

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 10 March 2026



Present:

Craig Mapleston	Observatory Director
Steve Wallace MBE	Chair/Science Officer
Paula Timberlake	Treasurer
Michael Lowe	Secretary
Chris Dakin	Curator of Optics/IT Administrator
Nigel Cunnington	Radio Astronomy Coordinator
Steve Binns	Communications Officer
Tony Booth	Science Centre Manager
Brendan Scoular	Outreach Coordinator
Shaun Pollard	Education Officer
Michael Williams	Deputy IT Administrator

1). Apologies

None

2). Conflicts Of Interest.

None.

3). Approval – Minutes Of Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed by the Chair.

4). Decisions Taken Since Last Meeting

Support of Arts Council grant application for musical performance covering the life of Caroline & William Herschel.

Display and possibly launch a number of model rockets from Rolf Williams.

5). Action Log Update

In light of a minor GDPR breach, Mail chimp or other similar package may be suitable for circulating mail to members in future. CD will discuss with Roisin. **Action: ML/CD. ML to contact CD when membership renewals completed.**

Café capacity – CD reported that after the Chris Miggels Concert, the café was overwhelmed with people wanting hot and cold drinks. It was suggested that a vending machine could possibly be installed to help alleviate this problem. CM to obtain costings. PT has asked TB to get 2 quotes from other suppliers **Action: CM. To review again after new exhibition installed.**

CD to research how Community Cinema Licences work. **Action: CD.**

We have a recommendation from our accountants to slightly broaden the scope of our charitable objectives to better recognise the link between arts and STEM as a means of drawing in more diverse audiences and enhancing our community benefit. **Action: ML advised that a change in the Constitution wording to reflect the link has been sent to the Charity Commission for approval. Awaiting ratification or otherwise (can take up to 16 weeks). Ongoing.**

SW to inform BS of whom Via Nottingham contact is. **Action: SW/BS. Incorrect design of signs has been used. Correct designs required for installation. Ongoing.**

CCTV outside Observatory not working. Needs fixing before refit starts. **Action: CM. Camera ordered.**

Trading Company Setting Up – PT is speaking to Stopfords about the subsidiary set up and SW is having a meeting with an outside source from Portland College about the logistics of setting such a company up. **Action: SW/PT. On agenda.**

Prior to the meeting, SP had sent out details on DBS checks and safeguarding practice to Trustees and TB. He suggested that fully enhanced DBS checks be carried out on all paid staff, Trustees, and “front line volunteers.” It was agreed that all of these required checks should be carried out by us to ensure uniformity. **Action: TB. 6 One further check completed. Three outstanding. Ongoing.**

CD commented about access control for members. Need to think about how we can use the proposed new access system to register cards for members. Two scanners for this purpose to be made by CD at an approximate cost of £50 to £100 each. Approved. **Action: CD. On hold.**

MW said that the IT team need to better understand the direction of travel that the Trustees would like to them to take. Therefore, he will formulate some questions to ask of us. **Action: MW. On agenda.**

LUMINA Project - SW advised that this is a “dark sky project” and would be run over 2 phases namely, sky quality monitoring, and the launching of a satellite. We are applying for a Royal Society grant in collaboration with Nottingham University, and SW is working with Dr Emma Chapman on this. **Action: SW. Complete.**

SP to ensure Safeguarding procedures follow Nottinghamshire Adult and Children Safeguarding processes. **Action: SP. Completed**

Accident book not checked on Monday 9/2. Will ensure checked when next in. **Action CM. On agenda.**

SW offered to give detail of SCAPE to CM to contact them. CM asked him to leave that until the end of the month to see if the architects had made contact. Approved. **Action: Complete.**

A “suggestion board” has been placed on the noticeboard in the lecture room for members suggestions. CM asked if there was really a need for 2 workshops. This is to be discussed outside of the meeting. **Action: CM/CD/NC/MW. REMOVE FROM LOG.**

SW will sit down with TB to look at operational income and expenditure for next year to give a better understanding of our operation. **Action: SW/TB. On agenda.**

SW suggested a video log to be made of each Trustee, explaining their role. Approved. TB said that he would contact Greg Malone to create a video log. **Action: TB to contact Greg Malone. Completed.**

CD suggested that committee meeting minutes should also be made available to any member who should wish to read them. Approved. **Action: ML to prepare and forward to CD. Complete.**

It was approved for CD to lay out some initial bullet points as to address new group fragmentation concerns and how their activities can be managed and communicated better. **Action: CD. Being referred to Governance Review Team.**

SW will liaise with TB to model various scenarios (re: open day events being moved to a Sunday) and assess the business and operational impact. **Action SW/TB. On agenda**

6). AOB Requests

Rocket Launches - MW

7). New Library Development

The Society Librarian Margaret Gosley had circulated details prior to the meeting about her ideas for incorporating a new library into the Observatory rebuild. It was agreed that the library “belongs” to the Observatory, and when the refurbishment has been completed to make sure that it is more usable and accessible by all members and advertised as such through the newsletter Event Horizon. All old books to be sold off through public events etc and replaced with new (three had already been purchased). SW asked if Margaret would do an article for Event Horizon outlining the proposals, which she agreed to do.

8). H and S – Security

CM reported that there were no accidents/incidents reported in the Observatory logbook.

TB advised the meeting of an incident in the Science centre where a customer had fallen down the stairs, due to probably fainting.

TB also advised about another incident where a car had parked in front of the substation and the occupant had subsequently driven over a post, and damaged it before driving off. The matter had been reported to the Police.

9). Observatory Extension/Refurbishment

CD advised the meeting that their ideas had been forwarded to the architects, and nothing had been heard back from them until a few days before the meeting, confirming that the architects were holding a meeting to discuss them.

10). Risk Register Review

All risk owners said that they were happy with the risk scores and no changes were required. SW will update the dates on the register. Hard copy attached to these minutes.

11). Finance Report

The accounts, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, were approved.

Setting up of Trading Company – It was agreed that more advice on the setting up of a trading company should be gained from Stopfords, and the position should be reviewed in about one years' time. Approved.

Agenda item 16 “2026/2027 Business Plan was incorporated into this agenda item. SW talked through the plan and advised that a figure for the Observatory maintenance budget was required (a maintenance cost) and an estimate of £15k was suggested. A charge of an extra .50p per planetarium show ticket was agreed and approved. SW also announced that our standing charge with our energy supplier will be reduced to “Band 2,” and this would see a decrease in costs from £28 to £15 a day.

SP announced that he would present some education costs for the next meeting in April.

Action: SP.

Lecturers fees – It was agreed that charges of over £100 (including travelling expenses) by any visiting lecturer were to be reviewed and approved beforehand.

No payments or travelling expenses were to be made to any member giving a talk.

12). Membership Update

ML had circulated the following information prior to the meeting:

Membership strength last month	324
Membership strength this month	327
Waiting list	1

Renewals - As of 7th March, 112 members have renewed their membership. This figure does not include 26 members who joined in January and February and have paid up until 31 March 2027. It does not include the 6 Honorary Members either (who do not pay). The total of “paid up members” including those joining in January and February plus Honorary Members is 144. A total of 44%.

A renewal reminder was placed in the March edition of Event Horizon, with a further prompt put out via email 6th March. A final reminder aimed specifically at those members who have not yet renewed will be sent out on 14th March.

13). Policies For Review Date

The policy “Settling Differences and Members Conduct Policy” had been circulated prior to the meeting for review. SW picked up on three changes relating to safeguarding which should be included as below:

Procedure:

After the words (or direct to the Chairman if the complaint is about the Secretary) add “or to the Safeguarding Officer if the complaint is felt to be a safeguarding issue.”

To make the document internally consistent, numbered para 4, first line, should read “Secretary/Chairman/Safeguarding Officer.” There is no need to make the change to other occurrences in that paragraph.

Paragraph 10 add “.....or off site” to the last sentence.

“Settling Differences and Members Conduct Policy” changes to be made by ML and forwarded to CD for incorporation into the online documents. Action: ML/CD.

Next month there are two policies due for review. “Safeguarding” and “Volunteers Policy and Handbook .” It was suggested and agreed that we revert back to Trustees taking it in turn to review policies when they are due. BS and SP will review the above two policies for the April meeting.

Action: SP/BS

MW will speak to SOARC about any changes that they may require to be incorporated into our existing policies, or if any new policies covering their activities may be required. Action: MW

14). IT Update

MW advised that due to the growth in the Society's activities the IT operations need to be brought under better management, with changes needing to be implemented now. A budget for the amount of £4.5k with a 10% maintenance fee was approved for this to happen.

15). Public Solar Events

During school holidays, it was suggested that if we hold a public solar day on a Saturday, the Science Centre staff could have that day off, and come in on the Monday instead. This would reduce the impact of loss of revenue due to not having public shows on the Saturday which is one of our most popular days. This system would only be used in the holidays as otherwise Mondays would be very quiet.

It was proposed for TB to look at Mondays during holiday periods when the Science Centre and Planetarium could be open. **Action: TB.**

To be reviewed again at the April meeting.

16). 2026/2027 Business Plan

See item 11 above.

17). Grant Funding Applications Update

LUMINA Project – Grant application has been submitted. Lots of interest from schools.

William and Caroline Herschel musical performance – Grant application submitted.

18). SOARC Proposal

Details of plans to build accommodation for the amateur radio section had been circulated prior to the meeting. SW queried storage size. It was suggested that the RAC workshop could be used, but MW advised that the workshop was within the Faraday Cage which would affect signals and also the workshop is used for dedicated radio astronomy work. It was made clear that any new space allocated had to be wheelchair accessible and occupancy compliant (fire regulations), and some of the design features put forward may not be feasible. The proposed construction was approved but it was subject to design. It was agreed that once the designs had been approved, we would review the most appropriate way of building it.

19). SGM 25TH March

SW advised that a governance review team consisting of Alex Peace-Gadsby, Martin Rigley, and Simon Martin, had held an initial meeting with himself and BS, and were holding another in three weeks to discuss the overall governance of our operation. This may involve several changes to our Constitution (if we agree), and in light of this, the SGM scheduled for 25th March to vote on the change to involve arts with STEM already submitted to the Charity Commission, has been postponed. A further SGM will be organised to discuss this change plus any recommended by the review team if required.

20). Listening Group

ML had circulated the following information prior to the meeting:

An article about the group was published in the March edition of Event Horizon, along with a couple of posters on the lecture room noticeboard. Members who would like to put forward ideas and suggestions for the benefit of the membership and the Observatory, can speak to any member of the group in person, or place a suggestion in the suggestion box on the printed forms provided which is situated in the hallway adjacent to the signing in book. Members may also submit them via the groups dedicated email address.

One idea about the use of the main telescope has already been put forward for review. On the agenda for the April meeting.

21). Refurbishment of Scope in Reservoir (Exhibition Area)

CD advised that a sum of approximately £200-£300 needed for refurbishment. Along with TB, he has a plan which he would like to discuss at the April meeting.

22). AOB

MW advised that he has contacts with UKRA to set up a rocket display along with display pull ups in the reservoir (exhibition area). He would also like a display cabinet. He also has contacts with a rocket club in Twycross which has an ideal site for launching and flying them. A budget would be required for the cabinet and display.

MW also advised that the round jet engine on display in the exhibition area is starting to degrade and requires maintenance.

With there being no more business, the meeting closed at 9.50pm.

23). Date and Time of Next Meeting

7.30pm Tuesday 14 April.

I confirm that this is a true and accurate record of the meeting:

Signed.....Chair

Print Name.....

Date.....