measures of effectiveness and salary calculations for senior staff.

It was noted that the draft did not yet contain a statement on the Society being a going concern. Council discussed this and agreed that the Society is exceptionally likely to be a going concern in 2016 and thereafter and agreed that text stating this should be added the annual report.

The Executive Director explained that their comments would be incorporated and a draft issued to Buzzacott in the following week. Following comments from Buzzacott a further draft would be issued by email to Council for approval out of committee.

Council noted the timelines for the financial audit:

- Audit field work starts 21st March and ends on the 1<sup>st</sup> April
- Audit Clearance meeting to be held on the 12<sup>th</sup> April
- Finance Committee to be held on the 28<sup>th</sup> April
- The Society's risk register would be considered by the Finance Committee and will be presented to Council for their input and approval in May 2016.

## **5.2 RAS Council Elections 2016**

Council noted the following documents:

- a covering letter to the Fellowship including candidate profiles
- ballot list
- agenda for the Annual General Meeting 2016

In April 2016 these documents will be despatched to the Fellowship by email to those that the Society holds an email address for and by mail to others.

## **5.3 Burlington House lease**

This item had been discussed under agenda item 3 when the Executive Director had provided an update on the deliberations on the lease as part of the discussion on future financial planning.

## **5.4 International matters**

The Treasurer introduced a paper by the Chair of the International Committee, Professor Phil Charles (version dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016) and reminded Council on their previous deliberations on earlier versions of this paper.

The paper had been redrafted to make it more realistic in regards to what the Society can offer in support of the proposed areas of collaboration. It was noted that discussion on the practicalities of implementing the proposals was required and that the Treasurer and Executive should meet with Kevin Govender from OAD when he visits in late March/early April. Subject to a positive outcome of this discussion Council agreed that the Society should provide an annual grant of £10K to the OAD. Council noted that York University ESERO already provides a repository of educational resources and that the OAD should consider aligning with this resource.

**[POST COUNCIL NOTE:** The Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director met with Kevin Govender on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to discuss the three proposed areas of collaboration

- Development and dissemination of university astronomy curricula and resources
- Development and dissemination of astronomy material for school curricula
- International Exchange Programme

Mr Govender advised that the requirements had changed since Council considered the latest draft. A short note attached to these minutes sets out the key points discussed and the agreed way ahead.]

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

### **6.1 UCAS data on astronomy-related undergraduate programmes from 2003-14**

Council noted the above paper.

## **7. OTHER**

### **7.1 Officers Reports**

Council approved the following candidates for Fellowship.

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Vigna-Gomez	Alejandro	Birmingham	Simon Stevenson Membership Committee
Millard	Alisha	Southport	Brian Blake
Sawers	Andrew	London	Helen Fraser
Dawes	Anita	The OU/ University of St	Andrew Cameron
Mortier	Annelies	Andrews	Ian Howarth
Amarasinghe	Aravinda	London	David Boyd
Potter	Callum	Tewkesbury	Dr Francisco Diego
Manian	Chad	Erith	Jon Mound
Birnie	Claire	Alford	Christopher Chen
Vech	Daniel	London	Timothy Horbury
Stansby	David	London	Katherine Joy
Martin	Dayl	Dudley	Simon Stevenson
Thomas	Edward	Birmingham	Andrew Norton
Hickey	Francis	Belfast University of St	Scott Gregory
Hodosan	Gabriella	Andrews	Apostolos Christou
Borisov	Galina	London	Robert Argyle
Chaplin	Geoffrey	Okubo	Serena Viti
Cosentino	Giuliana	London	R.B Horne
Allison	Hayley	Cambridge	Patrick Irwin
Ashcroft	Helen	Oxford	Colin Wilson
Strangeways	Ian	Wallingford	Serena Viti
Jimeuet-Serra	Izaskuu	London	Michael Smith
Bramley	Jamie	Ashford	Jon Mound
Giniaux	Jeanne	Leeds University of St	Vivienne Wild
Weaver	John	Andrews	Rene Oudmaijer
Johnston	Katherine	Leeds	Paul Money
Townsend	Keith	Lincolnshire	Stephen Wilkins
Duncan	Kenneth	Netherlands	Membership Committee
Chowdary	Madhukar	India	Ian Crawford
Till	Mark	Bucks	Andrew Norton
Heinrich	Martin	Germany University of St	Martin Dominik
Jaimes	Roberto	Andrews	Membership Committee
Schmitz	Robrecht	Germany	Melvin Hoare
Purser	Simon	Leeds	Roger Clowes
Defoe	Thomas	London	David Lyness
Hudson	Thomas	Cambridge	Malcolm Ridley
Parsons	Timothy	Haslemere	



Zingales	Tiziano	London	Giovanna Tinetti
Lopez	Veronica	Bairrigg	Jim Wild
Krupar	Vratislav	London	Jonathan Eastwood
Tan	Zhi	London	Ian Howarth

## 7.2 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held in February 2016

Council noted the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

## 8. AOB

### a) Special MNRAS Edition

The Executive Director advised that Professor Matt Taylor had approached the Society and other organisations about the possibility of publishing a special edition of Monthly Notices, dedicated to the Rosetta mission post perihelion.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** On the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the Publications Management Committee was advised that Monthly Notices has been chosen as the journal to publish the Rosetta mission post perihelion papers.]

### b) EU referendum

The Deputy Executive Director summarised the ongoing debate on the direction given by the Charity Commission on the extent to which Trustees should publically state their position on the EU referendum. The Charity Commission initially argued that learned societies, and key individuals within them such as staff and trustees, should not comment on the EU referendum, unless their organisation had taken a position on this. Following legal advice and criticism, they have to some extent moderated this approach. The counterpart organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland take a different view, and recognise the rights of individuals to hold views separate to the organisations they are associated with.

**ACTION:** Deputy Executive Director to circulate relevant links, (see below.)

<http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/significant-climbdown-charity-commission-eu-referendum-guidance/governance/article/1388708>,  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/510286/eu\\_referendum.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510286/eu_referendum.pdf), <http://www.bwbllp.com/file/bwb-briefing-on-eu-referendum-guidance-final-18-march-pdf> and [http://www.oscr.org.uk/media/2146/v10\\_guidance-on-eu-referendum\\_web-copy.pdf](http://www.oscr.org.uk/media/2146/v10_guidance-on-eu-referendum_web-copy.pdf)

### c) Specialist Discussion meetings 2017

Dr Mandy Bailey advised that the specialist discussion meetings for 2017 were oversubscribed and noted that as in recent years a further meeting would be held in April.

[**POST COUNCIL NOTE:** Council should note that as the second Friday in April 2017 is Good Friday the Specialist discussion meetings will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of that month, April 7<sup>th</sup>].

### d) Transit of Mercury, San Diego visit

Ms Jayne MacArthur advised that she had won a competition prize to visit San Diego during the transit of Mercury in May 2016. She acknowledged her thanks to the Space Research Centre, Leicester for providing sponsorship to cover the cost of the flights.

Council rose at 15:10

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M Barstow". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

.....  
Professor M. Barstow

13th May 2016

## **SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE OAD/RAS 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

The Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director met with Kevin Govender, OAD, on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to discuss the following three areas of collaboration between the RAS and the OAD.

- Development and dissemination of university astronomy curricula and resources
- Development and dissemination of astronomy material for school curricula
- International Exchange Programme

Mr Govender advised that the requirements had changed since Council considered the latest draft. The points discussed and the agreed way ahead is set out below.

- There is no longer a requirement for the RAS to set up a file repository for UK universities to deposit course material as the OAD is establishing such a repository.
- The OAD repository will contain a range of resources, such as peer reviewed and assessed curricula/resources through to non- assessed resources that might prove useful.
- The OAD will evaluate the resources deposited in their repository (probably via the OAD regional offices and use of their volunteer network.)
- The RAS will actively advertise the availability and location of the OAD repository to its Fellows in universities and research establishments, as well as teachers in schools, and will suggest UK organisations that the OAD can approach to share resources.
- RAS resources used for eclipse seen in the UK in 2015 will be provided to the OAD (and will hopefully be useful for the forthcoming eclipse in Tanzania)
- The RAS will make our existing school resources available for the OAD repository and will liaise with the Institute of Physics who have an extensive teacher network to ask UK teachers to deposit resources.
- The UK Space Education Office (ESERO), run out of the National STEM learning centre at the University of York and the National Space Centre in Leicester will be approached re school resources.
- The RAS will continue to provide short term travel grants in support of the international exchange programme. This will facilitate UK academics/teachers to visit foreign collaborators engaged in developing new programmes as well as travel grants for targeted institutions outside the UK to visit UK institutions for the same purpose.

### **Finances and Governance**

- The RAS Council agreed in March 2016 that the Society will provide an annual budget of up to £10K to support this initiative.
- The OAD will be asked to provide a short report on the success of this initiative and expenditure incurred during the previous year in late January.
- The RAS Council will consider the report in February and will confirm the budget for the following year.