



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

## **Minutes of the RAS Council Meeting held on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

### **1. Attendance, Apologies and Introduction**

**Present:** Professor Mike Cruise (MC) Chair; Dr Nigel Berman (NB) Treasurer; (MC); Professor Lyndsay Fletcher (LF); Professor Mark Lester (ML) (arrived 13.00); Dr Paul Daniels (PAD); Professor Steve Miller (SM); Mr Charles Barclay (CB); Dr Sheila Peacock (SP); Dr Mandy Bailey (MB); Stacey Habberghan-Mawsom (SHM), Anton Ziolkowski (AZ); Kevin Kilburn (KK); Dr Claire Foullon (CF); Professor Lorraine Hanlon (LH); Professor William Chaplin (WC) Michael Watson by telecon (MW)

Apologies: Professor Ian Crawford; Dr Megan Argo; Dr Clare Watt (CW)

Late: Professor Giovanna Tinetti (GT);

In Attendance: Philip Diamond (PD), Executive Director; Dr Robert Massey (RM) Deputy Executive Director;

MC Introduced the meeting and welcomed all. He drew Council's attention to the conflict of interest documents. Declarations of interest should be completed and also include any connections family members may have with organisations related to RAS business which could be deemed to be a conflict of interest. Council should also declare any gifts/hospitality or benefits they receive in their work for the RAS.

### **2. Minutes and matters arising**

Clarification of AOB re. awards, amend minutes to record that awards committees should not seek suitable nominations after the deadline. A note would accompany the announcement of awards that no award was made in a category 'x' due to no nominations having been received.

Corrections LF (sp.) MW Present, CW not present

#### **Actions:**

SM A revised timetable has been produced with the Workers Education Association (a RAS200 partner).

MC has arranged a meeting with Andrew Holland regarding SPAN

NB will waive penalty to OUP (which were the result of publication delays)

RM has arranged a meeting with Yonescat (the website developers) to talk through the issues arising from phase 1 of the website projects and discuss next steps.

PD actions re. away day have been dealt with.

RM As a result of the new GDPR legislation it would be problematic to share membership information. The membership committee/DPO will be asked to investigate whether names can be listed and whether we can circulate an opt-in form for present and future fellows.

### **3. President's Business**

The ASGI visit was very successful. ASGI are interested in some form of affiliation to the Society and will work through various options before contacting us with a proposal.

MC and NB attended the IAU meeting in Vienna. Some UK colleagues were elected to Committees. Serena Viti was elected to the Membership Committee. Ian Robson will be the next General Secretary. CF is also a Vice President of an IAU Commission.

RAS could convene a meeting of all the UK people with an IAU function. Issues for discussion: junior members, public engagement, funds for various IAU activities.

The office will compile a list of people to invite with a view to organising a meeting in the coming months. **Action: PD**

The office will design a process to elect junior members. **Action: PD**

MC reported that the decision to rename Hubble's Law, the Hubble-Lemaitre Law was deferred and a vote will now be put to the IAU members.

MC gave an update on developments with the BH lease (confidential note)

MC outlined the meeting that took place on October 18<sup>th</sup> between representatives of the Courtyard Societies and a special advisor to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government. There may be a possibility of the Courtyard Societies making an offer to purchase a freehold or a much longer lease. MC sought Council approval to enter into such a discussion with Government. **Council agreed.**

#### 4. Treasurer's Business

NB requested Council approval for a £300 000 budget for the bi-centenary activities in 2020 (including a £45 000 contingency). Council **agreed**

The office will circulate an updated spreadsheet of activities **Action: PD**

SHM suggested that the recruitment of a PR intern should be advertised to all universities with astronomy/geophysics groups. The office will discuss this with the 2020 Project Director **Action: RM**

#### 5. Organisation and Structure

##### 5.1 Taken under President's business

##### 5.2 RAS website redirect

RM said that this had been successful and the new URL is now the top result in Google searches.

There was a question of where the feedback form is being sent. The office will look into this. **Action: RM**

##### 5.3 2019 elections to RAS Council

LF presented the paperwork for Council approval. Members of Council were asked to encourage colleagues to put themselves forward.

One vacancy has arisen as a result of a resignation, so one elected Councillor will serve for one year. Council could if it wished, co-opt someone to cover this vacancy until May 2019. MB explained that someone elected to this one year term is allowed to stand for a subsequent three year term immediately.

Job descriptions should be included in the paperwork **Action: LF**  
The letter should include a statement that voting results will be published **Action: LF**  
SHM's name will need updating **Action: LF**

Council approved the paperwork subject to the above changes.

Council discussed co-opting a previous Councillor to take up the vacancy. As time to serve on Council would be limited for such a person, the Officers were delegated to consider names and make a decision on co-option. **Action: Officers**

#### **5.4 Strategy away day**

MC outlined the outcomes of the away day, particularly for the benefit of members of Council who were unable to attend. These included the continuation of a fully elected Council. The statement needs to be clarified to say 'elected from the Fellowship' rather than astronomers and geophysicists in general. CF argued that the proposal on research fellowships should talk about reducing the cost rather than the number of fellowships.

#### **Council is asked to review and approve the following decisions.**

- Council will remain elected from the fellowship of Astronomers and Geophysicists. Other personal skills will be recorded and used.
- The advice from OUP that the MNRAS brand is very strong will be recognised in future plans.
- Strategic discussions should take place more frequently.
- Council will set balanced budgets in the future unless a deficit is part of a finite and planned programme of evolution.
- Council will reduce the number of Fellowships but not to zero and will also seek other financial inputs to support Fellowships.
- Council approve the overall plan and budget for the Bi-Centenary

#### **Council formally approved the above decisions subject to the clarifications.**

#### **Council will set up working groups to bring plans back to future Council meetings in the following areas:**

1. Group to review code of conduct for effectiveness, relevance to Trustees and possible statement of Society values and KPI's
2. Set up tracking group to monitor and provide input to the OA model for our journals. Prepare plan for transition separately for MN and GJI and A&G.
3. Group to prepare the case for introducing a youth membership scheme aimed at school level membership and interfacing to amateur societies.
4. Group to prepare the case for introducing a trading activity (Books, Clothes, Instruments) to provide more income.
5. Group on benefits and support for younger members.
6. Group to tidy up committee structures, ToR, contact with committee chairs
7. Group of younger people to help on policy issues.
8. Group to track accommodation issues re Burlington House

The results of this work will need to be done in time for the AGM in 2019. The first meetings should take place by the end of November.

More focussed discussion in the following areas will be timetabled into future Council meetings. They will be ranked by Council members offline in order to prioritise the list:

**Action All**

Publish more books  
MOU between RAS and HoDs/employers to get support for time away on Council business  
Expand our journals- new subjects, parallel OA journals  
Hold more conferences  
Place a greater emphasis on activities outside London  
Review publishing overheads  
Expand professional membership- is it saturated?  
New membership level for professional members  
Improve benefits to amateurs  
Improve international reach, new structures  
Weekend use of building and library  
Better recording and dissemination of ordinary meetings  
Journal for Astronomy and Geophysics Education and Outreach  
Improve points of contact  
Improved contact with UK schools  
Find a better name for the Society to include Geophysics

## **6. Policy and Public Engagement**

### **6.3 Science and Technology Committee**

SM commented that John Agar in the UCL STS team has historical knowledge of how curiosity-driven research was defended in the 1990s and 2000s. **Action: RM to contact him for advice on the current situation**

### **8.1 Membership reports**

Confidential note: applicant to be reconsidered by the membership committee **Action: PD**

### **8.2 Grant status report**

It was commented that the range of grant areas the RAS funds is impressive. SHM commented that it would be helpful to put a 'zero' against unsuccessful grant applications.

## **9. Other**

NB proposed that Fellows should only be able to book free meetings in the Council room at one month's notice. For advance bookings a fee should be charged. Society business meetings would be exempt from this. A one year trial was proposed. Action PD to circulate current guidelines.

SP asked Council to consider the IPCC special report on global warming and suggested the RAS should be setting an example on reducing its carbon footprint.

Council will consider this and develop proposals **Action: PD**

Council rose at 14.30