

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 10 APRIL 2013 AT 2.30 P.M. IN THE CASSINI ROOM, ARMAGH PLANETARIUM

Present: Archbishop R. Clarke (Chairman), Professor A. Hibbert, Mr E. Donnelly, Professor T. Ray, Dr M. McKay, Mrs P. Wilson and Professor R. Oudmajer

Apologies: Archdeacon R. G. Hoey, Professor M. Merrifield, Mr A. Peoples, Mr B. Hannam and Mr M. Cory (DCAL)

In attendance: Professor M. Bailey, Dr. T. Mason and Miss H. Hughes

1. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

2. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2012

The minutes of the meeting of 22 November 2012 were reviewed, approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 3.1 Dr Mason referred to the Equal Pay Compensatory Sum (Minute 3.1.). A letter from NIPSA dated 7th March 2013 announced a court decision in which all test cases were rejected and NIPSA have communicated that they are not to appeal this decision. Dr Mason presented an email that he had received from a member of staff expressing dissatisfaction with this outcome and questioning whether staff are employed by DCAL or the Board of Governors. Professor Bailey noted that specific legal clarification is required to determine if Observatory staff have a case for compensatory payment. The Corporation is obliged to follow the MSFM, which imposes strict controls over the uses of funding, including matters relating to the terms and conditions of employment of members of staff. However, the Governors of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium is the employer. Dr Mason is to forward the email referred to above to all Board and Management Committee members and proposed a discussion with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to obtain clarity on this matter.
- 3.2 Professor Hibbert discussed the review of job descriptions and titles (Minute 3.5.) which had not yet moved forward owing to the complexity of the issue. In universities, staff can apply for promotion without threatening his or her current position, whereas according to NICS rules it appears that AOP staff would have to reapply for their own jobs in order to gain promotion. Professor Bailey highlighted the difficulties arising from the resulting inflexible staffing structure, noting that some staff members are working at substantially higher levels than their current grades. It was suggested that the DFP should view AOP as an exception.
- 3.3 Members discussed the Access NI change of policy with regards to Registered Bodies (Minute 5.15.5.) and queried if the Church of Ireland Board of Education had been approached. Dr Mason advised that this Board had been approached and had agreed that AOP could go forward in the way suggested. The consensus is that this is a suitable body with a robust structure, well vetted by legislation.
- 3.4 Professor Hibbert discussed the need to focus minutes in line with appropriate governance guidance (Minute 6.1). Following on from a DCAL meeting, areas of governance are to be highlighted to meet DCAL guidance and give absolute clarity. Dr Mason recommended the introduction of a template highlighting the governance items that are covered in meetings and attaching this template to the minutes. Members agreed with this recommendation.

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4 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Chairman requested a tour of Armagh Observatory and Planetarium at a future date. Members discussed the signing of governance documents by the Chairman. Governance documents had been discussed at a meeting between senior DCAL and ALB representatives. Dr Mason highlighted that this would mean that the Chairman and Vice Chairman would be signing off on documents on which they had incomplete knowledge and recommended that these should instead be signed by the Directors. A recommendation was made that the Chairman may need to countersign these governance documents as a witness signature. Professor Bailey said that he understood that the DCAL are in the process of repositioning the Boards and committees of all ALBs so as to ensure a closer connection between the respective Boards and their Executive. In DCAL's view, the ALB Board sets the strategic objectives and the Directors execute them. Following further discussion it was agreed that Professor Hibbert would complete the Governance Assurance Statement and that it would be countersigned by the Chairman.

5 DIRECTORS' INTERIM REPORTS AND REVIEW OF RISK REGISTERS AND QUARTERLY ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

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

- 5.1 Professor J. Gerry Doyle has been successful in obtaining a new research grant from the Leverhulme Trust. The grant, which will fund a senior postdoctoral researcher and a PhD student, has a total value of approximately £250,000.
- 5.2 Highlights of the Observatory's programme of Science in the Community during the past three months have included involvement of the Observatory in Stargazing Live 2013; worldwide publicity surrounding Comet C/2011 L4 (PANSTARRS); and successful site-specific performances of Bertolt Brecht's 'The Life of Galileo' in the Observatory, performed by the Greenwood Players in a new version by David Hare. This was the Irish premier of this version of the Brecht's play. A further performance of 'The Life of Galileo' is to take place in St George's Church, Belfast, on 11 May 2013.
- 5.3 Armagh Observatory has maintained a long-standing collaboration with Trinity College Dublin (TCD), which includes a variety of academic research, teaching and education/outreach links (Report ref. 6.1.8.). In order to formalise these links, the Observatory has developed a non-exclusive Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the University, which has been agreed and signed (ref. pages 4-7). This formalises the ongoing relationship between Armagh Observatory and TCD. The Management Committee welcomed this beneficial agreement.
- 5.4 In 2012 there was a record number of 66 referred journal papers (ref. 6.2.) and media citations are continuing at a high level.
- 5.5 Professor Bailey discussed the Key Performance Indicators (p.12), which are targets as requested by DCAL. The number of quality publications is increasing over the years. The Observatory receives external grant income from a number of sources; the rate of return is affected by fluctuations in quarterly income of grants and when they are received. Website hits total 17.5 million for 2012 and the number of visitors to the Astropark exceeded 42,000. The number of days absence of staff is much lower than in the NICS, although absence rates have increased over past three years. DCAL require that invoices are to be paid within 10 days; the accounts staff work extremely effectively in order to meet this target. Members queried if banking arrangements could be changed to take advantage of higher interest rates and suggested that non-DCAL funds should be lodged in the most effective way and that AOP should seek the best investment possible. Professor Bailey emphasised that DCAL are very supportive of Armagh Observatory and Planetarium.
- 5.6 Alison Neve has successfully passed the second and third of her four online in-service training courses as part of her continuing professional development under Accounting Technicians Ireland (ref 6.3.1.) Two students, Zhuang Huang and Xianfei Zhang have passed their PhDs.

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- 5.7 Professor Bailey expressed thanks to Aileen McKee, Alison Neve and Shane Kelly for their exceptional efforts due to the long-term absence of a member of staff. It was suggested that letters of thanks are sent to these staff members.
- 5.8 The Observatory has an ongoing collaboration with the Armagh Public Library (APL), which has over the past several years contributed to very significant improvements in the quality of the cataloguing, storage and collections management of the Observatory's Library, Archives and astronomical museum collection. (Ref. 6.5.1.) The Observatory also has a valuable collection of approximately 2,500 1835 Ordnance Survey maps, which are currently held for easier public access in the APL. These maps are coming under increasing pressure as interest in family histories and the social history of Ireland grows, and are part of an ongoing programme of digitization with the objective both of preserving the originals for future generations and to make them more widely and easily available to researchers, students and others who may wish to use the maps. During the first quarter of 2013, the 163 maps covering the most frequently requested Counties Armagh, Tyrone and Down maps were digitized, with a high-quality plot-copy produced of each one to enable use of the plot-copy, rather than the original, by members of the public. The maps for other counties will be treated in the same way as and when funds allow.
- 5.9 Professor Bailey recorded his thanks to the Ellison family for their kind donation of the book "The Amateur's Telescope to IGY Solar Patrol" (ref. 6.5.2.), which describes over 60 years of the Ellison family history and involvement in astronomy. He congratulated W.F.A. Ellison on the tremendous amount of work completed.
- 5.10 During discussion of the Observatory's library and archives, members emphasized the importance of progressing an application for funds to support the design and construction of the new Library, Archives and Historic Scientific instruments building. It was noted that the application process is a major exercise, which will require specialist expertise to take it forward. The Chairman asked Mrs Wilson to provide an information paper on progress to date on this project and to suggest a possible way forward.
- 5.11 The European Universe Awareness programme (EU-UNAWA) has continued to be very successful, with large numbers of teachers being trained and large numbers of children being reached by the outreach elements of this programme (ref.6.6.3.).
- 5.12 The From Earth To The Universe (FETTU) programme has also been highly successful (ref. 6.6.4.), with the Observatory's UK EU-UNAWA project manager, Ms Libby McKearney, working closely with Libraries NI staff to extend the reach of the FETTU project by displaying the FETTU posters in libraries throughout Northern Ireland. As a result, an estimated 4,500 children have seen these posters during the first quarter of 2013.
- 5.13 Other elements of the Observatory's programme of Science in the Community reported on included the Observatory's very successful contributions to StargazingLIVE! 2013 (2013 January 10–11); a series of site-specific performances by the Greenwood Players of Bertolt Brecht's play "The Life of Galileo", held in the Observatory during 2013 February 20 to February 24; a joint programme of events organized with the Armagh Public Library and No. 5 Vicars' Hill, Armagh, for St Patrick's Day 2013; and an Intergenerational talk in Omagh Library, in association with Libraries NI, provided by Mark Bailey and Libby McKearney as part of the Observatory's contributions to the 2013 Creativity Month.
- 5.14 Returning to issues of Governance and Accountability, the Director drew members' attention to the Equal Pay claim (ref 6.9.4.) and the possibility that the affected staff in the Observatory may now take this matter directly to the Board of Governors for review, supported by their union, UNITE.
- 5.15 The recent Internal Audit report has provided the Observatory with limited assurance with regards to Health and Safety. The post of the former Software and Hardware Engineer, who had responsibility for Health & Safety, is to be filled as soon as practicable; Professor Bailey is to progress with advertising this vacant post. Dr Mason is to look into the possibility of the Planetarium's health and safety officer assisting in the meantime. Professor Bailey discussed the issues regarding the upgrading of the wiring to the fire alarms and the level of fire safety provided by the interior doors of the main Observatory building, which also need to be upgraded. Such work would have to be carried out without interfering with the Grade A listed building status. Professor Bailey is to meet with the architect for this area and to obtain more precise guidance on cost, which

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is currently estimated at c.£50k plus CPD fees and VAT. This will allow Professor Bailey to bid to the Department for in-year funding. It will also provide specialist knowledge in order to determine if the proposed work is suitable for the building and can be carried out without causing damage. Professor Bailey is to progress a comprehensive action plan with regards to these health and safety matters. Professor Hibbert recommended that a simple to do list is drawn up and appended to minutes so that Members are clear on the actions that are required. Following a question regarding insurance it was confirmed that insurance cover is in place. A number of staff are required to carry out first aid training due expiry of the first-aid certificates of the previous first aid officers; St John Ambulance and other providers are to be contacted regarding this. Dr Mason is to look into a one-day training course for both Observatory and Planetarium staff. Professor Bailey discussed the ongoing health and safety review and noted that EEF are currently reviewing Health and Safety policies and risk assessments to bring these up to date. With regards to an update on specialist procurement, Members were advised that the Administrator had completed draft tender documentation, and this too is to be followed up.

- 5.16 A draft Strategic Plan 2013–2018 was circulated by Professor Hibbert. Members discussed the importance of aligning Armagh Observatory with the Museums and Libraries branch of DCAL (ref section 3). The Chairman advised that the Observatory is not purely a research institution but has a high cultural element. Comments and recommendations are to be provided to Professor Hibbert by the end of April 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter. Members queried that no dates or timeframes were included for strategic goals and advised the need for realistic strategic goals to be added to report. Dr Mason advised that DCAL provide suitable templates for targets. It was noted that targets may not be achieved due to funding limitations. It was proposed that the report is sent to DCAL in the present form, but with caveats that it is a draft form with modifications to be made and staff to be consulted. Members approved the Strategic Plan and expressed their thanks to Professor Hibbert for completing it.
- 5.17 The Business Plan 2013–2014 had not yet been completed owing to the need for the Director and other staff to validate the detailed financial estimates. It is expected that there will be a projected deficit owing to ongoing agency costs incurred as a result of the long-term absence of a member of staff. There is also an issue to be resolved with regards to the retirement of another member of staff.
- 5.18 Professor Bailey discussed the Governance Statement, which is replacing the Statement on Internal Control. A draft Governance Statement is currently being reviewed by DCAL to ensure that all ALBs are producing Governance Statements at a similar level. Professor Bailey requested that any comments on the draft Governance Statement should be forwarded to him as soon as possible. The Governance Statement includes a review of effectiveness (page 10). Both the Board of Governors and Management Committee are to review their effectiveness on an annual basis; a questionnaire is to be circulated in order for Members to complete this. Individuals' assessments are to be collated, as the Management Committee is responsible collectively as a body. Currently there is no template available for the self-assessment. Dr Mason is to extract a template from the annual board assurance statement. Members queried if there was any defined cost-benefit of the governance statement in the case of the Observatory and Planetarium, and the consensus was that there appeared to be none.
- 5.19 The Directors discussed the overlap of the review of Risk Registers between the Board of Governors and the Management Committee and noted that the Risk Registers have been updated following the Board of Governors meeting. Members queried the new risk of the long-term absence of a member of staff. Professor Bailey advised that this had been added at the request of the ARMC. Members were advised that a meeting was scheduled for 19th April 2013 with regards to the absent member of staff. Risks 8, 9 & 10 are interrelated and may need to be summarized and reduced to two risks. It was also noted that the organization may need to be restructured with a more appropriate number of support staff. The present structure is not appropriate for the core function of the organization owing due to the very significantly increased administration requirements from the Department. The long-term absence of a member of staff has increased this pressure. With regards to the retention of staff, members discussed the promotion opportunities that are available in other cognate bodies, noting however that under present circumstances it is virtually

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impossible to change the grading structure of staff in the Observatory and that the NICS would look harshly at any attempt to do so. The Director emphasized that administration staff are performing at levels significantly above their current pay grades. Members of the Management Committee questioned whether it might be possible to use university pay scales, but were advised that the Department of Education had previously transferred Observatory staff from University pay scales to NICS pay scales. It was suggested that the Department should recognise the special position within government structures of an organization such as AOP (see 3.2. above). It is a complex problem and the DCAL review team appears to be aware of the situation. Members suggested that a robust internal review should be carried out in addition to the external review in order to set the organization on trajectory that will allow it to grow in the future. Members suggested that the Strategic Plan should interlink with the structural issues of AOP. Following this full discussion Members approved the Risk Register.

5.20 Professor Bailey also presented the Observatory's most recent Quarterly Assurance Statement (for period 2013 January 1 to March 31). The discussion under Section 9 had been updated to include issues relating to the recent Internal Audit report concerning Health and Safety and other matters. The Committee requested that these issues be progressed as soon as practically possible and approved the Quarterly Assurance Statement.

5.21 Professor Bailey also highlighted the draft Annual Report for Calendar Year 2012 and Financial Year 2012/2013 included in the papers for information, and requested that any comments by members of the Management Committee should be forwarded as soon as possible. The prior-year Annual Report and Accounts for 2011/2012 had received an unqualified audit opinion from the Comptroller and Auditor General and, having been approved by DCAL in early 2013, were laid before the NI Assembly on 2013 February 19. The Chairman congratulated the Director and the staff and commented especially on the exceptionally high number of scientific papers produced with a restricted funding level.

Dr Mason referred to the following matters in his interim report for the Planetarium;

5.22 Dr Mason drew Members' attention to the need for formal approval of the Risk Register and Quarterly Assurance Statements. It was highlighted that Members need to challenge the Directors on the Risk Register. The Department is keen to receive a single report for AOP; however this is impracticable due to the different functions of each organization.

5.23 Dr Mason referred to the Key Performance Indicators (page 4); visitor numbers are projected to show an increase on the unaudited figures for 2012/13 with a small, steady increase in visitor numbers occurring over the past few years. Dr Mason discussed the Creativity month of March 2013; the Planetarium provided free school visits which resulted in a significant increase in numbers. Dr Mason is to propose free admission to the Minister, the reasoning to include that museums have free admissions and the Planetarium is a lengthy distance from Belfast. Dr Mason also suggested a tourist package in Armagh such as an all-inclusive ticket, to include other local tourist attractions. During 2012, the Planetarium hosted over 20 Public events, with those events which were free being much better attended than those for which a fee was charged. This is in line with the Minister's aims of supporting disadvantaged families as stated in the Programme for Government (PfG). A similar programme of events is scheduled to take place in 2013. Shop sales have increased; this suggests that free admissions may increase shop income. External income is estimated at 30% of total income; Dr Mason highlighted that it is difficult to increase this performance indicator due to the current economic circumstances. The use of GroupOn vouchers has been very successful; numbers attending have increased and it has promoted the Planetarium to different social classes. Dr Mason highlighted that the Planetarium is currently showing a deficit for 2012/13, mainly due to providing long term cover for an absent staff member.

5.24 Dr Mason discussed the Visitor Satisfaction Survey (page 6); the coffee shop did not perform as well as other areas surveyed as it cannot deliver hot food or support a permanent staff member.

5.25 The Planetarium advertises on a limited budget and is currently using a number of small advertising strategies; these involve obtaining support from the community and local media sources, advertising for free on the Internet and through word of mouth.

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- 5.26 The Planetarium is well served by its dedicated and well-informed staff. There is currently a vacancy for an Education Support Officer; Dr Mason is to make an application to DCAL for permission to fill this position.
- 5.27 The Planetarium is looking into the expansion of cross-border teacher training. In addition, Dr Mason is planning to introduce a pilot scheme whereby cases of equipment including iPads, a projector and meteorites are sent to small schools who cannot afford to visit the Planetarium.
- 5.28 The Planetarium has installed a Digistar 5 upgrade. Armagh is the only UK Planetarium to have a Digistar 5 installation. The Planetarium has several new shows in development and hopes to launch these in the summer.
- 5.29 Dr Mason highlighted the Quarterly Assurance Statements for the Planetarium (ref. appendix 1), which had been updated following the ARMC meeting. The Management Committee approved the Quarterly Assurance Statements.
- 5.30 Dr Mason highlighted the draft Governance Statement (ref. appendix 2), which includes details of attendance of all meetings. The Management Committee approved the draft Governance Statement.
- 5.31 With regards to the Risk Register (ref. Appendix 3), Dr Mason explained that amendments arising from previous meetings were in italics. Risk number 6 – the suspension of the Joint Administrator, was added at the request of DCAL. Members noted that the Observatory and the Planetarium have different judgments of the level of risk for the same risks. The Directors advised that this is a subjective judgment depending on the different circumstances pertaining within each organization. The Committee approved the Risk Register.
- 5.32 A report previously prepared by the Administrator on Subsidised Employee NILGOSC Pension Contributions (ref. Appendix 5) had been updated by Dr Mason. This is to be sent to DCAL and taken to the ARMC if approved by the Management Committee. A liability of approximately £4,600 has been budgeted for (ref. 3.7). The draft report was approved by the Committee.
- 5.33 Dr Mason discussed the Business Plan 2013–2014 for the Planetarium, which had been updated following comments from the Board of Governors and is to be forwarded to DCAL. The Committee approved the Business Plan. Members recommended that both the Board of Governors and the Management Committee should approve the Business Plans before they go to DCAL. Members suggested that the draft Business Plans for AOP should be provided in November each year rather than January; however Professor Bailey advised that a Business Plan cannot be provided until April owing to uncertain funding and fluctuations in external grant income throughout the year.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that the approval of the Risk Registers at the management committee meeting on 21st June 2012 was not recorded in the minutes. Members confirmed that these Risk Registers had been discussed and approved.

7 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meetings will be on Friday 21st June 2013 at 11.30am in the Observatory, and 18th October 2013 at 10.30am in the Planetarium.

The meeting ended at 5.50pm

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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(Chairman)

Dated: