

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTIETH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 JUNE 2006 AT 10.00 A.M. AT THE
PLANETARIUM**

Present: His Grace, The Lord Eames (Chair), Dr F. Byrne, Sir
Kenneth Bloomfield, Mrs M. Cruickshank, Dr Á. Downey,
Professor J. Dyson, Professor L. Drury, Professor P. Dufton,
Mrs Sue Hogg, Archdeacon R. Hoey and Professor A.
Hibbert

Apologies: Professor M. Merrifield

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

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2005

- 1.1. The minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on 25 November 2005 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. **Minute 3** – Dr Byrne, Chair of the Options Committee, reported that the Research Advisory Committee, comprising Professor John Dyson (University of Leeds; Chair), Professor Mark Birkinshaw (University of Bristol) and Professor Carl Murray (Queen Mary, University of London) will undertake a preliminary review of the Observatory's strengths and weaknesses prior to the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise and will provide advice and guidance to the Director on future research directions. The Options Committee concluded that at the present time there was no advantage in setting up an advisory committee for the Planetarium.
- 2.2. **Minute 4.1** – The Chairman reported that Mr David Hanson MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland, in a reply to the Chairman's letter regarding the funding position of the Observatory, confirmed that the DCAL had been successful in an in-year bid for £90,000 to cover the funding shortfall identified in the Observatory's Business Plan for 2005/2006.

3. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 3.1. The Chairman informed the Committee that he will retire from the Committee when he retires as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland on 31 December 2006. The Chairman also reported the following changes in membership of the Committee: (i) the DCAL has reappointed the three DCAL nominees on the Committee, Mrs Cruickshank, Dr Downey and Mrs Hogg, for a further period from 1 April 2006 to 30 June 2008; (ii) Dr Byrne has agreed to remain as a member of the Committee co-opted by the Board of Governors until 31 December 2007; and (iii) Sir Kenneth Bloomfield (co-opted by the Board of Governors) and Professor Drury (DIAS nominee) will retire from the Committee on 30 June 2006. The Chairman thanked the DCAL representative and Dr Byrne for agreeing to stay on the Committee for a further term and also thanked Sir Kenneth and Professor Drury for their contribution to the work of the Committee over many years.

4. INTERNAL AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr Byrne, Chair of the Internal Audit Committee, presented his Report:

- 4.1. The Internal Audit Committee met on 7 June 2006 to review the Accounts and the Internal Audit Reports for 2005/2006 and the Observatory and Planetarium Risk Registers.
- 4.2. During the review of the Accounts, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) representative confirmed that the Accounts comply fully with Government accounting directions and that the NIAO intend to issue an unqualified report on the Accounts.
- 4.3. The Internal Auditors have given a substantial assurance on the Internal Audit, which is the highest level they will ever give unless high volume checking of transactions is carried out. The Internal Auditors were satisfied with the management's responses to a number of minor weaknesses in systems reported by the auditors.
- 4.4. The Internal Audit Committee agreed to recommend the Accounts and the Internal Audit Reports for 2005/2006 for adoption by the Management Committee at its next meeting.

The Committee asked during consideration of the Report that a definition be sought for the term "a small body", which was referred to on a number of occasions in the Audit Reports.

On the proposal of Dr Downey, seconded by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, the Committee adopted the Accounts and the Internal Audit Reports for 2005/2006 and gave the Directors permission to sign the Accounts.

5. DIRECTORS' INTERIM REPORTS

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

- 5.1. The objectives for 2006/2007 are contained in the Planetarium's Business Plan for the period. The Plan will be modified to take account of new funding under the Science and Skills programme.
- 5.2. The building work is substantially complete and problems with the projectors have been resolved.
- 5.3. The Planetarium will re-open to the public on 31 July 2006. There will be press and media coverage leading up to the re-opening but the official opening will not take place until later in the year.
- 5.4. Sponsorship of £15,000 has been received to set up a render farm for storage and work on animation sequences that are part of Digistar shows.
- 5.5. The Planetarium hosted a very successful conference for the British Association of Planetaria in May 2006.
- 5.6. Two new Science Communicators, Sharon Carroll and Colin Johnston, have been appointed to the education team.
- 5.7. The Planetarium and the Observatory have been awarded funding of £300,000 in total for each of the next two years under the Science and Skills programme. The funding will be shared equally between the Planetarium and the Observatory. Mrs Wendy McCorry has been appointed as Science Communicator on a two-year contract to fulfil the Planetarium's commitments under the funding. The additional funding will also enable the Planetarium to start the development of a virtual planetarium on the World Wide Web.
- 5.8. A course on astrophotography will be run in Autumn/Winter 2006/2007.

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- 5.9. Recruitment for the two remaining vacant posts, a facilities manager and a front desk receptionist, will begin in September 2006.
- 5.10. A sponsored vehicle has been provided for the outreach service.

During discussion of the Director's report the Committee noted the Planetarium's arrangements for Child Protection and agreed that these arrangements should be referred to in the next Interim Report, The Committee also asked that explanatory notes be provided on the names given to the Planetarium's public halls and rooms and consideration be given to developing educational services for children under 5 years of age. The Chairman thanked Dr Mason for his Report and Dr Mason then left the meeting.

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

- 5.11. Approximately 250 delegates to the Church of Ireland General Synod visited the Observatory as part of the main reception for their congregation on the evening of 10 May 2006. The Chairman said that he had received overwhelming thanks from the delegates for the hospitality of Professor Bailey and his staff and for the very interesting tours of the Observatory.
- 5.12. Gerry Doyle has recently been honoured by Membership of the Royal Irish Academy. NASA has selected one of Miruna Popescu's images for downloading from its education websites.
- 5.13. Simon Jeffery reports that observations support the theory that extreme helium stars were formed from the merger of two white dwarfs.
- 5.14. Grant successes were as follows: (i) Gerry Doyle has obtained a 3-year PPARC PDRA grant with a value of £199,677; (ii) Simon Jeffery has obtained a PPARC Computer Systems Manager support grant of £21,798 for two years from 1 April 2006; and (iii) Mark Bailey has obtained a PPARC Studentship Quota for the 2006 and 2007 allocations. This is the first time the Observatory has received such an allocation, and it demonstrates the quality of the Observatory's postgraduate provision.
- 5.15. Two new minor planet names have been announced, one for John Butler who retired from the Observatory on 31 October 2005 and one for Bertie McClure, who has restored many of the Observatory's historic instruments and played a key role in the fabrication of the Human Orrery. In addition, John Butler has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. The Chairman asked Mr Young to send a letter of congratulations to John Butler.
- 5.16. John McFarland reports that with the help of the Library of the Royal Astronomical Society, he was able to obtain a number of free volumes of journals that fill gaps in the Observatory's collection.
- 5.17. There is no progress to report on the issue of a new Library, Archives and Historic Scientific Instruments building, other than a commitment by the DCAL to consider the development of an economic appraisal for the project.
- 5.18. The Human Orrery project is nearing completion leaving only the outer markers and interpretation panels to be completed.
- 5.19. The Director is now Chair of the Armagh Visitor Education Committee, which was set up to promote activities that encourage the pursuit of life-long learning and scholarship amongst visitors to Armagh.
- 5.20. A meeting will be held today between the Observatory and the Queen's University Belfast to consider renewing the approval and recognition agreement between the two institutions.
- 5.21. Details of visitors, lectures and other public events together with notes on administrative and financial issues are included in the Report.
- 5.22. Recruitment for the two vacant Research Astronomer posts is now underway. The closing date for receipt of applications is 8 September 2006. The Selection Panel

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comprises Professor Mark Bailey, Professor Peter Brand (University of Edinburgh), Professor Luke Drury (DIAS), and Professor John Dyson (University of Leeds).

- 5.23. It is anticipated that the allocation of £300,000 per annum to the Observatory and Planetarium from the Science and Skills programme for each of the two years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 will be split equally between the two institutions. It is expected that these additional funds will be sufficient to enable both institutions to function with a full complement of staff for the next two years. In the following year, 2008/2009, the Observatory will need an uplift in funding to avoid going into deficit.

During discussion of Professor Bailey's Report, the Committee noted the Observatory's involvement in North/South collaboration with the DIAS and encouraged the Director to continue to develop collaboration with appropriate North/South bodies. It was also necessary wherever possible to encourage discussion on a Northern Ireland strategy for the promotion of Science and Technology and the role of the respective organizations in this strategy. It was also noted that a number of schools with special science status would be interested in developing projects to promote science. The Committee agreed that the Observatory should also refer to its Child Protection arrangements in the Director's next Interim Report.

The Chairman thanked Professor Bailey for his Report.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1. There was no other business to report.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place at the Observatory on 24 November 2006 starting at 10.30 a.m. The Robinson Lecture will take place later that evening.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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His Grace, the Lord Eames
Chairman of the Management Committee

Dated: 24 November 2006