

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 14 April 2026



Present:

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 (via Zoom)	Communications Officer
Tony Booth	Science Centre Manager
Shaun Pollard	Education Officer
Michael Williams	Deputy IT Administrator

1). Apologies

Craig Mapleston, Brendan Scoular

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

Appointment of Karen Barker and Tony Booth as Deputy Safeguarding Officers.

Decision to change telescope training to Tuesday evenings.

Decision to allow Nina Spencer to use Planetarium on a corporate hire basis.

Allocation of extra £1.5k if required to purchase better option for planet Saturn model in new exhibition.

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. Ongoing.**

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. Ongoing.**

CD to research how Community Cinema Licences work. **Action: CD. To report at next meeting.**

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. Correct signs arrived. Awaiting confirmation of who is paying for installation. Ongoing.**

CCTV outside Observatory not working. New camera fitted. More work required to make it operational before refit starts. **Action: CM/CD.**

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. Remove form log.**

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. Ongoing.**

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 redacted version and forward to CD. Completed.**

"Settling Differences and Members Conduct Policy" changes to be made by ML and forwarded to CD for incorporation into the online documents. **Action: CD. Ongoing.**

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: BS. Safeguarding reviewed and adopted. Volunteer Policy and Handbook requires review (BS absent from meeting). Ongoing.**

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. Ongoing.**

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

6). AOB Requests

Saturn Ring Anomaly (exhibition area) TB
Governance Matters SW

7). H and S – Security

In the absence of CM, there was no H and S or security reports.

Some concern was raised about the security of the bench recently installed on the pavement outside the drive in entrance. TB said that he will apply some silicon to the fastenings. **Action: TB.**

ARC Callout Rota

SW advised that whenever an alarm is triggered, Julian Best and TB get called first. The system needs revising as it is unfair and a process needs to be put in place where it rotates to who is the “first responder.”

ML has made a note for this to be put on the agenda for the next meeting 12 May.

8). Observatory Extension/Refurbishment

CD confirmed that a meeting had been arranged with the architect on Thursday 16th April (after being rescheduled for the third time), but he was not hopeful. Depending on the outcome, they may look at employing a “paid” architect to get things moving. SW added that if they were not happy with progress after their meeting, then they should draft a brief that can be sent to several architects to tender against. NC advised that he knows an architect who would be interested.

9). Risk Register Review

The risk register was reviewed, and very little changes were noted from last month. Unable to assess all the risks fully due to the absence of 2 Trustees. A hard copy is attached to these minutes, and a copy has been sent to all Trustees.

10). Finance Report

Two queries from SW and SB about the accounts were resolved.

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

11). Membership Update

ML had circulated the following information prior to the meeting:

Last month: 327 members.

Membership renewals 2026/2027: 210

6 Honorary members.

38 members already paid membership fees when joining at beginning of the year.

4 applicants on waiting list. Memberships approved and awaiting payment (at time of writing).

Total membership as of 1 April 2026: 254

15 members contacted ML to say that not renewing as unable to give their time, plus one member saying that he lived “too far away.”

Have sent suggested wording to CD to amend the website to reflect that we are recruiting again.

12). Policies For Review Date

Safeguarding – SP had reviewed and rewritten the Safeguarding Policy and produced a header with the photos of the Safeguarding Lead and the 2 deputies. Kirsten Richards to be removed as a contact and access withdrawn. To be updated in Event Horizon.

SB advised of a small typo error, and queried who was the contact on Notts CC, which was explained by SP.

SW asked that the safeguarding policy should mention that visiting groups must bring sufficient competent adults to supervise their groups if they are split into smaller groups. He also queried if we did safeguarding training, and SP confirmed that a programme for volunteers and staff was in

place. SW also asked if the policy could be set out in the format of our existing policies so that it could be easily edited and updated. Afternote: Format for easy editing and updating completed.

In the absence of BS, the “Volunteering Policy and Handbook” policy has been deferred until the next meeting on 12 May. ML has made a note of it for the agenda. **Action: BS.**

The next policy for review, “Compliments, Complaints, and Comments”, is not due until August 2026.

13). IT Update

MW advised that equipment was required to create an “Active Directory Programme”. He said that it was sometimes difficult to obtain due to it being sold out quite quickly, and PT offered the use of the Society bank card to purchase it if required. About £4k was needed.

Also need to look at the physical security of laptops and desktop computers to prevent theft.

An IT budget is needed and requires putting into the business plan.

14). Annual Budget/Business Plan

Operational Plan Update

Turnover is predicted to be £370k per year, and we are predicting to break even (after VAT assessment) on operating costs (including maintenance to maintain business as usual) and income but excluding spend on new projects.

Reserves and Planetarium Refurbishment Savings

Have reserves which will stay at £150k as previously agreed but will add a further £25k of restricted reserves to cover future upgrade and replacement of planetarium equipment.

Project Plan and Budgets

A copy of the updated projects matrix is attached to the hard copy of the minutes. A copy will also be sent to all Trustees.

The following member projects which had been submitted by Adam Roberts were approved:

Lightning detector – Cost 2k.

BirdNET Pi – Cost £260 estimate. ML to be supervising committee member.

Public Display of RAC Data – Cost £284. Based on advice from MW, the budget was increased to £400.

For review by MW:

Solar LORA Node – Cost £222.54

The following projects were not approved:

Hacking Projects – Cost £400 estimate, and AI based projects £1300

15). Staff Salary Reviews

A salary increase was agreed for Matt Nutter, Susanna Holt, and Karen Barker.

A salary increase was agreed for Tony Booth.

16). Listening Group Proposals

A proposal from Rob Dawes for access to a remote controlled telescope for the Society was discussed. SP had an idea which he would like to discuss with him. ML has informed Rob of the decision. **Action: SP**

Paula Timerlake (Treasurer) had submitted a proposal to change the monthly guest speaker night from a Tuesday to a Wednesday. It was agreed that a poll to the members would be put together to gauge opinion. **Action: CD.**

17). Junior Section Update

ML advised that he had held a meeting with Tim Sharp, Selina Trueman, and Chris and Nina Spencer to discuss the formation of a junior section within the Society. A sticking point was membership eligibility. Would membership be restricted to existing junior members, or could it be opened up to external members? If open to external members, would they be subject to the same rule that under 16's, must be accompanied by a parent/guardian? Could the under 16 rule be scrapped altogether?

It was felt that a meeting with a couple of Trustees to discuss the group, and also the issue of membership be held at a suitable date. ML is waiting for a suggested date (ideally on a Wednesday evening if possible).

18). Donorbox Donation System

TB advised that he had looked at this method of obtaining donations for the Society which could be embedded into the website. There was a small "platform fee" of 2.95% made on every donation. Approval for its use was given for 6 months. **Action: TB, and associated IT - CD**

19). Podpoint Charger Member Rate

Some members have asked about a discount on EV charging at the site. A discount to .36p per KW was approved. TB will send details of how to obtain the discount to ML for circulation. Afternote: Details circulated 16 April.

20). Education Offer GCSE/A Level

SP advised that the night school slots were booked for the next 12 months and is hoping for an 80% occupancy.

GCSE/A Level. Has had some enquiries as to when these will start. Has had 2 meetings, the second of which had a more positive outcome. Along with new member Julian Krishna who is also a physics teacher, they are looking at lesson plans and planetarium usage.

21). SOARC Design Proposal

NC circulated plans for the construction of the proposed SOARC room. The plans featured the external areas only, and these were approved. NC to now present plans for the actual room build itself before further approval will be considered. **Action: NC.**

22). AOB

Saturn Ring Anomaly (exhibition area) – TB

TB advised that the original cost of £1500 to replace the rings of Saturn in the exhibition area has now risen to £1940 plus VAT. This was due to the original quotation being verbal, but they revised their costings after speaking to their third party. New costs include an allowance for the fitting of new rings, and extra anchor points to be reinstalled together with the hire of an access tower. Approved.

Governance Matters – SW

SW remarked that the governance review team have asked for each Trustee to look at their job descriptions and divide up what they do as a Trustee against what they do as a volunteer. SW to forward details via email of what is required, with a request that it is completed by the end of April.

Action: All Trustees

With there being no more business, the meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Date and time of next meeting: 7.30pm. Tuesday 12th May

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

Signed.....Chair

Print Name.....

Date.....