

MINUTES OF THE SIXTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2004 AT 2.00 P.M. AT THE OBSERVATORY

Present: His Grace, The Lord Eames, Dr F. Byrne, Mrs M. Cruickshank, Professor M. Merrifield and Professor L. Drury

Apologies: Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, Archdeacon R. Hoey, Mrs S. Hogg, Professor P. Dufton and Dr Á. Downey

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

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2004

- 1.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2004 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 2.1. **Minute 3.1** The Committee agreed an addendum to the minutes of the meeting to clarify one aspect of the discussions at the joint meetings of the Board of Governors and the Management Committee, namely, that the proposed research and education sub-committees, whilst primarily concerned with Observatory and Planetarium matters respectively, should not be mutually exclusive.

3. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 3.1. The Chairman informed the Committee that Professor Kenneth Bell had resigned as the representative of the Queen's University Belfast on the Board of Governors and consequently as the Governors' representative on the Management Committee due to other pressing commitments on his time. The university subsequently appointed Professor Alan Hibbert to succeed Professor Bell on the Board of Governors.
- 3.2. Dr Byrne reported on the work of the Options Committee, formed to progress the recommendations in the report, "Options for the Future", prepared by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, Dr Downey and Professor Merrifield. As part of the preparation of the submission to the DCAL, the two Directors had submitted their views to the Options Committee on the benefits of their respective institutions and a local author had offered to help with the presentation of the submission.

4. AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2004

Mr Young informed the Committee that the accounts for 2003/2004 had been audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and signed as approved by the Directors. Mr Gavin Stewart from the NIAO joined the meeting and made the following comments on the audit:

- 4.1. Responsibility for the audit of the accounts of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium had been transferred from the Board of Governors to the NIAO under the Audit and Accountability (NI) Order 2003 with effect from the year ended 31 March 2004. The audit work was carried out by KPMG Belfast on behalf of and

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under the supervision of the NIAO. The audit was carried out with no difficulty and there were no general problems.

- 4.2. Under Government accounting rules the DCAL is required to issue an Accounts Direction for the Observatory and Planetarium.
- 4.3. In order to comply with Government guidance on NDPB accounts, the accounts should have an appropriate foreword and should also include notional interest charges.
- 4.4. The accounts include a provision for a potential taxation liability. This matter should be resolved with the Inland Revenue.
- 4.5. The draft Management Statement and Financial Memorandum issued by the DCAL and the draft staff handbook on policies and procedures should be finalised as soon as possible.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stewart for his presentation and Mr Stewart left the meeting. After further discussion of the audit recommendation on the potential taxation liability, the Committee agreed that this matter should be resolved with the Inland Revenue after taking professional advice.

5. DIRECTORS' INTERIM REPORTS

Professor Bailey referred to the following matters from his Interim Report:

- 5.1. Jonathan Horner (University of Bern), Wyn Evans (University of Cambridge) and Mark Bailey have completed two papers on the dynamical evolution of outer system objects known as Centaurs. A team led by Michael Smith has proposed locations where we might finally detect the molecules being formed around regions of present-day star formation. In addition Michael Smith is to be congratulated on the completion and publication of his monograph "The Origin of Stars". A team of 12 staff and students travelled to the west of Sligo to observe the predicted occultation of the magnitude 6.5 star HIP 186.
- 5.2. In the period 1 June to 31 October 2004 there were seven senior academic visitors from various countries.
- 5.3. The construction and commissioning of the Southern African Large Telescope continues at a satisfactory pace. The dedication and naming ceremony will take place on 11 November 2005 and all involved parties have been asked to send a representative. The Committee should send any suggestions as to whom the representative should be to Professor Bailey.
- 5.4. A 30-node computer cluster has been installed in the Observatory Bungalow as part of the Cosmogrid project. The Observatory was also connected to the Northern Ireland Regional Area Network with effect from 1 November 2004 at an annual cost (from 1 August) of £22,000 plus VAT. This gives the Observatory and Planetarium a 10 Mbps internet connection.
- 5.5. The Librarian, John McFarland, has agreed to write a monthly astronomy column for the Belfast Telegraph. There were 180 media citations by the end of October 2004, roughly in line with target.

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- 5.6. The Observatory continued its partnership with the Armagh Natural History and Philosophical Society by hosting one of the Society's lectures delivered by Dr Alastair Gunn on 15 October 2004.
- 5.7. Among the visitors to the Observatory were Dr Dill Faulkes, Councillor Mrs Pat O'Rawe MLA, and Mr Nigel Marshall and Ms Ann Picot from the "Spacedout" project.
- 5.8. The illness of a key member of the team responsible for restoration of the Calver reflector has led to some delay in the completion of this part of the HLF Telescope and Domes Project.
- 5.9. The second meeting of the Irish Phenological Garden Network took place at the Observatory on 28 September 2004. Following the meeting, an offer was received to provide the Observatory with a specimen of the Tree Poppy *Romneya coulteri*, named after a former director of the Observatory, Thomas Romney Robinson, and the botanist Thomas Coulter.
- 5.10. The DCAL has provided funding for the completion of the Human Orrery and for improved access to the grounds and buildings for members of the public with disabilities.
- 5.11. Owing to lack of core funding, the individuals who took part in the 2004 summer student programme were supported entirely by external grants. The special needs student from the Appleby Trust continued to work at the Observatory on the archives.
- 5.12. The Committee agreed to the creation of selection committees to appoint staff to replace Margaret Cherry and John Butler, who will retire in 2005.
- 5.13. A revised version of the DCAL Management Statement and Financial Memorandum was submitted to the DCAL in mid October 2004 for the Department's comments.
- 5.14. The Observatory and Planetarium were required to complete a Pay Policy Return for 2004/2005 in order to confirm that the organisation's pay settlement complied with Government Pay Policy, even though the pay award for 2004/2005 had not been announced and the organisation did not separately negotiate pay settlements but simply followed the agreed NICS settlement.
- 5.15. When the Planetarium caretaker retires in 2005, the Observatory will have no one on site with security duties and will be required to rely on an outside security company. The Committee agreed that the Director and Administrator should investigate alternative arrangements for security cover.
- 5.16. The Observatory was informed in September 2004 that its total budget for 2004/2005 would be £754,000 (Recurrent) and £130,000 (Capital). Considering that the announced budget for this year had been the worst, in relation to need, for many years, this came as very welcome news.
- 5.17. NILGOSC has confirmed that there will be substantial increases in the employers' contribution to the approved pension scheme for 2005/2006 and subsequent years, bringing the previous pensions 'holiday' to an end.

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- 5.18. The launch of the Human Orrery and the 2004 Robinson Lecture were both scheduled for 26 November 2004

Dr Mason presented the Planetarium Interim Report:

- 5.19. Owing to delays in starting the building refurbishment work there will be an estimated underspend of £96,000 in this financial year. This amount will be returned to the DFP but the DCAL has been assured that the funds will be made available next year. Building work on the administration building started in November 2004.
- 5.20. Some of the programming by Julie Thompson on the new Digistar 3 projection equipment was presented at a promotional event at Madame Tussaud's in London. The programming, entitled "D3 Aria", was received with acclaim at the event and subsequently won a prize at the Digistar User Group conference held in California.
- 5.21. The outreach numbers of just over 10,000 to date are on target for the year.
- 5.22. The Chinese New Year event will take place during February 2005 at the Dundalk Institute of Technology and other events are planned next year in collaboration with University College Cork and Newtownabbey Borough Council.
- 5.23. Robert Hill is running adult education courses for the Queen's University Belfast as part of the university's programme for lifelong learning.
- 5.24. Planetarium staff are working with authors of textbooks for the new Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure that the Planetarium is mentioned as an educational resource.
- 5.25. Following last year's pilot project, the Director has been asked to run the 2004 Medtronic Scientists of the Future Programme for the Galway Teachers' Centre.
- 5.26. Anna McNally and Kate Leer have enrolled in a business administration course at the Armagh College for Further Education. Eamon Rafferty will take responsibility for Observatory accounting duties for an interim period pending the recruitment of a new member of staff to replace Margaret Cherry. Mina McCall has been allocated cleaning duties at the Observatory for an interim period during the Planetarium building closure. Pat Corvan is due to leave the Planetarium Bungalow at the end of March 2005 following his retirement. The Bungalow will be used for office accommodation after refurbishment. Julie Thompson is concentrating on the programming of new shows for the re-opening in 2006 and Robert Hill is working with various organisations to develop future collaboration and to obtain funding for a number of educational projects.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr Byrne presented the report of the Internal Audit Committee.

- 6.1. The Directors will submit the final drafts of the Observatory and Planetarium Risk Management Plans to the Internal Audit Committee for their consideration in the near future. The plans should be regarded as live documents, which should be reviewed and monitored by the Directors and the Internal Audit Committee on a regular basis.
- 6.2. The controls over Planetarium admissions income will be reviewed when the Planetarium re-opens to the public.

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- 6.3. The report of the Internal Auditors for 2003/2004 was included in the Committee papers for information. The Internal Auditors confirmed that there were no serious weaknesses and that the organisation can be reasonably assured that the system of internal control is both adequate and effective.
- 6.4. The Internal Audit Committee considered a request from staff representatives that a member of the Management Committee be nominated to consider issues and concerns without recourse to the respective Directors. It was agreed that this was inappropriate for the organisation because an adequate informal and formal grievance procedure exists for such matters.
- 6.5. Draft Terms of Reference for the Internal Audit Committee, largely based on model terms of reference for an internal audit service contained in the draft DCAL Financial Memorandum, were approved by the Committee.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 7.1. Professor Drury informed the Committee that there were a large number of scientific and astronomical events and anniversaries in 2005 which the organisation should acknowledge.
- 7.2. Dr Mason reported that two members of staff had left the recognised trade union, NIPSA, and joined another trade union, UNISON, who had now requested recognition rights. The Committee agreed that further advice should be taken on this matter.

8. DATE OF THE COMMITTEE MEETINGS IN 2005

The Chairman asked the Secretary to arrange the meeting dates for 2005.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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His Grace, the Lord Eames
Chairman of the Management Committee

Dated: