

MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 11.00 AM

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 M Merrifield, Professor R Oudmaijer, Professor T Ray and Mr R Wilson

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), Ms K Moylan (Boardroom Apprentice), Dr K Lemon (Boardroom Apprentice) and Mrs L Brown (Corporate Manager)

In Attendance
for Project
Juno

Presentation: Dr S Bagnulo, Mr K Cubuk, Dr E Higgins, Mrs S Mackle and Professor J Vink

1. OPENING REMARKS

1.1 At the outset the Chair welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting, extending a special welcome to Ms Kim Moylan, AOP's new Boardroom Apprentice. He also welcomed Dr Kirstin Lemon and advised that she would continue to attend the Management Committee meetings as a boardroom apprentice until the end of the year.

2. APOLOGIES

2.1 There were no apologies.

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.

3.2 Conflicts of interest were declared by Dean G Dunstan and Mr R Wilson in respect of the update in the Director's Report pertaining to the Royal School and ABC Council's planning application. The Chair considered the interests declared did not have a material impact on the meeting and there was no need for the Members to leave the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2020

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 15 June 2020 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting to be signed by the Chair at a later date.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 5.1 The Committee noted that there were 5 matters arising from previous meetings. Three remained ongoing, one was yet to commence and it was proposed to close the remaining matter. There were no further matters raised.

6. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 6.1 The Chair thanked all those who had completed a Board Evaluation Questionnaire and drew attention to the summary of responses, which had previously been circulated. He said the summary would be reviewed and matters identified addressed in due course.
- 6.2 Dr McKay queried the value of the evaluation given that only 5 responses had been received. The Chair considered this a valid point and asked if it could be reissued for completion. Mrs Corvan confirmed that this was possible. Discussion ensued during which several Members expressed concerns about the length of the questionnaire, the relevance of some of the questions and that they didn't feel sufficiently qualified to respond to some of them. Mrs Corvan pointed out that it was a generic questionnaire and she wasn't sure how much lee-way AOP had to develop its own questionnaire. It was agreed that the Questionnaire be recirculated to those who hadn't responded previously and that other evaluation options be explored. **Action MC 21/9/20-1 Recirculate Board Evaluation Questionnaire and consider other evaluation options for future years.**
- 6.3 The Chair sought and was granted approval to formally sign the Boardroom Apprentice Memorandum of Understanding. **Action MC 21/9/20-2 Boardroom Apprentice MOU to be signed.**
- 6.4 With reference to the 2021 Meeting Schedule the Chair explained that, due to the imminent new appointments to the Management Committee, rather than setting dates for the full year, the Corporate Manager would seek to find a suitable date for the March 2021 meeting only. Relevant Members would be contacted in the coming days. **Action MC 21/9/20-3 Establish date for March 2021 meeting.**
- 6.5 The Chair reported that throughout the COVID crisis a tremendous amount of work had been progressed in relation to the AOP Vision, with support from SIB and DfC. He hoped that there would soon be a report for Management Committee consideration.

7. REPORT FROM DIRECTOR

- 7.1 Professor Burton guided the Committee through his report, elaborating briefly on the matters for discussion which included the impact of Corona Virus (COVID 19) on AOP's operations; Business Plan 2020-21; Capital Budget 2020-21; Budgets 2021-2024; Data Visualisation Laboratory and Staff Appointments, Achievements and Activities.
- 7.2 The Chair congratulated Professor Burton and his team on the capital investments for AOP.
- 7.3 Dr Lemon commended the Education Team on the amount of work they had been engaged in. She said that she followed them on Facebook and it was good that they had been able to adapt and were making science accessible, however, she queried if any analysis or evaluations had taken

place. Professor Burton advised that there had been no formal evaluation, however there were statistics on viewers and Facebook followers and lessons learned through experience were informing the virtual classroom initiative.

- 7.4 The Chair asked Professor Merrifield if he could provide any guidance or advice in this regard and in response he explained that bench-marking was difficult. He reported that his University was working with their linguistics team to analyse comments received and undertook to pick up this matter with Professor Burton after the meeting.
- 7.5 Mrs Corvan pointed out that AOP evaluated what worked well all the time. She said it was a member of a number of bodies including the British Association of Planetaria (BAP) and the Association of Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC) and the work the Planetarium had been doing was being recognised and commended. She also said it was worth noting that an STFC grant of £14,500 had been awarded to bring together the online activities into a book that would be provided free of charge to all Schools. In addition, Professor Burton had delivered a presentation at the BAP Conference, together with the senior members of the Education Team. Mrs Corvan acknowledged that none of AOP staff had been furloughed, which had been a big help in enabling staff to refocus activities.
- 7.6 Dr Sarzi added that the ongoing co-operation between the Education Team and Research was very relevant for the mock-REF.
- 7.7 The Committee accepted the Director's report.
- 7.8 Dr Sarzi provided a verbal update on Research Matters:
- 8 projects had been submitted to STFC for funding and in June positive comments had been received, all of which had been addressed. A decision was expected at the end of the year;
 - an Ernest Rutherford STFC fellowship application had been submitted by Dr Andreas Sanders;
 - a Royal Society URF application had been submitted in August, also by Dr Sanders;
 - the STFC PhD student Summer School, which had been postponed due to COVID-19, had been rescheduled to take place online in January 2021. AOP was working with the Institute of Physics (IoP) to co-ordinate the event;
 - AOP had been approached to take over administration of the UK SALT consortium (UKSC) for which DfC and Department of Economy approval had been granted. An update MoU was being circulated among the UKSC members;
 - a new timetable for the REF2021 had been agreed as had a draft submission. The draft was expected to be available for consideration at the March 2021 Management Committee.
- 7.9 With regards to AOP's administrator role in SALT, Professor Burton sought the Management Committee's approval to take on this responsibility and sign the Memorandum of Understanding. The Management Committee's approval was granted. **Action MC 21/9/20-4 SALT MOU to be signed.**
- 7.10 Dr Sarzi responded to a number of questions from Members on Research Matters. Professor Ray asked if more help should be sought for the preparation of the mock REF review to which Dr Sarzi replied that in particular AOP would like to prioritise early feedback on the impact case, on the impact of research-informed outreach and public engagement.

- 7.11 Professor Merrifield commented that the Data Visualisation Laboratory proposal was a good development. He pointed out that this was a fast-moving area of technology and stressed the importance of a robust Business Case. In response Professor Burton briefly explained that the project would be broken up into modules beginning with a modest Business Case for a small upgrade. A key component of the project was having people with the necessary expertise.
- 7.12 Professor Mathioudakis enquired about future student extensions to offset COVID-19 related disruptions and Dr Sarzi replied that STFC students would certainly be able to be funded in these cases but that AOP would struggle to find funding to support its own AOP funded students, although as also mentioned by Mrs Corvan it would be important to ensure all students were treated in the same way. Professor Mathioudakis raised a further query regarding finishing PDRAs during the pandemic and whether they would also be supported. In response Dr Sarzi explained that this was where the UKRI Covid-19 Allocation would come into play. In terms of the Summer School, Professor Mathioudakis stated he was aware of at least two that had taken place online and suggested AOP could seek feedback and lessons learned from the organisers of those.
- 7.13 Professor Harra enquired about student mental welfare and Mrs Corvan confirmed that AOP had routinely provided assistance and permitted several students to return to their home countries to help cope with the current situation.

Mr R Wilson retired from the meeting at 11.49 am, during the above agenda item.

8. ADDITIONAL ITEM OF CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 8.1 The Chair provided a further item of Chair's Business at this point in relation to Membership related matters. He reported that DfC was progressing the public appointment process. The Panel had been appointed, the short-listing criteria had been agreed and the opportunity was expected to be advertised late October with shortlisting in November and interviews early December.
- 8.2 The Chair advised that it was acceptable for Committee Members to encourage suitable candidates to apply.
- 8.3 As a result of the process, Mr Brett Hannam and Dr Mike McKay would be leaving at the end of December, the position on the Management Committee, formerly held by Mrs Primrose Wilson would also be appointed to. All three positions being DfC appointments to the Management Committee.
- 8.4 The Chair reported that he and Professor Burton had met with the Archbishop and would be moving forward with the membership recommendations arising from the Governance Audit.
- 8.5 It was noted that Dean Dunstan would be retiring at the end of October. The timeline for his successor was not yet known. It was agreed to explore further. **Action MC 21/9/20-5 Explore timeline for Dean Dunstan's replacement on the Management Committee.**

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

- 9.1 Mr Hannam informed the Committee that the ARAC had considered two Internal Audit reports. The Internal Audit report in respect of Payroll provided satisfactory assurance. It had identified two Priority 3 recommendations that were for Libraries NI to progress. The report on the Internal Audit review of Governance, which had also provided satisfactory assurance, had identified recommendations in relation to succession planning and appraisals for Board Members and that safeguarding training be provided for Board of Governors and Management Committee members. A suitable online course had been identified and would be circulated in due course.
- 9.2 A report on the status of Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations, as assessed by Management, identified 12 outstanding recommendations, which included 5 added from the two audits reported on above. 11 should be completed by December 2020.
- 9.3 The Risk Register identified two key risks rated as extreme – funding and impact of COVID-19, both of which were being kept under regular review. The ARAC was content to recommend its approval.
- 9.4 The Committee had considered the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April-September), which it was also content to recommend for approval.
- 9.5 The Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 and Draft 2019/20 Report To Those Charged With Governance had been considered. It was a clean audit report with minor recommendations and the ARAC was content to recommend for Management Committee approval.
- 9.6 The Committee considered the Computer & Network Usage Policy had been well written and was content to recommend approval of same.
- 9.7 The Management Committee accepted the Chair of ARAC's update report and approved the Risk Register; Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April-September); Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20; 2019/20 Report To Those Charged With Governance and the Computer & Network Usage Policy.

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

- 10.1 Professor Ray reported that SPRC had considered and recommended for approval the Performance Appraisal Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. He reminded Members that the draft appraisal policy had been considered in June but as the consultation process had not concluded it had been decided that the final policy should be brought back in September. In addition, a new section on the Appeals Procedure had been included. The Safeguarding Policy, which had previously existed, had been reviewed, and included recommendations from the recent Internal Audit Governance review.
- 10.2 The SPRC had been appraised of the Senior Management Team's concerns that significant Annual Leave balances remained so late into the leave year. No employee had been prevented from taking leave as a result of COVID-19, however, in light of the lockdown period the Committee had agreed to allow an additional 5 days' annual leave to be carried forward into 2021 provided employees who might have difficulty using their allocation discussed their outstanding leave with their line manager before the end of October and it was mutually agreed that the balance could not be reduced due to work related priorities.

- 10.3 SPRC recommended Special Bonus Scheme payments totalling £2,775 to 10 employees, who had worked above and beyond, for Management Committee approval.
- 10.4 The SPRC had also noted the following matters:
- 2 long-term agency posts had been filled;
 - a number of short term temporary posts continued, subject to available budget and workload;
 - the 2019 Pay Award Business Case had been approved and payment would be made in the September salaries;
 - update on how AOP staff was coping with COVID-19;
 - proposals for a staff engagement event in December;
 - update on HR Strategy Action Plan 2020/21.
- 10.5 The Management Committee accepted the report and approved the Performance Appraisal and Safeguarding Policies and the recommendations in respect of Annual Leave Carry Over and Special Bonus Payments.

11. PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUSINESS PLAN – Revised Corporate Plan Objectives and KPIs and Finance

- 11.1 Mrs Corvan advised that the draft Business Plan 2020/21 and an Addendum reflecting changes, both of which had been previously circulated, were presented for Management Committee approval.
- 11.2 The Committee approved the submission of the Draft Business Plan 2020/21 and Addendum to DfC for approval and noted the Finance Report for Period 4.

Dr S Bagnulo, Mr K Cubuk, Dr E Higgins, Mrs S Mackle and Professor J Vink joined the meeting at this juncture to deliver the presentation on Project Juno.

12. PRESENTATION ON PROJECT JUNO

- 12.1 At the outset Mrs Corvan, introduced Dr Stefano Bagnulo, Chair of the Juno Committee; Mr Kerem Cubuk, student representative on the Committee; Dr Erin Higgins, former student and temporary PDRA; Professor Jorick Vink, Research representative on the Committee and Mrs Sinead Mackle on behalf of Education.
- 12.2 Dr Bagnulo explained that Project Juno was an initiative of The Institute of Physics which sought to recognise and reward institutes and organisations that could demonstrate that they had taken action to address gender equality in physics and to encourage better practice for all staff and was designed by Physicists for Physicists.
- 12.3 AOP's Project Juno journey commenced in November 2016 with a formal letter from Professor Burton endorsing the project's six principles and making the commitment to work from Supporter status towards Practitioner and then Champion level. The six principles being:
- A robust organisational framework to deliver equality of opportunity and rewards;

- Appointment and selection processes and procedures that encourage men and women to apply for academic posts at all levels;
- Departmental structures and systems which support and encourage the career progression and promotion of all staff and enable men and women to progress and continue in their careers;
- Departmental organisation, structure, management arrangements and culture that are open, inclusive and transparent and encourage the participation of all staff;
- Flexible approaches and provisions that enable individuals, at all career and life stages, to optimise their contribution to their department, institution and to SET;
- An environment where professional conduct is embedded into departmental culture and behaviour.

12.4 An action plan had been drawn up which identified supporting evidence and gaps associated with the 6 principles and sub-sections.

12.5 Dr Bagnulo explained that whilst the Research environment was male dominated AOP's Education Department had strong female representation thereby addressing issues of gender balance. Dr Higgins briefly outlined some of the enhancements to the appointment and selection processes and procedures to encourage men and women to apply for posts across the organisation which included an information pack providing advice on accommodation; doctors, training opportunities etc; unconscious bias training; encouraging applicants from minority groups and providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

12.6 Mrs Mackle focused on the Planetarium's role in the communication of science to under-represented groups and how the new Changing Places and Sensory Room facilities would further enhance the offering and make it more accessible to those who couldn't visit before. She said they wanted to ensure AOP was a space for all and a further initiative in this regard was subtitling for shows and the creation of an accessibility programme. It was aimed to have all shows subtitled by the end of the year, thereby providing greater scope to reach under-represented people within the community. Within the world of Planetaria she would like to drive show-makers to provide this functionality as standard and for them to become part of what was received within the show-pack. Another initiative was to provide audio-description – using ear-pieces people could experience through sound what was happening on the screen. She explained that the little changes outlined would have a huge impact for the community, for the better.

12.7 In terms of AOP's Podcast Series, Mrs Mackle advised that there had now been 8 episodes broadcast, the most recent of which had been dedicated to Women in Science. This would continue to be a key theme moving forward. The listenership was predominately females within the 23-35 age bracket.

12.8 Mrs Corvan explained that the Project Juno Committee had been reviewing its Action Plan and one of the actions had been to keep the Management Committee apprised of progress. She suggested that the Project Juno Committee provide an annual update moving forward.

12.9 Professor Mathioudakis suggested that the impact on lockdown on different groups might be something they may wish to consider. Mrs Corvan welcomed the suggestion adding that they were looking at questions for the annual staff survey and they could include something around this topic.

- 12.10 Professor Oudmaijer picked up on the podcast listenership statistics and the reasons for them. Mrs Mackle confirmed that 70% of the audience was female but she would need to delve deeper to establish why this might be. Dr Higgins added that in general podcasts seemed to reach more females than males.
- 12.11 Ms Moylan expressed her support for the project and AOP's excellent education programme and in response to a query from her Dr Sarzi, Dr Higgins and Mrs Corvan all highlighted AOP activities to encourage young women/girls and to feed their enthusiasm for science, including summer projects for students, attending University Open Days, holding Girls in Science days and engagement with schools.
- 12.12 Dr Bagnulo pointed out that it was important to use the correct language that didn't discourage women or demonstrate unconscious bias.
- 12.13 The Chair thanked the Project Juno Committee Members for their attendance and assured them of the Management Committee's support and hoped they would attain Champion status.

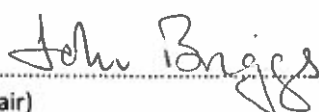
13. AOB

- 13.1 The Committee noted the availability of training as outlined in the report, which was now being delivered on-line.
- 13.2 The ARAC Minutes June 2020 and SPRC Minutes 2020 were noted.
- 13.3 The date of the next meeting was noted as 14 December 2020.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members for attendance and participation.

The meeting concluded at 12.47 pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting


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(Chair)

Dated:

Updated Actions as at 9 September 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>May 2020: Deferred until a physical meeting can take place.</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>
MC30/3/20-02	Explore inclusion of Observatory in Armagh Conservation Area and report back to a future meeting.	SMT	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>June 2020: Update included in Director's Report</p>
MC15/6/20-01	Write to STFC and DIAS regarding their nominees to the Management Committee		<p>September 2020: Not yet progressed, to be completed before December meeting.</p>
MC15/6/20-02	Alumni Paper to be circulated to Management Committee	Corporate Manager	<p>Proposed to close</p> <p>19 June 2020: Paper circulated to members</p>

**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTION POINT LOG
AND MATTERS ARISING**