

MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 30 MARCH 2020 AT 11.00 A.M.

Present: Mr J Briggs (Chair), Mr S Brown, The Very Rev Dean G Dunstan, Mr B Hannam, Professor L Harra, Professor M Mathioudakis, Mr P McGurgan, Dr M McKay, Professor R Oudmaijer, Professor T Ray and Mr R Wilson

Apologies: Professor M Merrifield

In Attendance: Professor M Burton (Director), Mrs C Corvan (Head of Corporate Services), Dr M Sarzi (Head of Research), Mr L Knox (Head of Finance), Dr K Lemon (Boardroom Apprentice), Mrs L O'Neill (Corporate Support) and Mrs L Brown (Corporate Manager)

1. OPENING REMARKS

- 1.1 At the outset the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting which was taking place virtually via Microsoft Teams. He advised that Mrs Corvan would be monitoring the chat facility and if any Member wished to make a comment or ask a question they should do so using this function.
- 1.2 Mrs Corvan confirmed that Mr Magee, ICT Manager had been in contact with everyone in advance of the meeting to ensure they were set-up and there were no accessibility issues.

2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Apologies were recorded as above and it was noted that Mr Wilson was required to leave at approx. 11.30 am.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 The Chair reminded members and officers of the need to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest associated with any item on the Agenda either now or at the relevant point during the meeting. He added that there was an item contained within the Director's Report regarding the 'Covenant on AOP's lands leased to the Royal School Armagh' in respect of which both Mr Wilson and Dean Dunstan had an interest. This item would be deferred until the end of the meeting by which stage Mr Wilson would have left and at which point Dean Dunstan would retire from the meeting.
- 3.2 Mr Wilson declared an interest in the 'Covenant on AOP's lands leased to the Royal School Armagh' and requested that this be formally recorded in any subsequent meetings where the matter was discussed.

4. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2019

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2019 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 5.1 The Committee noted that there were 3 ongoing matters arising from previous meetings. There were no further matters arising raised.

6. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 6.1 The Chair reported that John McDowell had been announced as Archbishop Clarke's replacement and Dean Dunstan confirmed that he was due to take up office on 28th April.
- 6.2 A revised timetable for the Boardroom Apprentice 2020 initiative had been received. Recruitment had been postponed until July 2020.
- 6.3 The June meeting of the Management Committee would take place on Monday 15 June and was also likely to be a virtual meeting.

7. REPORT FROM DIRECTOR

- 7.1 Professor Burton guided the Committee through his report, elaborating briefly on the matters for discussion. The Committee noted the matters and some of these were discussed in detail.
- 7.2 Since the time of writing, a decision had been taken to postpone the 2020 Summer Programme 'Brickosaurus' until 2021.
- 7.3 In terms of the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) the Director advised that the Estates and Meteorological Officer was the only person permitted on site and he continued his duties in respect of the weather readings; there was a schedule of meetings using Microsoft Teams technology to maintain regular contact between staff and students, the researchers were conducting a programme of seminars and discussion meetings, and the Education Team was using online media as a means of engagement providing a regular programme of material using YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and blogs.
- 7.4 In response to queries from Professor Mathioudakis, it was confirmed that in exceptional circumstances staff and students could access buildings, with prior approval from the Director and it was noted that there were regular meetings and one-to-one contact between supervisors and their students. Any issues affecting or causing issues for students could be raised through these forums.
- 7.5 Professor Harra referred to AOP's online presence and enquired if the number of followers was known. In response Mrs Corvan explained that it was possible to obtain statistics and these would be collated for the next Committee meeting. She also advised that a creative writing competition was running in partnership with the local paper. **Action MC 30/3/20 – 1 Analytics on online activity to be brought to the June meeting.**
- 7.6 It was noted that AOP's online presence included short videos and science workshops delivered through the Education Team. The Research Team engagement included short videos; interviews; Q&A sessions and talks. In welcoming this activity, Professor Harra considered it important to plan and prepare for a different future.

- 7.7 In response to a query from Professor Oudmaijer, Mrs Corvan briefly outlined the lone working arrangements in place for the Estate and Meteorological Officer.
- 7.8 Professor Burton guided Members through the Discussion Paper: AOP and World Heritage which included three possible scenarios whereby Armagh (or AOP) could pursue World Heritage status.
- 7.9 Dr Lemon advised that, having carried out some work with UNESCO and World Heritage Sites, it was a very lengthy process that could be costly. She queried what criteria or multiple criteria in the World Heritage application process it was intended to follow. In response, Professor Burton explained that that depended upon the scenario to be followed, which was an area for discussion.
- 7.10 Dr Lemon queried why AOP would want to pursue such status and what it considered the benefits would be in so doing. Professor Burton explained that the aspiration was about putting AOP on the world stage and preserving and conserving the Observatory for future generations.
- 7.11 Dean Dunstan thanked the Director for the suggestion. In terms of the 3 possible scenarios he acknowledged the cross-border appeal of the second option, but expressed reservations in respect of option 3 which he considered to be a little nebulous in contrast to the others which were more scientific. In response, Professor Burton recognised that the various scenarios needed closer consideration. Professor Burton added that he had been in contact with Historic Environment Division (HED) and they were planning to schedule a meeting with the Director, Iain Greenaway. He reported that HED was positive about exploring the idea further.
- 7.12 Mr Wilson thanked the Director for his presentation and reported that ABC Council was currently considering similar proposals in respect of the Navan Centre. He considered it would be useful if AOP was having discussions with Mr Greenaway that the Council also be involved. He also acknowledged Dean Dunstan's view in respect of option 3. Professor Burton undertook to include ABC Council in the meeting with HED.
- 7.13 Mr Wilson apologised that he needed to leave and said it had been interesting having the meeting entirely remotely and congratulated the officers involved.

Mr Wilson retired from the meeting at 11.40 am.

- 7.14 The Chair hoped that the proposal could be picked up later in the year and asked that in the meantime Members reflect on the 3 options provided.
- 7.15 Professor Burton reported on the advice from Hamilton Architects following preparation of the Conservation Management Plan that AOP should seek the inclusion of the Observatory within the Armagh Conservation Area. The Chair considered this a logical step that he felt would strengthen AOP's plans for the future. He sought Members' views on the value of investigating further.
- 7.16 Mrs Corvan and Professor Burton addressed a query from Dr McKay as to whether any UNESCO conditions or inclusion in the Armagh Conservation Area would constrain AOP's plans for the future.
- 7.17 The Chair asked that the Management Team investigate the extension of the Armagh Conservation Area to include the Observatory and report back to the Management Committee in due course. **Action MC 30/3/20 – 2 Explore inclusion of Observatory in Armagh Conservation Area and report back to a future meeting.**

- 7.18 Professor Burton referred to the future proposals for the Observatory and sought Management Committee approval to explore how temporary decanting from the Observatory building could be progressed. Management Committee approval was granted.
- 7.19 The Committee noted that there was considerable momentum and support for AOP's future plans, however, it was expected that the current situation due to the Coronavirus would impact upon progress in the coming months.
- 7.20 Professor Burton advised that a timetable for development of the Corporate Plan 2021-26 had been prepared, however this was likely to change due to the impact of the Coronavirus.
- 7.21 The Committee noted the matters for information in the Director's report. The Director's report was accepted.

8. UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)

- 8.1 Mr Hannam informed the Committee that the ARAC had considered 3 papers from Internal Audit:
- Internal Audit Report in respect of IT Systems and Security – the audit, with a satisfactory rating, had identified 3 low priority recommendations;
 - Follow Up Review of previous audit recommendations – good progress had been noted with only a small number of low priority recommendations outstanding. This represented a considerable and very satisfactory improvement with the number of outstanding recommendations having been as many as 80 in the past;
 - Annual Assurance Report – this had a satisfactory rating.
- 8.2 Mr Hannam advised that the Risk Register had been updated to take account of the impact from COVID 19 and contingency plans were in place in respect of risks to payroll and ICT. The longer-term impact would take some time to work through.
- 8.3 The Committee had considered the external 2019-20 Audit Strategy. Constrained by extant government regulations there would be no site visits, the audit being largely completed remotely.
- 8.4 The draft ARAC Report was presented unchanged for Management Committee approval.
- 8.5 The ARAC considered six policies which it approved for presentation to Management Committee for approval:
- IT Asset Management
 - IT Password
 - IT Administrator Procedures
 - Incident Handling
 - Register of Interests
 - Financial Policies and Procedures
- 8.6 Mr Hannam advised that the draft Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (Oct-March); the draft Governance Statement 2019/20 and the draft Annual Board Assurance Statement 2019/20 which would normally have been considered at the March ARAC meeting had not been on the Agenda as these needed to be reviewed to take account of the current pandemic.

8.7 The Management Committee accepted the Chair of the ARAC's update report and approved the Risk Register, Draft ARAC Report and 6 policies – IT Asset Management, IT Password, IT Administrator Procedures, Incident Handling, Register of Interests and Financial Policies and Procedures.

9. UPDATE FROM THE STAFFING POLICY AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE (SPRC)

9.1 Professor Ray reported that SPRC had considered nine policies, all of which had been consulted upon with staff. The Committee was content to recommend them for Management Committee approval and thanked the Head of Corporate Services and her team for their work in developing them:

- Code of Conduct
- Learning and Development
- Lone Working
- Social Media
- Retirement
- Pension Discretions
- Good Practice in Research and Dealing with Misconduct
- Induction
- Leavers

9.2 In response to a query from Professor Oudmaijer regarding Section 8 of the Social Media policy relating to monitoring of the use of social media and what might be considered excessive Mrs Corvan explained that someone using social media recreationally for a large portion of their working day could be construed as excessive. She recognised that using social media could be a valid part of someone's job.

9.3 With regard to the policy on Good Practice in Research and Dealing with Scientific Misconduct, Dean Dunstan suggested that the word 'seriously' be removed from Paragraph 6.1.

9.4 Professor Mathioudakis pointed out that there needed to be a clear distinction between social media and Microsoft Teams group comments. He explained that the latter was a communication platform paid for by the organisation and its use as a social media medium should not be encouraged. In support of Professor Mathioudakis' comment, Professor Harra pointed out that the same rules that applied in the working environment were relevant and no one should be doing anything inappropriate either at work or via virtual means. Dr Lemon queried whether this point was covered in the Code of Conduct. Mrs Corvan welcomed the comments, but stated however that AOP had opened some channels specifically to be used like an internal social media, but that she would ensure that staff were aware the normal rules of conduct apply.

9.5 Professor Ray advised that the SPRC had considered a number of staffing matters which it was recommending for Management Committee approval, providing a brief background in respect of each:

- Maintain the status quo in respect of Observatory cleaning arrangements for the time being;
- Introduction of Planetarium Duty Manager Allowance;
- Establishment of two Fixed Term Contracts - Head of Finance and Income Generation and Education and Outreach Manager

The Head of Finance and Income Generation temporarily retired from the meeting whilst the establishment of the two fixed term contracts was being discussed.

9.6 Mrs Corvan provided further detail in relation to the establishment of the two Fixed Term Contracts.

9.7 In conclusion, Professor Ray advised that the SPRC had considered the HR Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2021 and was content to approve same.

9.8 The Chair asked if the Committee was content to accept the report and approve the recommendations from the SPRC – maintenance of status quo in respect of Observatory cleaning arrangements; introduction of Planetarium Duty Manager Allowance; establishment of 2 No Fixed Term Contracts; HR Strategy and Action Plan and 9 policies - Code of Conduct; Learning and Development; Lone Working; Social Media; Retirement; Pension Discretions; Good Practice in Research and Dealing with Misconduct; Induction and Leavers, subject to amendments previously outlined and this was confirmed.

10. PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUSINESS PLAN – Corporate Plan Objectives, KPIs and Finance

10.1 The Committee noted the Corporate Plan Objectives updated with Q4 progress; Q3 KPIs and the Finance Period 11 report to February 2020.

11. POLICY FOR APPROVAL

11.1 The draft Code of Conduct for Board and Management Committee Members had previously been circulated.

11.2 It was noted that there was an error on Page 6 where reference had been made to Libraries NI.

11.3 Dean Dunstan felt that the policy should be strengthened to reinforce its relevance to the Management Committee.

11.4 The Management Committee noted that with effect from the 2019/20 financial year Declarations made would be published on the AOP website.

11.5 The draft Code of Conduct for Board and Management Committee Members was approved subject to the correction on Page 6 and strengthening the Policy's reference to the Management Committee.

12. DOCUMENT FOR SEALING

12.1 The Committee agreed to sign and seal the Memorandum of Agreement (Research Students) between Queen's University Belfast and Armagh Observatory and Planetarium in relation to Supervision of PhD Students.

13. AOB

13.1 The Committee noted the availability of training.

14. DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

14.1 The remaining meetings for 2020 were noted as:

15 June
21 September
14 December

The Chair advised that there being no further business the deferred item from the Director's report would be considered at this point. Declaring a Conflict of Interest in the matter Dean Dunstan retired from the meeting at 12.20 pm

15. DEFERRED ITEM FROM DIRECTOR'S REPORT – COVENANT ON AOP'S LANDS LEASED TO THE ROYAL SCHOOL, ARMAGH

15.1 Professor Burton referred to correspondence received from Royal School, Armagh requesting a variation to the lease to remove or vary the covenants. He briefly outlined the specific covenants on the lease which included use of the grounds during daylight hours only; use for school games; no buildings, construction or lighting on the site and no sub-letting and advised that no further detail had been provided on the Royal School's plans. He considered that the matter was something that could have been discussed at the Collaborative Forum, however, that had not met since November 2019.

15.2 Professor Burton also reported that correspondence had also been received from the Council advising that it proposed to submit plans to replace the existing pitch and provide a stadium for 150 people. He advised that the Royal School had signed a non-disclosure agreement.

15.3 Mrs Corvan briefly elaborated on the planning application detail and AOP's concerns regarding its impact on the proposals for the future. She considered that AOP needed full disclosure before it could consider the Royal School's request and that AOP would need to take legal advice.

15.4 Discussion ensued during which the views of several Members were expressed in relation to the protection of AOP's interests both in terms of the site and its wider interests as an astronomical institution. The importance of the Collaboration Forum as the appropriate way to discuss such matters in the context of all of the partner organisations was noted.

15.5 The Chair summarised the discussion and asked Members if they were content that AOP write to ABC setting out the positive position and willingness to fully engage while protecting its values and interests.

15.6 The Committee agreed to respond to the Council acknowledging the importance of an effective Collaboration Forum where all partner organisation's needs were considered in the context of an overall vision and that this was the appropriate mechanism to address such matters. AOP could

not make any decisions until it was fully aware of the current proposals and they had been fully discussed.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members for their participation in what he considered had been a successful virtual meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting


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(Chair)

Dated: 15 June 2020

Updated Actions as at 23 March 2020

Reference	Action	Owner	Progress
MC29/01/15 – 01	Dr McKay to explore within ESA if exhibits could be provided to the Planetarium	Dr McKay	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>16 December 2019: Dr McKay and Professor Burton to progress.</p> <p>10 December 2018: Dr McKay advised that he and Professor Burton would endeavour to progress the matter relating to the exhibits.</p> <p>21 June 2018: Dr McKay advised that he has been unable to progress this due to his contact being on exceptional leave. He will endeavour to resolve this before his retirement.</p> <p>17 November 2017: Continuing to explore opportunities with Dr McKay</p> <p>1 September 2017: Dr McKay advised that he will introduce Mr News to the ESA PR.</p> <p>23 August 2017: John News has been appointed as temporary HECO and will pursue this matter with Dr McKay</p> <p>29 March 2017: It is hoped that a temporary Head of Education & Outreach will be appointed shortly and this matter will be pursued at this time.</p> <p>20 September 2016: Dr McKay has spoken to ESA PR in HQ (Paris). ESA would like to understand the direction AOP intends to follow and what support they could provide. It has been decided to wait until the new Head of Education & Outreach is appointed before pursuing further.</p> <p>28 January 2016: Dr McKay to introduce Planetarium representative to the ESA teams to pursue potential exhibits.</p>
MC24/6/19-02 & MC16/12/19	Invite Sean Barden to September Management Committee meeting	Corporate Manager	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>16 December 2019: Deferred to Board of Governors Meeting 2020</p> <p>10 September 2019: Deferred to December meeting due to facilitated session with Management Committee Members following September meeting</p>
MC23/9/19-04	KPI 3 to be reviewed for 2020/21 financial year in consultation with Professor Mathioudakis	SMT	

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