

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday 19th June 2012 in the Ashburnham Arms, SE10.

Attendance: Lin Potter (Chair), Mike Meynell (Vice-chair), Brian Evans, Deborah McGarvey, Grey Liple, Jane Bendall, Peter Kitcherside, Rachel Harrison.

Apologies: Malcolm Porter, Roger Geeson, Sumitra Sribhashyam, Rob Edwards.

1. Membership Survey Results: Mike said that there was a good response to the survey, which resulted in about 50% of the members giving feedback.

Growth in membership numbers - The results were split between agreeing and disagreeing with continued growth in society numbers. However, there was slight majority in favour of continued growth.

The members were mainly against a two-tier membership, and a small majority were against capping membership.

With regards booking for lectures, there was a majority in favour towards first come first served rather than charging per lecture.

Mike stated that there is a clear demographic split between long-term and short-term members, with longer-term members favouring a membership cap and others favouring continued growth. Rachel commented that the feedback from members reflected the varied opinions of society members.

Capacity – a small minority were against a matinee lecture, whereas there was a slight majority in favour of the lecture being televised on a big screen in the overflow area.

Interest in our Offerings – most people were very interested in lectures as well as viewing events. However, socialising with other members was not as popular as we thought it would be.

Lin thanked Mike and Rachel for all their hard work with the survey.

Grey said that he will ask Nick if we could have a solar viewing session for Flamsteed members only.

Lin wondered if we could ask Greenwich University about renting the 200-seat lecture hall as a one off, should we ever feel that a lecture would be too popular to be accommodated at the NMM lecture theatre. Rachel said she would ask the University. Mike stated we had deliberately not pursued alternative venues, as we didn't want to break our close links with the museum.

2. Update on membership strategy meetings with RMG

The working group on Flamsteed membership strategy held their first meeting in the RMG boardroom on the 7th June. In attendance were Chris Styles, Marek Kukula,

Rosemary Gilbert and Tori Young from the museum and Malcolm Porter and Mike Meynell from the Flamsteed.

The working group went through the membership survey results and were concerned with the demographic split where the long-term members (over 4 years) favoured capping and short-term members (1 year or less) preferred continued growth.

It was noted that most survey respondents rejected charging per lecture.

It was thought that matinee lectures would prove to be very difficult to arrange for our more eminent speakers.

Most people favoured the 'first come, first served' booking system but were not happy with the 'clunky' Museum booking system. The committee believed that, despite the problems with the booking system, the system had worked, as we had 130 bookings for the Lintott/Clark lecture. The presence of membership staff on the door of our lecture events was particularly welcome progress and the working group agreed that this arrangement should continue.

Marek Kukula thought there was a division between the core members (+4 years) who regarded the Flamsteed as a society, and the newest members (- 4 years) who regarded the Flamsteed as a membership proposition.

Lin said that bookings for museum events can be difficult as she sometimes has to book last minute. She tried to book and left a voice mail, no one got back to her, also that the answerphone message was too long.

Grey said there were some problems with booking free events, and that the booking system needs to be looked at.

Rachel is aware of these issues.

Mike said there was slight majority of members favouring televising lectures.

Grey suggested giving numbered tickets for seats.

Peter said that the museum needs to get involved more as Flamsteed grows. Rachel said that the Museum is aware of this.

Lin acknowledged the involvement and support from the museum during busy times.

Jane stated that the booking system must be the responsibility of the museum as there are more than 280 members now. Rachel said that the museum was happy to help Flamsteed.

3. Radio Astronomy – Grey said that specialist radio receivers had been purchased. The Flamsteed Radio Observers Group had set up the equipment at their last meeting. The equipment proved to have excellent frequency range and managed to pick up a number of amateur radio beacons.

Over the summer break, Grey will look at what else we can do.

Grey wants to show Flamsteed members our solar outreach kits, i.e. the Coronado and the radio dish and receiver, prior to a lecture in the new season.

4. New website: During the past week the committee had an opportunity to view the new website proposed by Mike Meynell. Mike had felt it was time to update the website,

as the technology on which the old website was based was now obsolete, despite serving us very well over the past 10 years. The website is now on an upgraded server and migration to the new site can commence immediately. The old website has been archived and can be accessed if required on a mirror server. The main advantage of the new design is that it provides a consistent design, integrates all of our social media offerings and (most importantly) is easy to maintain. Rosemary has requested that we add the RMG logo to the website which Mike is now implementing.

The committee thanked both Mike and Sumitra for their very hard and dedicated work in helping to design the new website which everyone agreed is really excellent. Mike highlighted the huge amount of design and build work performed by Mark Duwe on the website. A vote of thanks for proposed and passed and it was agreed that Jane should write to thank Mark for all of his hard work on behalf of the society.

Any Other Business:

a. The incident where the car park gates were closed at the last Flamsteed lecture on 18th June was discussed. Rachel agreed that it should have been open but there were lots of events happening at the museum that night.

b. Rachel said that the museum was concerned about the amount of cars parked outside the entrance door at our lectures. Deborah and Peter said that they needed to park near the door for practical reasons (e.g. limited time to set up refreshments, etc). Rachel suggested maybe the museum will buy the wine in future, and that she will look at that.

c. Deborah is resigning from her role as catering organiser for tea and coffee. The committee thanked her for all the hard work she has put into making members feel welcome when they come to meetings.

It was suggested that, from now on, the Member's office could provide refreshments as they already buy wine, tea coffee etc in bulk for their events. This sounded an excellent idea and we felt that we should start a rota of members to actually serve the refreshments during next season.

d. It was agreed that Jane should send the invoice for the book presented to Mike Dryland to the museum for payment.

e. Grey asked the meeting to start thinking about the second round of purchases to be made from our reserve funds. Now is the best time to carefully consider and discuss with Rob, what else we would mutually like to acquire from the original "wish list" compiled last autumn. We are aware that a sensible sum of money should be left for a contingency fund.