

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VISITATION BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 25 MARCH 2004 AT 10.30 AM AT THE OBSERVATORY

Present: His Grace, the Lord Eames, Canon J.M. Barton, Canon H.J.W. Moore, Canon R. Porteus, Canon F.D. Swann and Professor D. Lynden-Bell

Apologies: Archdeacon R.G. Hoey, Dean H. Cassidy, Canon W.J.A. Dawson, Canon C.F. Moore, Councillor B. Gardiner-Watson, Professor K. Bell and Dr E. Haughey

In attendance: Dr T. Mason, Professor M. Bailey, and Mr L. Young

1. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1. The Chairman referred to the announcement of additional Government funding for the refurbishment of the Planetarium and congratulated Dr Mason on what he had achieved despite all the difficulties at the Planetarium over recent years.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VISITATION HELD ON 7 MAY 2003

- 2.1. Paragraph 7.3, first sentence of the minutes of the Annual Visitation held on 7 May 2003 was altered to read – “Professor Lynden-Bell informed the Board that he was leaving Northern Ireland in July 2003 and therefore was unable to serve as one of the Governors’ representatives on the Management Committee.” The minutes were then approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 3.1. Any matters arising were dealt with under other Agenda items.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- 4.1. Dr Haughey has agreed to serve on the Board of Governors for a further 5-year term, commencing on 1 January 2004.
- 4.2. Professor Sir Martin Rees resigned as a member of the Board of Governors on 2 September 2003. The Board agreed that the Secretary should invite the next Astronomer Royal to join the Board.
- 4.3. Professor Lynden-Bell informed the Board that this would be his last meeting as a Governor. The Chairman thanked Professor Lynden-Bell for his contribution to the work of the Board of Governors and the Management Committee.

5. AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2003

The Chairman informed the Board that this was the last occasion that PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP would present the accounts. Under the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, the Comptroller and Auditor General had taken over responsibility for the audit with effect from the financial year 2003/2004. Mrs Loughran, Audit Manager from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, joined the meeting and referred to the following matters in her review of the audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2003:

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- 5.1. The Observatory received grant of £649,000 for unrestricted purposes and £117,500 for restricted purposes from the DCAL. A further £305,713 of grant income was received from other sources. £223,926 of the grant income was transferred to deferred income to be matched against expenditure in subsequent years. The most significant additional expenditure in the year was the cost of the refurbishment of the main building and the domes, amounting to £84,635. The overall deficit of £5,318 shown in the statement of financial activities was set off against reserves. The asset value of the Astropark was transferred from the Planetarium to the Observatory and additional depreciation was provided to write off the value of the old Calver dome, which will be demolished when the new dome is built. Cash at bank at the year-end, amounting to £373,589, included deferred grant income of £263,926.
- 5.2. The Planetarium received grant income of £384,000 for unrestricted purposes and £80,000 for restricted purposes from the DCAL, £60,250 of which was transferred to deferred income. The Shop and Mail Order incurred a loss of £10,703 due to lower shop sales arising from the closure of the main building. Salary costs were lower than the previous year due to the non-replacement of a member of staff who had left. The increase in management and administration costs was due mainly to additional legal costs of £39,750. The overall surplus of £10,169 shown in the statement of financial activities was transferred to reserves. Cash at bank amounting to £81,461 included deferred income of £60,250.
- 5.3. In the opinion of the Auditors the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium at 31 March 2003 and comply with statutory requirements, accounting reporting standards and the Northern Ireland Resource Accounting Manual.
- 5.4. The Chairman thanked Mrs Loughran for her presentation and the Secretary for his work on the accounts.

6. REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES AND INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

- 6.1. The minutes of the Management Committee Meetings held on 18 March 2003 and 24 June 2003, the Report of the Internal Audit Committee dated 17 November 2003, and the Internal Audit Report for 2002/2003 were received and noted by the Board.

7. DIRECTORS' REPORTS

Professor Bailey referred to the following matters in his Report for the Calendar year 2003:

- 7.1. Performance against target performance indicators for 2003 showed either constant or improved performance.
- 7.2. A significant achievement during the year was the Observatory's involvement in arrangements for the National Astronomy Meeting held in Dublin from 7-11 April 2003. With almost 600 participants this was the largest astronomy meeting held in Ireland apart from the IAU General Assembly in 1955. The meeting provided a programme of specialist meetings and talks as well as a high level of scientific exchange between the participants and also added to the Observatory's national and international profile.
- 7.3. The principal objectives for 2004/2005 will be to: maintain the existing high-quality research programmes; obtain grants and additional funding to support new research projects; strengthen the research capability in solar system and stellar astrophysics; strengthen access to and use of necessary research infrastructure; widen access to the heritage material; and advance plans for a new Library, Archive and Historic Scientific Instruments Building.

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- 7.4. Professor Bailey referred the Board to the appendices to his Report which provided lists covering staff members, refereed journals, presentations and seminars (given by staff all over the world), media mentions and the Observatory's component of the DCAL'S combined policy on New Targeting Social Need.
- 7.5. Following discussion of Professor Bailey's Report the Board agreed that the Observatory and Planetarium should organise a joint display for the forthcoming Church of Ireland Synod to be held in the Armagh City Hotel in May 2004, The Board also agreed to pass the following resolution: "The Governors draw attention to the need for a suitable archive and library building providing a more accessible library, some office space and a suitable public display of the Observatory's archives."

Dr Mason referred to the following matters from his Report for 2003/2004:

- 7.6. The initial plan for the re-opening of the theatre, in the absence of Government funding for a new building, was to carry out limited refurbishment work to the interior of the theatre and the outer dome using existing funds from slippage funding, savings in costs and reserves. This work has been substantially completed and the resurfacing of the theatre's outer dome has made a significant improvement to the appearance of the main building. Preliminary plans prepared by the Observatory's architect were drawn up to provide improved disabled access to the main building, required by new legislation coming into force in October 2004, together with additional storage and office space.
- 7.7. Further Government funding was announced for the refurbishment of the Planetarium - £217,000 in December 2003 and £1million in January 2004. The DCAL agreed that new projection equipment (Digistar 3) could be purchased from the additional funding. As part of the business case necessary to draw down the balance of the additional funding, the DCAL commissioned the Central Procurement Directorate to report on the condition of all the Planetarium buildings. Preliminary estimates of the total refurbishment costs show that substantial additional funding will be needed to complete the work. As events unfold plans will change but at present we still intend to open the theatre to the public for the summer period with new interactive shows for different age groups. When the buildings are closed for refurbishment the Planetarium will concentrate on outreach activities.
- 7.8. Details of events in 2003/2004 are included in the Report and most of these will be repeated in the year ahead. Over 9,000 visitors attended the Planetarium compared with 6,000 in the previous year. Outreach figures decreased but this was part of the plan to attract more visitors to the Planetarium. The total visitor and outreach figure for the year was approximately 20,000.
- 7.9. The new Planetarium web site, created by Julie Thompson, was launched in June 2003. The site provides full information on Planetarium activities and we have received excellent feed back from people who have visited the site. The bulk of the orders for Mail Order products now come through the Mail Order web site and Mail Order sales for the year have increased from the previous year.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1. The Board agreed to provide copies of approved minutes of future meetings of the Board to the DCAL.
- 8.2. Dr Mason reported that he had received a request from a member of staff for early retirement due to ill health. This matter will be referred to the DCAL for consideration.

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8.3.

This paragraph is not published under Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act because it contains personal information relating to a member of staff.

9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

9.1. The Secretary will arrange the date of the next meeting of the Board.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

His Grace, the Lord Eames
Chairman of the Board of Governors

Date 18 March 2005