

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY SEVENTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2012 AT 2 P.M. IN THE BOARDROOM, ARMAGH OBSERVATORY**

Present: Mrs P. Wilson (Acting Chairman), Mr B. Hannam, Mr E. Donnelly, Dr M. McKay and Professor R. Oudmaijer

Apologies: Professor A. Hibbert, Archdeacon R. Hoey, Professor M. Merrifield, Mr A Peoples, Professor T. Ray and Mr M. Cory (DCAL)

In attendance: Professor M. Bailey, Dr T. Mason and Mr J. Copeland

**1. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Members declared no conflicts of interest.

**2. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2012**

2.1. The minutes of the meeting of 21 June 2012 were, with minor amendments, approved by members and signed by the Acting Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Acting Chairman referred to the following matters:

- 3.1. Minute 3.2 – the issue of whether the equal pay compensatory sum applied to Observatory and Planetarium staff remains unresolved. Mr Copeland advised members that the matter is now subject to a decision to be made at the County Court, due in early 2013.
- 3.2. Minute 3.3 – Professor Bailey updated members on the problems of sourcing expert advice on the maintenance of the Grade A Observatory building. A draft tender to procure specialist services to maintain and protect the Observatory building has to be progressed.
- 3.3. Minute 3.4 – the issue of the Meridian Markers was raised and Professor Bailey was asked to work with John Butler to contact the owner of the southern Meridian Marker and NI Environment Agency to ascertain if the marker could be taken into guardianship of NIEA.
- 3.4. Minute 3.6 – Professor Bailey was still investigating the ability of QUB staff and accredited students to access online journals via the QUB portal.
- 3.5. Minute 3.7 – Dr Mason advised members that he had not completed his review of all Planetarium job descriptions and job titles for referral to the Employment Conditions and Remuneration Committee. He further advised members that Professor Hibbert had written to DCAL to request a review of job descriptions and grades for administrative and educational support officers in both the Observatory and Planetarium. This matter would be dealt with in 2013.
- 3.6. Minute 5.6.8 – Automatic Enrolment in Pension Scheme – From 1 April 2012, all new staff will have to be automatically enrolled in the NILGOSC pension scheme. Mr Copeland advised Members that PhD students will not be classified as “eligible jobholders” as they receive a stipend that does not attract tax or national insurance contributions.
- 3.7. Minute 5.6.14 – The Memorandum of Agreement with QUB had been signed by Sir Peter Gregson and Professor Bailey in August 2012 with the official seal of Armagh Observatory affixed.
- 3.8. Minute 5.10.5 – Staffing Matters – Following the Industrial Tribunal requirement that the corporation’s disciplinary process be reviewed to ensure separation of duties between the investigation officer and chair of the Disciplinary Authority, the Joint Administrator will review the procedures and agree changes with staff organisations.

**4. CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS**

4.1 The Acting Chairman had no business.

# MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM

22 November 2012

Page 2

## 5. DIRECTORS' INTERIM REPORTS

Professor Bailey referred to the following matters in his interim report for the Observatory:

- 5.1. Performance Monitoring: The Director provided a comprehensive summary of the Observatory's 2011 and 2011/2012 annual performance outturn as well as an in-year summary of results to date for 2012 and 2012/2013.
- 5.2. Funding: Details of the Observatory's income and expenditure up to 2012 March 31 were provided as too was the in-year spend to date compared with the 2012/2013 Business Plan projections under various headings.
- 5.3. Research: The breadth of the Observatory's international collaborations as well as highlights from recent research were presented by the Director.
- 5.4. Donations: A cumulative summary of donations to the Observatory during 2012 was provided.
- 5.5. Science in the Community: The Director provided detailed information on this important element of the Observatory's activities. Principal amongst these were: (1) the programme of School Work Experience and Summer Programme involving school students, undergraduates and graduate students; (2) the Observatory's work involving the Faulkes Telescope; (3) promotion of the Human Orrery as an educational tool to raise knowledge of STEM and Universe Awareness among all age groups; (4) the enhanced programme of Lifetime Opportunities; (5) the Observatory's multifaceted programme of Universe Awareness (UNAWA) and especially the programme of primary-sector teacher training and engagement with young people led by Libby McKearney; (6) collaboration with Libraries NI and other organizations to promote astronomy education and learning through the Observatory's FETTU ('From Earth To The Universe') programme; (7) public lectures and other special events, for example the Observatory's programme of St. Patrick's Day events 'Discovering the Universe' and its contributions to the September European Heritage Open Days; and (8) various other outreach activities, e.g. inclusion of the Observatory in television documentaries; involvement of Observatory staff in the first Faith and Science Partnership event to be held in Armagh City; and the opening, on 2012 May 28, of the refurbished piece of public art, 'Turning Point'.
- 5.6. Future Events: The attention of the Committee was drawn to the future public events, namely: (1) the Robinson Lecture, scheduled for the evening of Thursday 22nd November. The Robinson Lecturer is Professor David Southwood, President of the Royal Astronomical Society, who will speak on the subject "To Mars, Titan and the Universe Beyond! Europe's Arrival on the Space Frontier". The 2012 Robinson Lecture will be preceded by a Robinson Schools Lecture, also by David Southwood, which will be held in the Royal School Armagh on the afternoon of Wednesday 21 November 2012. The subject of this lecture is "What is Space Exploration About?"; (2) The Life of Galileo: The Observatory will be open from Friday 22nd February to Sunday 24th February inclusive, for a staging of a new production of Bertolt Brecht's play about the life of Galileo Galilei, presented by the Belfast-based Greenwood Players. February 2013 marks the 380th anniversary of the start of the trial in 1633 which led to Galileo's sentence later that year to indefinite house arrest for teaching the heliocentric system as fact.
- 5.7. Performance Monitoring: Key Performance Indicators and SMART Targets for 2012/2013 were provided along with a summary of seven key performance indicators and targets which together span the Observatory's principal functions and activities.
- 5.8. DCAL Income and Expenditure for Financial Year 2012/2013: A summary of the Business-Plan budget for 2012/2013 together with actual income and expenditure to 2012 September 30 was provided to members
- 5.9. Staff Movements: The Director provided details of staff and student movements for the period from 1 January 2012.
- 5.10. Visitors: The Director provided a cumulative summary of research and non-research visitors, including the visit of Sir John and Lady Sheila Houghton and Sir John's inaugural lecture on 2012 May 16, on 'God, Science and Global Warming' of the Armagh Faith and Science Partnership, and the visit by The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Rt Revd Dr Roy Patton on 2012 October 3.
- 5.11. Grants: The Director provided information on successful grant applications by (1) Stefano Bagnulo

# MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM

22 November 2012

Page 3

(Short-Term Scientific Missions under COST Action MP1104 “Polarization as a Tool to Study the Solar System and Beyond”), (2) Mark Bailey, Libby McKearney and Sally Bonner (Donegal Education Centre, DEC) from the Republic of Ireland’s Discover Science and Engineering (DSE) programme and the European Space Education Resource Office (ESERO) Ireland, to deliver in DEC and Armagh Observatory a 2.5-day foundation-level astronomy course for second-level Transition-Year (TY) teachers from Co. Donegal, Ireland and (3) Carol Conlin, Gregory Dunstan and Thirza Mulder (Armagh Public Library) and Mark Bailey for Raising Collections Awareness and Preserving History in Armagh.

- 5.12. Governance and Accountability: A number of issues were brought to the Committee’s attention on governance and accountability matters most of which are routine and for information only. The most important matters were: (1) DCAL required the Committee to note, and approve or amend, the most recent Quarterly Assurance Statement since the last meeting of the Management Committee and the current Risk Register, (2) The Observatory’s UKBA Sponsor Licence which was granted for a period of four years to 2012 November 27 was extended. The Director and the Administrator wished to particularly commend Aileen McKee for maintaining the Observatory’s UKBA records in good order over the last several years and for ensuring that every necessary action was done to secure the renewal of the Observatory’s A-rated sponsor licence, (3) Access Northern Ireland Registered Body Network: The Joint Administrator reported that Access NI has changed its policy with regard to Registered Bodies. With effect from 2013 April 1 organizations which submit less than 20 disclosure applications in any 12-month period will be de-registered and required to make any future disclosure applications through an Umbrella Body, (4) Automatic Enrolment – From 2012 April 1, all new staff will have to be automatically enrolled in the NILGOSC pension scheme.
- 5.13. Collaboration with Queen’s University Belfast - During early 2012 July, the University informed the Observatory that it was prepared to approve a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) in relation to the registration and supervision of PhD students at Armagh Observatory, up to 2013 August 31, with financial arrangements following those of the previous MoA. The one-year MoA was signed by the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Peter Gregson, and by the Observatory Director in the presence of Archbishop Alan Harper in 2012 August. Shortly after this document had been sealed the University requested that a minor amendment be made with the objective of reducing the administrative load on the University’s single point of contact, who for many years had been the second supervisor for all Armagh Observatory QUB-registered PhD students. The increased administrative burden of this position had arisen as a result of the introduction by the University of new procedures which require the second supervisor to attend, several times a year, documented meetings between the principal supervisor and the student. The original one-year agreement and the proposed Amendment were appended, with the request that the Committee gave approval, which was agreed, for the Director to sign the proposed Addendum.
- 5.14. Other Matters: (1) Chalara Dieback of Ash - the Grounds and Meteorological Officer has undertaken a survey of the Observatory’s historic woodland to ascertain the potential impact of the disease on the Observatory’s tree stock. As yet, there are no cases of the disease in the Observatory Demesne but some or perhaps all of the Observatory’s approximately 250–300 mature or semi-mature ash trees are potentially at risk, (2) Historic Windows: The repair of the valuable historic pane of glass in the Staffroom, accidentally broken by window cleaners commissioned by CPD during the week beginning 2011 February 14, has proved to be very much more problematic than was first imagined. The repaired sash window was re-installed in its frame in 2012 November. The cost of the repair has still to be recovered from the contractors that originally caused the problem, (3) Press Releases, Media Citations and Media Coverage - 22 press releases were issued during the calendar year 2012 up to 2012 September 30, all of which were picked up and published at least once. There were also approximately 221 identified media citations in the same period, highlighting the Observatory’s continuing high public profile on the UK and international stage and (4) Public Queries and Correspondence: approximately 238 caller, e-mail, letter and telephone queries have been handled up to 2012 September 30.
- 5.15. Consideration of Observatory Director’s Interim Report
  - 5.15.1. Professor Oudmaijer proposed that the Management Committee approve both the original Memorandum of Agreement with QUB and the addendum. This was seconded by Dr

# MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM

22 November 2012

Page 4

- McKay and agreed by members.
- 5.15.2. Members extensively discussed the increased volume of demands for information from government departments, particularly Governance Support Unit of DCAL, and the risk presented, now included in the Observatory risk register, to the Observatory's ability to recruit and retain staff whose ability to undertake astronomical research and education will be affected by administrative and governance duties. The Vice-Chairman and Directors have registered their concerns with senior management at DCAL that the increasing volume of demands and levels of materiality will reduce the ability of staff to undertake astronomical work and may require additional resources from DCAL to meet these demands. Members asked that the Directors, in association with DCAL, review the structures of the organization so as to improve the support available. Members also asked that Professor Hibbert be involved in further discussions with senior DCAL staff on these matters.
  - 5.15.3. Members congratulated John McFarland on researching and securing repairs to the window in the Observatory staff room.
  - 5.15.4. Members asked that the Director commend Aileen McKee for maintaining the Observatory's UKBA records in good order over the last several years and for ensuring the renewal of the Observatory's A-rated sponsor licence.
  - 5.15.5. Members discussed the Access NI change of policy with regard to Registered Bodies. Mr Copeland advised that the change would require the Observatory and Planetarium to make any future disclosure applications through an Umbrella Body. Mr Copeland's preference was to use the Church of Ireland Board of Education as its umbrella body for Access NI vetting. The use of the Church of Ireland Board of Education as the umbrella body for Access NI vetting would have no equality impact on the corporation's selection and recruitment of staff but would reflect the long association between the corporation and the Church of Ireland. Members agreed that the corporation should use the Church of Ireland as its umbrella body for Access NI vetting checks.

## Planetarium Director's Interim Report

- 5.16. Performance Monitoring – The Planetarium Director provided a summary of the Planetarium's 2012/2013 performance including striking complimentary comments referring to the visitors' experiences with Planetarium staff.
- 5.17. Science in the Community – (1) The Planetarium's website is designed and maintained by Planetarium staff. To make the site more efficient and user friendly, website visitors are now directed to a live cloud-based web calendar, which shows what is on at the Planetarium on any given day. Thus, the daily information includes the opening hours, the show times, show titles that are being run, the running order, and any other events that may be on at the Planetarium on that day. It can also show additional data such as school, bank and public holidays etc, (2) Planetarium staff continue to maintain the Planetarium's electronic presence with Blog and Twitter feeds and staff issue web adverts and conduct surveys on the web to promote the Planetarium, (3) The installation of the Planetarium's iPads was delayed due to missing parts for the stands, (4) Planetarium Science Communicator Colin Johnston continues to run his external adult education course for Queen's University. The Planetarium continues to present accredited adult education classes in astronomy through QUB School of Education including a ten-hour introduction the night sky, a twenty-hour introduction to the whole subject and a ten-hour advanced course focusing on selected topics in astronomy. Demand for these courses appears high, and they regularly attract a very dedicated and enthusiastic collection of students, (5) The very popular outreach programme for schools and community groups is stalled at present as the person employed to deliver this service was on sick leave. We have an application pending with DCAL to reinvigorate and extend the Outreach programme, and (6) The Planetarium is still playing a key role in the ESERO-UK STEM programme; Cosmic Cuilcagh is one such project. Since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 we have worked with colleagues in Ireland in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Letterkenny to bring astronomical topics to the young people of these cities, supporting the Irish government's drive to promote the STEM agenda. We ran a joint summer teacher training event with Discovery Primary science in the ROI

# MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM

22 November 2012

Page 5

and the ESERO-Ireland team as we have significant common ground and interests. The Planetarium supported a local Newry school to participate in the UK rocket challenge and we have heard that ADS systems are prepared to sponsor a greatly expanded programme in Northern Ireland to capitalise on the success on local schools in May 2012.

- 5.18. Future Events – (1) On the first week in January 2013 BBC2 will broadcast the third year of Stargazing Live. This astronomy programme will be hosted by Dara O’Briain and Professor Brian Cox and has proved very successful in attracting new amateur astronomers from the vast number of the public interested in the night sky and space exploration. The past two years’ events have been stunningly successful. In common with last year, the activity hub in NI will be at the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre at Oxford Island. Planetarium staff will be supporting the local amateur astronomers on the night of January 10 2013. We also intend to run special evening sessions at the end of January as follow up events, (2) As a spin off from the BBC event we have collaborated with staff at Marble Arch Caves in Fermanagh to run a dark skies event at the NI Geopark at Cuilcagh mountain in March 2011 and 2012. This was supported by DCAL’s Creativity month funding. This year we intend to change venue for the Cosmic event and operate in Newtownards with the Scrabo quarry as the place where we will talk about past earth history as a lead in to artistic interpretation of the Scrabo geology, along with information on meteorites and fossils. This will be part of a number of creative events during the month of March 2013 in NI. We hope to obtain funding from the DCAL Creative Industry division to support the event, (3) We are planning to run a test show about a fantasy planet inhabited by dragons in collaboration with Martin Ryan, who has worked with us for a number of years with Star Wars and Harry Potter themed events. These have proved to be attractive crowd pullers. This time we are seeking to test this new concept with help from the DCAL Creativity budget. (4) We are planning to launch our new Digistar 5 upgrade, the only one in the UK, which will be installed in January, and also run special talks by Planetarium staff and Dr Mike Simms from the Ulster Museum. We have allowed time for the installation, for Theatre Manager Julie Thompson to be fully trained on the new systems, and then for the senior staff to train the junior staff and load the various programmes and shows that we will need to re-open. This is currently scheduled to happen just before Easter, as this is traditionally a very busy time for us. We have upgraded an older workstation with the new software and are currently learning as much as we can about it before the training sessions, and a second workstation has been set up. These are production machines which enable Julie Thompson to make our own show content. Following the D5 installation Theatre Manager Thompson and the Director will be trained on the new hardware (Director) and D5 software (Ms Thompson) systems. This upgrade is a completely redesigned software package with a very different Graphics User Interface. We will have to write and programme new shows for our visitors and are looking forward to exploring the new system’s versatility.
- 5.19. Governance Matters – (1) The latest Risk Register was provided for the members’ comments and approval, (2) Two Quarterly Assurance Statements were provided for discussion and approval. The governance requirements set by DCAL place great reliance in these documents. Together with the Risk Registers these are probably the most important governance documents regularly placed before the Board of Governors and the Management Committee. They are followed in importance by the business plan for the coming year, and the longer term strategic plan for the future direction and activities of the organisation, (3) It is becoming apparent to the Director that DCAL would much prefer to have a joint Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (AOP) business plan, and strategic direction presented as a composite document, and that they would issue funds for AOP to execute the plans. They do not seem to be at all concerned about how the budget is distributed between the Observatory and Planetarium. They also rely heavily on these synopsis documents as they succinctly address the matters which have caused major problems for government departments in the past: put simply they want the financial work to be exemplary, and procurement to be fair, open and above board. There may be scope for rolling all of our activities into a whole of AOP return. The Director believes that the corporation must be extremely careful to deliver a business plan which dovetails with the DCAL ministerial priorities, as well as the across the board Programme For Government (PfG) document, (4) The Director felt it would be worth specifically addressing these matters at a 2013 meeting specifically designed to discuss a 5 year and 10 year strategy, mindful that Ministers are often only in post for a very short time, and they often bring

# MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM

22 November 2012

Page 6

widely diverse interests to the post. AOP needs to carefully stake out its turf, and to protect it by being unassailably excellent in as much as we can. Our diversity is strength, but we must deliver a coherent message to the oversight financial committees at the DCAL.

- 5.20. Staffing Issues – (1) The new pay remit has been submitted to DCAL and thence to DFP for approval, (2) We are still awaiting the outcome of the legal challenge to the lack of compliance across the government in implementing payment of the compensation lump sum for equal pay owing to staff members of ALBs, (3) The Director has compiled a set of staff job descriptions and duties which recognise the reality of what staff currently do, rather than what they were originally employed to do. It will be appropriate to table and discuss these matters at the next Management Committee meeting to allow the new Chair to be briefed on the function and operation of the AOP complex, and for the Vice-Chairman to have a chance to discuss and brief the new Chair about active issues for debate, (4) A review of AOP management structure is due to commence in 2013, and it would be best to prepare for this. The Director would be reluctant to deal with the NICS Business Development service or its successor as previous experience has not been encouraging and has led to considerable discontent and friction.
- 5.21. Health and Safety – (1) There are no outstanding Health and Safety issues at the Planetarium, (2) We had an accidental fire alarm event on 8 November 2012, when a child accidentally triggered the alarm in the theatre. As it was an unannounced test everyone on staff assumed that it was real and reacted perfectly. The building was quickly evacuated and checked according to our drill protocols, and (3) We are planning to run first aid courses for staff in January 2013 as there is only one person currently qualified and we would like to increase this number.
- 5.22. Other Issues – (1) During the period under discussion the Director, accompanied by sculptors and artists from the Seacourt Print Workshop ran courses for a week at the Portland Stone and Quarry Trust (PSQT) as a contribution to the Cultural Olympiad. A new course in NI will be run in March and another during the summer of 2013 as a direct result of this work in England, (2) The Director also attended the International Planetarium Society conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This is the last time that he will be an office bearer in the IPS as his term ends on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 after serving for 6 years, (3) Dr Mason and Ms Thompson attended the Digistar user's Group meeting at Evans and Sutherland's facility in Salt Lake City, Utah. Both attended a two-day technician's meeting relating to the maintenance and trouble shooting on the Digistar system. They also worked with the D4 computers and attended talks and workshops about the latest developments in the software and hardware. Following this meeting it was decided that the Planetarium should go for the option of upgrading to the newest Digistar 5 configuration. This is a relatively trivial and inexpensive upgrade and (4) Dr Mason was invited to attend a meeting in Greece where Dionysios (Dennis) Simopoulos, Director of the Eugenides Foundation Planetarium in Athens, was awarded an honour by the Greek Society of Physicists. The Director attended as a past president of IPS and delivered a eulogy to around 300 people who were in attendance at the old parliament building in central Athens.
- 5.23. Consideration of Planetarium Director's Interim Report
  - 5.23.1. Members again discussed the increased volume of demands for information from government departments, particularly Governance Support Unit of DCAL, and the risk presented, now included in the Planetarium risk register, to the Planetarium's ability to recruit and retain staff whose ability to undertake astronomical education will be affected by administrative and governance duties and reiterated the views expressed in Minute 5.15.2.
  - 5.23.2. Mr Hannam advised members that the planned meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC) due to be held on 9 November 2012 to consider, inter alia, Quarterly Assurance Statements and Risk Registers had been postponed. Members agreed that Mr Copeland should circulate these documents to ARMC members and ask for their approval out of session and once comments and approval had been given, circulate the documents for Management Committee approval.

**MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM**

**22 November 2012**

**Page 7**

**6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 6.1. Management Committee Minutes – Professor Oudmaijer felt that the Management Committee minutes were too extensive and expansive and asked that consideration be given by the Joint Administrator to produce shorter minutes.
- 6.2. Lease of Land to Hibernia Asset Management Ltd – Mr Copeland advised members that the lease with Hibernia for a small plot of land at the Planetarium bungalow had been agreed for a period of five years with effect from 1 October 2009 at a rental of £2,000 per annum. The lease would be signed by two members of the Board of Governors and the official seal of The Governors of Armagh Observatory and Planetarium would be affixed to the lease, All legal costs relating to the lease would be met by Hibernia.
- 6.3. Presentation to Dr Byrne and Archbishop Harper – Dr Mason showed members the inscribed meteors which would be presented to Dr Byrne and Archbishop Harper to mark their contribution to the management of the corporation and their support to allow staff to deliver research and promote the public understanding of astronomy and science.

The meeting ended at 4.25pm.

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be on either Thursday 11 April 2013 or Friday 12 April 2013 at 10am in the Cassini Room, Armagh Planetarium. The date will be dependent on The Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke's diary commitments.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

.....  
His Grace, The Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke  
Chairman of the Management Committee  
Dated: 10 April 2013