

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VISITATION BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 30 MARCH 2006 AT 10.30 A.M. AT THE OBSERVATORY

Present: His Grace, the Lord Eames, Archdeacon R.G. Hoey, Canon J.M. Barton, Canon H.J.W. Moore, Canon R. J. N. Porteus, Canon F.D. Swann, Professor A. Hibbert, Canon J. McKegney and Councillor W. B. Gardiner-Watson

Apologies: Canon A. Dawson, Canon C.F. Moore and Professor J. Dyson

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

1. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1. The Chairman informed the Board that a reception for the General Synod of the Church of Ireland will be held in the grounds of the Observatory on the evening of Wednesday 10 May 2006.
- 1.2. The Chairman expressed his delight at the improvements in the outward appearance of the Planetarium, which is a credit to the Dr Mason and his staff.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VISITATION HELD ON 18 MARCH 2005

- 2.1. The minutes of the Annual Visitation of the Board of Governors held on 18 March 2005 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 3.1. The meeting with DCAL officials attended by Councillor Gardiner-Watson and Dr Mason has helped to resolve the funding difficulties of the building's refurbishment project.
- 3.2. The new Astronomer Royal has not yet been appointed and accordingly this vacancy on the Board remains.
- 3.3. Professor John Dyson, University of Leeds, has agreed to serve on the Board and as one of the Board's nominees on the Management Committee.
- 3.4. Archdeacon Hoey has agreed to serve for a further term as one of the nominees of the Board on the Management Committee.

4. REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

- 4.1. The Board reviewed the following minutes of the meetings of the Management Committee and its sub-committees:
 - approved minutes of the Management Committee held on 26 November 2004 and 28 June 2005 and draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2005;
 - draft minutes of the meeting of the Options Committee on 19 January 2005;
 - draft minutes of the meeting of the Internal Audit Committee on 23 June 2005; and
 - draft minutes of the meeting of the Employment Conditions and Remuneration Committee on 15 August 2005.

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5. DIRECTORS' REPORTS FOR 2005/2006 AND BUSINESS PLANS FOR 2006/2007

Professor Bailey referred to the following matters in his Report for 2005/2006:

- 5.1. The Observatory continued to perform very well during the year. External grant income, refereed scientific journal publications, identified distinct e-visitors and media citations are all above target. Actual performance has exceeded target over the last ten years in every case bar one. This record of success is in contrast to flat cash funding from the DCAL for the last three years.
- 5.2. A notable milestone was the inauguration of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) on 10 November 2005. It is anticipated that SALT will soon come into regular scientific use.
- 5.3. The key task for the Observatory is to obtain a sustainable level of core funding to at least maintain the Observatory's research activities and its record of success. Two of the five Research Astronomer posts became vacant during the year but recruitment has been delayed because of the very difficult financial situation facing the Observatory. The DCAL has been very supportive and provided additional funding in the latter part of the year to prevent the Observatory going into deficit. However the DCAL cannot guarantee that additional funding will be provided in the future and accordingly it is very difficult for the Observatory to plan strategically. It is extremely important that the two vacant posts are filled as soon as possible to maintain the heritage of research work at the Observatory and to lay a strong foundation for the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise.
- 5.4. Professor Bailey asked the Board to consider whether the recruitment for the two vacant posts should proceed bearing in mind that there is no guarantee that the DCAL will be able to provide the extra funding needed. After full discussion of this matter, the Board unanimously agreed that the recruitment for the two posts should proceed as soon as possible.
- 5.5. Professor Bailey referred the Board to the appendices to his report, which gave details of the performance indicators. It was particularly interesting to note in the list of seminars the wide range of institutions from which people come to give talks and to collaborate with Observatory research staff.
- 5.6. Canon McKegney complimented the Director on his report, and particularly on the exceptionally low level of staff absence reported in the Business Plan, due to sickness.

Dr Mason referred to the following matters in his Report for 2005/2006:

- 5.7. The project for the refurbishment of the Planetarium's main building has been substantially completed and the contractors are currently completing a number of outstanding jobs.
- 5.8. The projection equipment, lighting, sound system and seating for the theatre have been installed and commissioned.
- 5.9. Three new shows have been installed and tested and work is progressing on the Planetarium's own show which will be used for interactive presentations.
- 5.10. Two new high-calibre persons have been recruited for the education team.
- 5.11. The space models for the exhibition areas are being refurbished and Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland has agreed to provide a further display.
- 5.12. The office refit has been completed and the Bytel Internet equipment has been installed in the bungalow basement.
- 5.13. The marketing plan is in the course of preparation. Funds for such purposes are limited due to overall budgetary constraints.
- 5.14. The formal opening day for invited guests will be Monday 12 June 2006 with opening to the public on the following day. A series of media events will be organised for the

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weeks leading up to the opening. A date will be arranged to show members of the Board and the Management Committee around the building.

- 5.15. Selling space for the shop has been doubled and new stock will be purchased prior to re-opening. New catering arrangements will be put in place.
- 5.16. An announcement is expected from the DCAL on possible additional funding for the Observatory and Planetarium under the Science and Skills Programme. This funding would allow the Planetarium to increase its outreach work and to develop additional facilities on the website.

The Chairman congratulated both Directors on their Reports and the achievements that had been made. The Chairman also asked that the dip at the entrance to the Robinson Drive be looked at to see if this could be rectified.

Professor Bailey referred to the following matters in his presentation of the Observatory's Business Plan for 2006/2007:

- 5.17. The Observatory's principal objectives for 2006/2007 are to:
 - maintain the existing high-quality research programme;
 - obtain grants and additional external funding to support new research projects;
 - strengthen the Observatory's research capability in solar system and stellar astrophysics in readiness for the next Research Assessment Exercise;
 - enhance the Observatory's use of research infrastructure;
 - promote use of the Armagh Observatory Grounds and Astropark and widen access to astronomy at Armagh by continuing to develop the Observatory's Education and Public Outreach programme; and
 - progress plans for a new Library, Archives and Historic Scientific Instruments Building.
- 5.18. The performance indicators relating to these objectives are explained in the plan along with how the Observatory's objectives align with Government priorities.
- 5.19. Possible additional funding from the DCAL under the Science and Skills programme is likely to be directed at younger people, largely at primary or secondary school level. The Observatory does a reasonable amount of outreach but clearly not to the same extent as the Planetarium. It is not clear how the Observatory would bid for these funds or how they would be divided between the Observatory and the Planetarium. If additional funds are provided the Business Plan will have to be changed.
- 5.20. The key task for the year is to obtain a sustainable level of core funding.

After further discussion the Board approved the Observatory's Business Plan for 2006/2007.

Dr Mason then presented the Planetarium's Business Plan for 2006/2007:

- 5.21. The Planetarium's key objectives for 2006/2007 are to:
 - be the leading centre for space astronomy and related science education and advice in Ireland;
 - remain at the leading edge of centre-based and outreach learning through the use of state-of-the-art technical and other resources;
 - enhance the Planetarium's reputation as a centre of innovation for astronomy and science teaching and events for young people and the general public;

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- provide a unique visitor experience that will strike a balance between formal education and fun-based learning;
- make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Northern Ireland curriculum through the medium of space and astronomy education;
- make a significant contribution to major science events throughout Ireland;
- bring the Planetarium's education services to as many people as possible through visits to the Planetarium and through the Planetarium's Outreach Service and in so doing also contribute to the development of cultural tourism in Armagh City and District;
- provide equal access to the wonders of space and astronomy to all in our society;
- seek to maximize income from the Planetarium's services whilst taking account of the needs of those from economically and other deprived backgrounds;
- establish, with appropriate funding support, the Planetarium as the European Space Agency's outlet for space education in Ireland in partnership with colleagues and sister institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

5.22. The key performance indicators are contained in the plan. With the new staff resources in place, the Planetarium will be open to the public six days per week and it is anticipated that funds of up to 45% of the DCAL recurrent grant will be obtained from admissions income and other activities. In addition staff will attend more scientific events throughout Ireland.

After further discussion the Board approved the Planetarium's Business Plan for 2006/2007.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1. Professor Bailey drew the Board's attention to the following forthcoming events:

- Professor David Southwood (Director of Science, European Space Agency) is to give a talk in Armagh on the evening of Friday 5th May 2006, in the Rotunda Lecture Theatre, St Patrick's Trian, Armagh, commencing at 20:00. The subject of the talk is: "Space Science in Europe"
- The Armagh Visitor Education Committee (AVEC), currently chaired by Professor Bailey, is hosting a heritage day in Armagh on Wednesday 24th May 2006. The programme will comprise a series of talks by AVEC members about their respective organizations in St Patricks's Trian in the morning and, in the afternoon, several AVEC organizations will be open for group tours.
- The Robinson Lecture will take place in the evening of Friday 24 November 2006.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

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

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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His Grace, The Most Reverend A E T Harper OBE BA
Chairman of the Board of Governors

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Date