

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 10 February 2026



Present:

Craig Mapleston	Observatory Director
Steve Wallace MBE	Chair/Science Officer
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 (via Zoom)
Michael Williams	Deputy IT Administrator

1). Apologies

Paula Timberlake.

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

Renewal of Marketing Officer contract for a further 6 months.

5). Action Log Update

THE FOLLOWING ACTION POINTS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED TO VARIOUS TRUSTEES TO FOLLOW UP.

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.

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

External defibrillator – To be fitted on external wall of Observatory. Approved.

SW confirmed that the Community Cinema projectors were to be installed. CD to research how Community Cinema Licences work. Also looking at licence conditions for some of our planetarium shows.

TB advised that our marketing officer had received an email from the parents of Declan Newman about the placing of a memorial bench. ML asked that the email be passed to him, and he would follow it up. CD to price up a suitable bench.

For a bench to be sited next to the roadside, SW has contacted Via Nottingham about the location and is awaiting a response. NC said that he could assist with the concrete base – Afternote: NC has provided name of a person who helped with RAC and can do this for a day rate.

The following action was agreed at the 6 monthly review meeting held 21 October.

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.

SW to contact ATTFF with celebratory event for volunteer details.

SW to inform BS of whom Via Nottingham contact is.

CM reported that accident book in SC needs checking. Accident book in Observatory is ok.

CCTV outside Observatory not working. Needs fixing before refit starts.

SW to update the “date reviewed” column of risk register and recirculate.

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.

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.

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.

Plans on hold since Christmas. Have discussed a couple of ideas for “knocking down and rebuilding” and “extending and refurbishing.” Need to get review by external team and obtain prices.

SW asked ML about review of the results of the recent “Trustee Awareness” survey. ML stated that SB had all the information and that he would be making an analysis of the data and publishing it in the next few weeks.

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

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.

SP to ensure Safeguarding procedures follow Nottinghamshire Adult and Children Safeguarding processes.

6). AOB Requests

Overflow Car Park Barrier Code – ML
The Library – ML
Synesqo – SW
Open Day Events - BS

7). H and S/Security

CM reported that all was good.

Accident book not checked on Monday 9/2. Will ensure checked when next in.

8). Observatory Extension/Refurbishment

CD advised that an email with the plans had been sent off to the architects. Awaiting reply. Concerned that as they are doing the design for free that “we may go to the back of the queue.”

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.

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.

9). Risk Register Review (Red items)

All red items of the current risk register were reviewed and changes agreed. Updated risk register attached to hard copy.

10). Finance Report/Accounts Approval

SW had a question about VAT recovery but was unable to be answered in the absence of the Treasurer. The question did not affect the figures which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The accounts were approved.

11). Membership Update

Membership strength last month	305
New members	19
Membership strength this month	324
Waiting list total	0
Membership renewals (to date)	49

ML reported that there were 6 applicants on the waiting list who had been invited to pay their membership fees with a 2-week window. Nothing heard. Contacted again and advised that as it was likely that they were no longer interested, then their details would be removed from the database. One applicant then replied explaining that they had been in hospital but were still interested. ML advised the applicant to resubmit their application when able, and they would be prioritised. Nothing heard yet.

12). Members Listening Group

ML advised that the inaugural meeting for the group was scheduled to take place the following evening, 12 February. Eight members interested in being a part of the group, but he thought that only 6 would attend (not including a member who was abroad for a couple of months on holiday).

13). Policies For Review Date

There were no policies for review this month. The next review date will be the March meeting where the policy "Settling Differences and Members Conduct Policy" will be reviewed.

14). IT and RAC Update

It was agreed that MW be added to the committee mailing list and WhatsApp group.

Afternote: Action completed by CD.

15). Monthly Talk Issues

Due to the difficulty in the setting up of the January guest speaker talk, CD suggested that in future, all talks should take place in the Planetarium possibly without Zoom. It was felt that this may not be popular with members who cannot genuinely attend. It was suggested that the talks could be recorded and put on our You Tube channel, but this may not be agreeable with some speakers.

For the talks in the Planetarium, tickets should go out to members, with any remaining put out to the general public.

It was agreed that we use the Planetarium in future and also explore the use of Zoom connectivity too. We could still deliver the guest speaker talk over Zoom (with their permission), but this would be by screen sharing only, rather than using a separate webcam in the Planetarium.

If a member wanted to give a talk, then they should be given the choice of rooms.

MW offered to help with Zoom connectivity if required.

Speaker fees. It was agreed that in future, members should not be paid for delivering talks (but may claim reasonable travel expenses).

If any issues in future were encountered in the setting up of a talk, and could not be resolved before the talk commenced, then the talk needs to be cancelled and the speaker informed.

16). Budgets and Business Plan

SW reminded the meeting that we were approaching end of the financial year, and not as much attention had been paid to income and expenditure. More clarity on income and expenditure will be needed for next year. Looking at capital and operating expenditure, does our operational income exceed our operational expenses? In order to bring more clarity to our operational costs and expenses as opposed to our project costs, for the new financial year we are going to revert to sharing a table of project budgets and spend at each committee meeting.

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

17). Governance Review/Organisational Structure (Item 20 on Agenda)

BS raised concerns about our current governance arrangements, specifically that while we have several deputies assigned to Trustees, these roles are not subject to the constitutional review and re-election process. As a result, the organisation could benefit from establishing a formal operational committee, given we have a sufficient pool of skills & experience.

SW agreed that those conducting the external governance review should liaise with BS regarding the organisation's structure.

18). Trustee Survey Results

SB advised the meeting that there had been over 60 responses to the survey. There were some interesting comments. Some members did not realise the importance of Trustees (i.e. "No Trustees means No Volunteers"). It was suggested that we hold a meeting to explain what each of us does, and our responsibilities within the Society. ML also said that some members did not realise that all Trustees are also the committee members.

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.

Could also do an Obscast recording, and an article in EH.

CD suggested that committee meeting minutes should also be made available to any member who should wish to read them. Approved.

19). Group Fragmentation Concerns

CD raised a concern about the number of "clubs within the club" that have been raised over the last year. These are causing "cliques" with members attending only other internal club events and not engaging as much with the wider society.

More input is probably needed to ensure that sub-club activities are inclusive to the wider society.

It was approved for CD to lay out some initial bullet points as to how their activities can be managed and communicated better.

20). Organisational Structure

See item 17 above.

21). AOB

Overflow Car Park Barrier Code – ML

ML advised that there were a couple of occasions upon arrival on a Wednesday evening, that members cars were unable to access the overflow (old main) car park, and had been left blocking the car park barrier. It was agreed that the padlock code should be issued to all members so that

if they arrived and needed to use the car park and the barrier was locked, then they would be able to gain access.

Afternote: ML issued the code to all of the membership after the meeting with a proviso that whoever was the last to leave, must ensure that the barrier was locked after them.

The lock details will be issued by ML to all new members on joining.

The Library – ML

ML reminded the meeting that Margaret Gosley had been in touch wanting funding to purchase a number of books for our library, as recommended by Martin Braddock at the recent Society Talk. SW advised that funding was already in place for her to purchase them.

ML then advised that Margaret wanted to discuss the new library when the refurbishment of the Observatory has taken place. It was suggested by SW that she be invited to our next CM on 10 March to discuss her ideas.

Afternote: ML has been in touch with Margaret, and she will be attending the next committee meeting on 10 March at 7.45pm and has been allocated up to a 30 minute slot to discuss her proposals. ML also advised her that she already had agreed funding to purchase the books requested.

Synesqo – SW

SW advised that Science Quo would like to give us more money. Although they had not specified an amount, he asked the committee for a specific way in which the money could be spent.

Open Day Events – BS

BS raised concerns regarding future public open days being scheduled on Sundays from April. Historically, Sunday operations have led to reduced volunteer participation and an increased risk of burnout, particularly for those who work on Mondays. It was therefore recommended that public open days return to Saturday operations rather than Sundays.

SW will liaise with TB to model various scenarios and assess the business and operational impact.

The matter is to be discussed at the next CM on 10 March. ML has noted it for the agenda.

With there being no more business, the meeting closed at 9.30pm.

22). Date and Time of Next Meeting

7.30pm Tuesday 10 March

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

Signed.....Chair

Print Name.....

Date.....