

**Minutes of the Two Hundred and Fourth Annual General Meeting at the Royal
Astronomical Society and via Zoom
16.00 -17.15, Friday 10 MAY 2024**

[**NOTE:** The minutes of the Two Hundred and Fourth Annual General Meeting of 10 May 2024 (below) will be presented for confirmation and signed by the President at the Annual General Meeting on the 9 May 2025.]

The President announced that the AGM was only open to Fellows (and RAS staff) and then by a count of persons present declared the meeting to be quorate, and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the 203rd Annual General Meeting

The President asked for a show of hands in order to approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 12 May 2023. They were confirmed as a true record and were signed.

2 Update from the President

The President updated Fellows as follows:

- Burlington House Lease has been signed and we should be able to stay for 999 years. There are implications for our finances: and how we work together with the other Courtyard societies
- We had the largest ever NAM at Cardiff: 920 attended, 120 online.
- We have undertaken a Strategy review and Governance review
- We had our first John Brown Memorial lecture
- We produced a RAS200 Report, with special thanks to Steve Miller and Sheila Kanani
- Government Science and Technology Review of Astronomy - "Astronomy matters because it seeks to answer fundamental questions about the origins and evolution of the universe".
- We are continuing to champion of "Dark Skies" on Earth and in Space
- NAM 2024 will be in Hull
- The Annual Report is on the website
- There will be a communication and website review
- Professor Richard Ellis (UCL Physics & Astronomy) has been elected as an international member of the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

3. THE REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR 2023

Prof. Mike Cruise, Interim Treasurer, presented highlights of the report.

- Net Income for 2023: £1,806,563 (significantly influenced by new publishing contract and high investment rates)
- The two major risks foreseen by RAS Council were both realised in 2023/24
- The opportunity to change our lease as described by the President previously, and the change of publishing policy to full Open Access
- Some financial provision for these risks has been built up over past decades.
- RAS Council are of the view that the financial provisions declared in the Annual Report are compatible with the audit status of a “going concern” and the clean, clean audit we received

Questions were raised and answered as follows:

- Regarding our investments, what are our current returns? Last year £640k, should average £300-£350k
- Regarding our loan, is it fixed? Yes, and there are no penalties for paying it off before the end of the term
- Regarding the handover and new Treasurer, arrangements had already been in place prior to the election there has been ongoing dialogue
- Regarding paying instalments on the lease, it was asked why we have not decided to make payment in full, is this something that could be considered? This will be considered
- Regarding Open Access, it was felt that having a surplus from publications is unethical. It was stated that our income is put towards the charitable objectives of the society.

4. Membership Subscriptions

On behalf of Council the Treasurer proposed an increase to Membership Subscriptions for 2025:

	2024 Actual	2025 Proposed
Rate	Subscription	Subscription
Full rate	£155	£161
Full rate (first year)	£104	£108
Early Career	£104	£108
Early Career (first year)	£69.50	£72
Student	£30	£31
Student (first year)	£5	£5
Concessionary	£30	£31
Full rate with IOP/GSL discount	£116.50	£121
Full rate (first year) with IOP/GSL discount	£78	£81

Early Career with IOP discount	£78	£81
Early Career (first year) with IOP discount	£52	£54

The proposal was voted upon and **approved**.

5. IN REMEMBRANCE - MEMORY OF FELLOWS PAST

There was a minute's reflection for Fellows and Friends who had passed away since the last AGM.

6. VOTE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SOCIETY'S PROFESSIONAL AUDITORS FOR 2024

The Treasurer requested approval for the re-appointment of Buzzacott as auditors for the coming year.

This was voted upon and **approved**.

7. REPORT OF THE HONORARY AUDITORS FOR 2024

The President invited Prof. Yvonne Elsworth to present their report for 2023.

The Honorary Auditors met with the Executive Director, staff and Council members in person and via zoom.

The Honorary Auditors presented an overview of their report including the following:

- Burlington House lease: major progress with the lease; removes uncertainty; secures the future; evidence that it is allowing people to think forwards; However does require expenditure and we caution some restraint
- Publishing: Full implementation of Open Access for GJI and MNRAS; Fall off in the number of papers submitted; OUP are not worried and expect recovery; Waiver scheme underutilised; A Positive: A&G trialling the addition of an app for phone/tablet
- Library Services: Assistant Archivist appointed; Progress with cataloguing and with sorting out the Annexe reserve; (in general) Balance needed with access to avoid damage; Working towards digitising Caroline Herschel papers
- Council and Governance: Strategy document produced, A&G article; Governance Review underway;Council Size effective; Demographic Survey; Bullying and Harassment Survey –soft power; Ethical behaviour should permeate all areas of activity

- IT Systems: Some progress but more needed; Website not easy to manage; Hybrid working requires processes to ensure staff engaged and appreciated; Hybrid Science meeting offer opportunities for remote participation but lack other opportunities; 'Highlights' meeting good but more participants wanted
- Membership and Outreach: Numbers steady; New staff in membership team finding their feet; Increased courtyard wide outreach is a requirement of deal on lease; RAS 200 showed the power of partnerships; Difficult to effectively capture the breadth of activities
- Final remarks: Future looks quite good but not without challenges; There has been a turn-over in the staff and care is needed to ensure effective continuity; The Bullying & Harassment report to be launched on May 17

The President thanked Yvonne Elsworth and Lorraine Hanlon for their informative report.

Questions were raised and answered as follows:

- Regarding Hybrid meetings, since one third of Fellows are based overseas this is beneficial, and meetings can be uploaded on YouTube. There is the concern that you do not have the opportunity to network, and it might be an opportunity to fund junior staff to attend the events.
- Regarding the Demographic survey, this has been completed and will be published in due course

8. Vote on the appointment of the Honorary Auditors for 2024

The President was pleased to announce that Prof. Lorraine Hanlon and Chris Lee have agreed to serve for next year.

The appointment was **approved**.

9. Announcement of the Result of the Ballot

On behalf of the scrutiny panel Dr Peter Grimley declared that this election has been conducted in line with the byelaws of the Society and that there has been a fair and valid election process.

There were 744 electronic votes cast.

The following is the result of the 2024 ballot:

Arvind Parmar elected unopposed elected as Treasurer (A) who will serve for 5 years

Caroline Smith elected unopposed as Vice-President (G) who will serve for 2 years

Matthew Griffin elected unopposed as Vice-President (A) who will serve for 2 years

As Councillors who will serve for 3 years

Stephen Eales (A)	461
Chrysa Avdellidou (G)	403
Andrew Young (A)	375
Iain Hannah (G)	302

The votes for the remaining candidates were as follows:

David Williams-Baldwin (A)	291
Luca Franci (G)	213
Rok Nezic (G)	201
Anton Ziolkowski (G)	200
Timothy James Clark (G)	105

The RAS office responded to all e-mails received in this period and there was no evidence that any errors in the recording of votes had occurred.

10. Presidential Handover and Vote of Thanks

Professor Mike Edmunds, President, proposed a vote of thanks to the Honorary Auditors, the Scrutineers, RAS Staff, and particularly to the retiring members of Council: Prof Mike Cruise (Interim Treasurer), Prof Claire Watt (VP-G), Dr Joanna Barstow (A), Dr Jasmine Kaur Sandhu (G), and Prof Belinda Wilkes (A)

The President, Mike Edmunds, then formally handed over to the new President Prof Mike Lockwood, and wished him every success during his term of office.

10a. ITEMS FROM HORACE REGNART

Horace Regnart put forward a recommendation to Fellows and Council that NAM (National Astronomy Meeting) be renamed to INAM (International and National Astronomy Meeting). The President, Mike Edmunds, said this would be considered for discussion.

Horace Regnart congratulated the President on a successful tenure and presented the President with a gift to commemorate his leaving.

11. Date of the next Annual General Meeting

The 205th AGM of the Society will take place on 9th May 2025.

12. Meeting Closure

There being no further business the President announced that the AGM was closed.