

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY FIRST MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2006 AT 10.30 A.M. IN THE OBSERVATORY

Present: His Grace, The Lord Eames (Chair), Dr F. Byrne, Dr Á. Downey, Professor P. Dufton, Mrs Sue Hogg, Archdeacon R. Hoey, Professor M. Merrifield and Professor A. Hibbert

Apologies: Professor E Meurs and Professor J. Dyson

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

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2006

- 1.1. The minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on 22 June 2006 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 2.1. Matters arising were dealt with in the Directors' Interim Reports.

3. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 3.1. The Chairman informed the Committee that he and Dr Byrne had met with Mr Paul Sweeney, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, on 11 October 2006. At the meeting the Chairman expressed his concern that certain provisions in the latest draft DCAL Management Statement and Financial Memorandum document were inappropriate for the Observatory and Planetarium because of the uniqueness of the Institution and its close association with the Church of Ireland. Mr Sweeney, was receptive to these remarks and recognised the uniqueness of the organization. He agreed that he would write to the Chairman outlining the Department's attitude to these matters and arrange another meeting in due course.
- 3.2. As there had been no response as yet from the Department, the Committee agreed that the Chairman should write to Mr Sweeney asking for a follow-up meeting. The Chairman also agreed to ask Mr Sweeney about arrangements for the formal opening of the Planetarium, which would provide an opportunity for further positive publicity.

4. DIRECTORS' INTERIM REPORTS

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

- 4.1. John Butler was recently honoured by the award of an MBE in the June 2006 Birthday Honours List.
- 4.2. Mrs Aileen McKee has completed in one year a 2-year part-time Level 4 NVQ course in Business and Administration, being graded outstanding by the external assessor. The Committee agreed that the Secretary should write to Mrs McKee to convey the Committee's congratulations on her achievement.

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- 4.3. Work by Gerry Doyle's group on transient events observed with one of the solar atmosphere remote sensing instruments has revealed that some transient events are not transition region explosive events at all despite having the same spectral characteristics.
- 4.4. Simon Jeffery and Hideyuki Saio (Sendai, Japan) report that calculations using new atomic data show that accumulations of nickel as well as iron are important for driving various types of pulsations in subdwarf B stars. Simon Jeffery and Detlef Schönberner's (Potsdam, Germany) study of the rapidly expanding post-AGB star FGSge concludes that the surface composition does not change as radically as previously thought.
- 4.5. Gerry Doyle and Antoaneta Antonova report that very low mass stars and brown dwarfs can exhibit unexpected pulsed radio emission similar to a pulsar.
- 4.6. Apostolos Christou and David Asher carried out a CCD observation of an asteroid occultation in Donegal, the first made anywhere in Ireland using a CCD camera and a small telescope. This demonstrates what is possible with small instruments, given mobility and adequate planning. The Observatory's rooftop meteor camera detected 58 meteors during the period of the Perseid meteor shower on 12/13 August 2006.
- 4.7. The meteorological readings recorded the third, fourth and fifth hottest July days since measurements of the maximum temperatures began at Armagh in 1843. This year's September had the second highest average temperature on record and October was exceptionally warm.
- 4.8. Martin Murphy and Geoff Coxhead successfully completed the installation of the new automatic weather station in July 2006. The manual record will be maintained to ensure a long period of overlap to calibrate the new data against the old.
- 4.9. There were many research visitors in the period June to October 2006 and details have been provided in the report.
- 4.10. Owing to illness, the first meeting of the Research Advisory Committee did not take place in September 2006. This will be rearranged in the light of information following the recent recruitment of new Research astronomers.
- 4.11. Maire Brück (University of Edinburgh) has promised to provide, as a gift to the Observatory, a set of historic Armagh-Dunsink-Harvard telescope plates from Dunsink's first observing session.
- 4.12. Approximately 32,000 people have visited the Observatory Grounds and Astropark, which are looking well with few reports of vandalism.
- 4.13. The construction of the Human Orrery is virtually complete with only the installation of two weather-proof interpretation panels outstanding.
- 4.14. Observatory public information leaflets have been updated and new ones produced. These are available on the internet and are on display in the Planetarium and other locations in Armagh.
- 4.15. Staff at the Observatory supervised a wide range of students as part of the summer programme and the work produced by the students has been very useful for supervisory staff.
- 4.16. The Armagh Visitor Education Committee, currently chaired by the Director, organized a new event, the Armagh Heritage Trail, which took place on 5 August 2006. This was a one-day guided walking tour around some of Armagh's most attractive public gardens and parklands, including the Observatory's Grounds, Astropark and Human Orrery. Between 30 and 35 people took part in the event.
- 4.17. The Observatory has applied to the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) Validation Committee for a continuation of the present collaboration between the Observatory and the QUB. There has been no formal response from the Validation Committee as yet but the report issued on 18 July 2006 was generally extremely positive and favourable to a renewal of the present collaborative arrangements. It will be necessary for the Observatory and the University to develop a formal Memorandum of Agreement between the two organizations, outlining the operational

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arrangements for the collaboration. This will be submitted to the next meeting of the Board of Governors for their approval. In addition, the Observatory will be required to submit an annual report reflecting on the collaborative arrangements for the previous year. In the meantime, Apostolos Christou, Mark Bailey, Gerry Doyle and Simon Jeffery have each received confirmation from QUB that they have been approved as recognized teachers on the MPhil and PhD programmes for a period of five years until 31 August 2011.

- 4.18. Details of the tours and general public visitors are included in the report. In particular, about a dozen members of St. Brendan's Scout Group, Craigavon, and their parents, visited the Observatory grounds to take part in the filming of a CBBC programme for national broadcast on 25 July 2006, with a repeat on 28 July. It is estimated that this programme alone reached an audience of 1.5 million young viewers per day.
- 4.19. As part of the Observatory's contribution to the annual European Heritage Open Days, John McFarland and a number of students accompanied a record number of approximately 350 visitors on tours of the Observatory on 9 September 2006.
- 4.20. During the 10 months to 31 October 2006, the Observatory attracted 235 media citations, already exceeding the target of 200 for the year.
- 4.21. Two new students arrived during September and October 2006, namely Mr Tobias Hinse and Ms Srividya Subramanian. A third student, supported on a PPARC grant, Mr Eamon Scullion, will arrive later in the year. Dr Rhona Maclean began work as a new PDRA on 1 November 2006 and a second PDRA, Dr Igor Savanov, is expected to start work on 1 January 2007.
- 4.22. The Director has been proposed for election as Vice-President of the Royal Astronomical Society with effect from mid-May 2007.
- 4.23. Following the recent recruitment process, the following Research Astronomers have been appointed: Dr Stefano Bagnulo, currently at the European Southern Observatory, Chile; Dr Gavin Ramsay, currently at Mullard Space Science Laboratory, Dorking, University College London; and Dr Jorick Vink, currently at the University of Keele. The new astronomers, who provide a very significant addition to the stellar astrophysics side of the Observatory's research, are expected to arrive in Armagh during March/April 2007.
- 4.24. Additional training on the protection of children and vulnerable adults from harm was provided by the Volunteer Development Agency on 9 November 2006 for Observatory staff and students, and a second course will be provided on 4 December 2006 for Planetarium staff and the few Observatory staff and students who missed the first course.
- 4.25. The Director understands that the DCAL will issue a revised draft Management Statement and Financial Memorandum later in the year. In response to the question whether the Observatory adheres to NICS Terms and Conditions and Procedures, the answer is that the Observatory seeks to adhere as closely as possible to NICS terms and conditions and procedures, but this is not possible in every instance because of the Observatory's unique operational and staffing structure.
- 4.26. The Government has issued a large number of policies, action plans and initiatives in the broad area of equality, targeting social need, the promotion of a shared future for Northern Ireland's diverse communities, and promoting social inclusion. These were listed in the report for the Committee's information. The Observatory can make a contribution to a number of these but it also has to be recognized that these matters are not academic priorities.
- 4.27. The NILGOSC actuary has computed the Observatory and Planetarium share of the overall scheme deficit as £70,000 for the Observatory and £75,000 for the Planetarium. Under Financial Reporting Statement 17, a provision will be required for the deficit in the 2006/2007 accounts. A bid has been submitted for additional funding from the December monitoring round to cover this deficit.

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- 4.28. During the discussion of the Internal Audit Report at the meeting of the Management Committee on 22 June 2006, the question was asked as to whether there was a definition of a small organization within Government. The DCAL has advised that there is no such definition and the only circumstances in which the size of an organization is relevant is in relation to Government consolidated accounts.
- 4.29. The Valuation and Lands Agency will carry out a five-year revaluation of the Observatory and Planetarium grounds and buildings and this will be included in the 2006/2007 accounts.
- 4.30. From October 2006 the Observatory and Planetarium salaries will be paid through a new Internet banking system, which will also provide access to the Observatory's bank statement through the Internet.
- 4.31. Agreement has been reached with the Properties Services section of the Department of Finance and Personnel under which they will provide access to a help desk for routine and out-of-hours emergency maintenance and a cyclical maintenance service to discharge the Observatory and Planetarium Health and Safety and other statutory obligations relating to buildings maintenance. Whilst at face value this should be an excellent arrangement, so far there have been a number of instances where work has not been satisfactorily attended to.
- 4.32. The principal change in the Observatory Risk Register, last updated on 31 March 2006, will be that, owing to a substantial injection of funds into the organization through Skills and Science funding, the most serious risk, namely lack of funding, has receded temporarily. However, this remains a substantial long-term risk and after 2007/2008 the Observatory will require a significant uplift in baseline funding.
- 4.33. There has been one (non-reportable) accident during the period under review in which an individual working on the Grubb 10-inch telescope fell from the observing steps to the ground when the telescope became unbalanced. The injury – a badly bruised hip – required no further treatment. In future the telescope will be properly secured when work is being carried out. In order to provide improved focus on Health and Safety matters as recommended by the last audit report, the Observatory Health and Safety Committee was formed and met for the first time on 13 November 2006.
- 4.34. On 22 November 2006 the Observatory hosted a one-day seminar and workshop for Observatory staff and students and Planetarium staff on the Universe Awareness (UNAWA) project. The purpose of the seminar and workshop was to consider how the Observatory and Planetarium could advance the aim of the project, which is to expose economically disadvantaged young children to many of the inspirational aspects of astronomy, as well as to Earth's place in the solar system and the wider universe. Dr Carolina Ödman, project co-ordinator, and the Director will prepare a report on meeting.
- 4.35. The Robinson Lecture, to be given by Professor Eric Priest FRS, will take place on the evening of 24 November 2006. Two further conferences will take place in 2007. The Observatory will hold a one-day conference and public lecture on 26 January 2006 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of the former director, Dr E.M. Lindsay. An Armagh Cross-Border Schools conference will be provided by Observatory staff and students together with the Centre of Cross-Border Studies on 8 and 9 March 2007. This will also be provided with the assistance of the Planetarium and the Royal School Armagh.
- 4.36. Appended to the report is the Observatory's revised Business Plan for 2006/2007. This differs from the version circulated in March/April 2006 in several respects, principally by the introduction of new key performance indicators at the request of the DCAL and new targets (and funding) provided by the Skills and Science funding package. The revised plan has been approved by the DCAL and is now

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submitted for consideration by the Committee and if approved it will be submitted to the Board of Governors for comment.

During discussion of the report Professor Merrifield congratulated the Director on securing three excellent persons for the Research Astronomer posts. In addition, Professor Hibbert said that he had received very positive feedback from Victoria College students who had undertaken work experience at the Observatory.

The Committee approved the Observatory's revised Business Plan for 2006/2007.

Dr Mason referred to the following matters in his Interim Report:

- 4.37. The work undertaken by the Planetarium does contribute to many of the Government equality policy drivers but it is quite often difficult to measure this contribution. For example, it is a Government priority to tackle poverty and social exclusion experienced by many lone parents. No doubt quite a number of lone parents visit the Planetarium but this is not something the Planetarium records.
- 4.38. The Planetarium's revised Business Plan for 2006/2007 will be completed shortly.
- 4.39. Three new science Communicators have been recruited, Ms Sharon Carroll, Mr Colin Johnston and Mrs Wendy McCorry. Mrs McCorry is working on a two-year fixed-term contract funded by the Skills and Science funding package. Mr Neil Cullen has been appointed to fill the vacant Administrative Officer post and two one-year fixed-term Educational Support Officers, Ms Naomi Francey and Mr Paul O'Neill, have been appointed to replace Mr Robert Hill, the Planetarium's New Business Manager, who has been seconded to run the Northern Ireland Space Office. One further Planetarium post remains vacant.
- 4.40. The Voyager Café has been franchised to D & L Catering. The food and beverages are much more attractive and the ambience of the café area has much improved.
- 4.41. Robert Hill has been seconded to the Yorkshire Forward Regional Development Agency to set up the Northern Ireland Space Office (NISO), based at the Planetarium, as a resource for teachers in aligning the potential offered by developing technologies to the requirements of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. The NISO programme of work will ensure that the Planetarium is written into the curriculum as a resource for schools for space science and will contribute to the aims of the Planetarium's Skills and Science programme. Mr Hill will also seek further sponsorship for computer equipment and other resources for the Planetarium.
- 4.42. To date, approximately 25,000 people have visited the Planetarium against a target for the financial year of 35,000. Admission prices have been increased to fund increased costs.
- 4.43. Training on the protection of children and vulnerable adults will be provided for Planetarium staff on 4 December 2006. Vetting of all new staff will be carried out against disqualification lists maintained by child protection agencies.
- 4.44. There were two minor accidents during the reporting period and appropriate remedial action has been taken.
- 4.45. In response to a question from the Chairman, Dr Mason agreed to consider whether additional measures could be taken to reduce the risk of children falling down stairs and to install signage to draw attention to the Planetarium's Child Protection Policy.
- 4.46. A number of new public shows are being developed and commissioned by Julie Thompson. The new show for the festive season is the Mystery of the Christmas Star.
- 4.47. Hewlett Packard has sponsored equipment and programmes to present 3D images in the Copernicus Hall.

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- 4.48. A number of media appearances and events have kept the Planetarium's name prominent in the public mind. Radio advertisements will be placed to promote the Christmas events at the Planetarium.
- 4.49. On 7 December 2006 the Chairman will dedicate the Armagh Planetarium building to the memory of Dr E.M. Lindsay.
- 4.50. The Planetarium continues to work closely with the European Space Agency (ESA) and it is hoped that ESA will provide a model of the Aurora Project Martian Rover.
- 4.51. The Planetarium intends to run a Chinese New Year event in co-operation with the local Chinese community in January 2007 and telescope events in 2007 as part of the Skills and Science programme. ESA plans to run a summer space camp based at the Planetarium during summer 2007.
- 4.52. Work is continuing on the development of the Skills and Science programme. The virtual Planetarium is due to go live on the web in January 2007.
- 4.53. Total outreach numbers are 7,384 to date and it is anticipated that a further 4000 people will attend Planetarium presentations at the Galway and Waterford Science Festivals in November 2006. At an outreach event at Limerick University on 14 November 2006, 1,566 children attended four talks given by Robert Hill. The Skills and Science programme of activities will be targeted at Northern Ireland schoolchildren.
- 4.54. On average there have been 1,500 hits per day to the Planetarium website.
- 4.55. There was one Freedom of Information request during the reporting period which was dealt with and a small number of minor complaints about the Planetarium's facilities which have been addressed.
- 4.56. Income to date from admissions is £76,000 and £25,000 from shop sales which is very encouraging.
- 4.57. Approximately 3,000 visitors per month are needed for the rest of the year to meet the target of 35,000 for the financial year. The number of weekend visitors continues to be strong.
- 4.58. At the Digistar Users' Group meeting at Salt Lake City in September to October 2006, Julie Thompson won first prize for the second time in the Digistar 3 category with a show she produced, the Armagh Story. This was achieved against stiff competition.
- 4.59. The Director, at the request of members of the Council of the International Planetarium Society, has agreed to stand for President of the Society.
- 4.60. There have been a number of interface difficulties with Property Services who have taken over responsibility for the maintenance of the Planetarium's buildings in accordance with the requirements of the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. In addition, there is some concern that these arrangements may increase maintenance costs.

During discussion of the Director's report it was noted that the monthly Astronotes were an excellent educational resource. The Director agreed to set up arrangements for additional proofreading of technical astronomical matters in the publication.

The Chairman informed the Committee that he will retire from the Management Committee when he retires as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland on 31 December 2006. The House of Bishops will meet on 10 January 2007 to decide on his successor and also when the new Primate will take over his new responsibilities. The Chairman thanked Dr Byrne, Professor Bailey, Dr Mason, Mr Young and members of the Committee for their guidance, support and friendship over the years.

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5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1. There was no other business to report.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEEETING

Mr Young will arrange the 2007 Committee meeting dates when the new Chairman is appointed.

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 Management Committee

Dated: 28 June 2007