

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held at 6.30pm on Wednesday 26th September 2012 at the Novotel Hotel, Greenwich SE10.

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

Apologies: Sumitra Sribhashyam, Rob Edwards.

1. **Matters arising from previous minutes:** Mike said that there had been over 8,500 views to the new website since the 'go-live' at the end of June 2012, around 100 per day.
2. **Committee roles:** Nominations received from Brian Blake and Chris Mann. Jane, Grey, Lin and Mike will propose and second their nominations.
Mike proposed that there should be an additional officer of the society when the new committee meets following the AGM, with a chair and 2 vice-chairs. This will help to give additional support to the chair and provide focus on those areas that are important to our future strategy as well as giving recognition to roles that members of the committee are already performing. It was proposed that one vice-chair would focus on the internal affairs of the society (i.e. administration, lecture bookings, observing evening coordination and bookings, website, etc). The other vice-chair would cover external affairs such as liaison with the ROG, solar viewing and radio astronomy, as well as media liaison.
However we can amend role descriptions at any time. Lin agreed it was a good idea. Future senior roles may be needed, with job descriptions.
3. **AGM:** Committee members were asked to draft a short statement on activities during the last season for inclusion in the chair's report. Jane said committee nominations close on Saturday 29 September at 7pm. Mike to send a further email to members requesting details of any questions that members may wish to raise in the AGM. Rachel stated that Mike Dryland's honorary membership certificate will be available at Mondays Flamsteed meeting.
4. **Catering:** The museum agreed that they would cover the catering on a trial basis, as they want to bring the catering in-line with their other events. Any extra refreshments we can keep for the next meeting.

Radio astronomy can borrow jugs etc. Roger said that the catering equipment needs to be handed to the museum at some point.

Grey is hoping that the Radio Astronomy group will continue to be able to use the Endeavour room for its meetings.

Roger is happy to continue to volunteer with the catering.

5. **Update on Membership strategy:** Mike and Malcolm tabled the proposed membership strategy document that will be presented at the AGM. Points included a discussion on the main benefits of membership of the society and the corresponding benefits to the museum (access to a pool of knowledgeable people, next logical step in learning programme, improving the profile of astronomy, etc).

The results of the membership survey were already discussed at our previous committee meeting (slight majority in favour of increased membership, lecture bookings and a trial of televising to an overflow area).

As of 26 September, 78 people have booked seats for the AGM.

Deborah questioned why committee members who were performing work on the evening of a lecture had to book seats. Rachel commented that they could reduce the number of tickets available so that committee members were guaranteed to get it in.

Mike wanted the committee to work with the public as a key point.

The museum (RMG) does not plan to actively promote Flamsteed membership but will not put a cap on membership numbers. It will be organic growth.

Concerns: as the society gets bigger, people may lose being familiar with other members. As a potential solution, we are looking at introducing more 'special interest groups' within the society (i.e. in addition to solar viewing and radio astronomy, we may add observing and astrophotography).

Grey discussed the additional groups, as well as pub evenings, 28-inch viewings nights and a plan of what to do during bad weather, as well as telescope workshops.

Media interest in the society has started to increase and we need to work closely with RMG to complement our activities. We now have a media contact at the museum.

Ways to improve the membership benefits of the Flamsteed were also discussed, for example, private / curator tours of exhibitions, developing events in conjunction with the museum in the Sammy Ofer wing and the ROG micro-galleries.

Mike and Malcolm gave their view of what the society may look like in 2 years time: to have no cap on membership numbers with organic growth, lecture bookings, more special interest groups, more support and assistance from RMG and more support to RMG from the Flamsteed and more Flamsteed interaction with the public and increased involvement with the media.

Malcolm summarised: thanks to the survey we have a good idea as to what members want, and we now need the museum to help as our membership grows. We have a broad range of interests and skills within the society, giving us an opportunity to assist the education department at the museum and raise our profile as a society.

We need to continue to work with the museum to improve the benefits we bring to the RMG, the public and, most importantly, our members.

Next steps: we will ask members their initial feedback following the AGM presentation. We will take some questions on the night but also ask for feedback via

email. The past 13 years have been an amazing foundation and we have now reached the 'end of the beginning.'

6. **Members that are not on email:** Rachel said that the office can help Brian in posting out information to members not on email, and to give the members the office number for any queries. Brian accepted.
7. **Telescope and Astrophotography workshops:** Astrophotography at Charlton House was very successful and Grey has spoken to Nick Babbs and Rob Edwards to open this up to the public. There were some concerns raised that this will detract from courses at the ROG etc, but Mike and Grey believe that the opposite is the case. Jane stated that telescope workshops were always open to the public in the past.
8. **BBC Stargazing Live 2013:** It has been confirmed by the BBC that this event will take place on 7, 8, 9 January 2013. The BBC has been in touch with the Flamsteed and the ROG regarding potential events, but this was still in the early phase of planning. Mike said that we should suggest Charlton House again as it was so successful last year. Events at the ROG site are unlikely to be possible due to access restrictions after dark.

Lessons learnt from last year were that the limited number of tickets issued for Charlton House meant that numbers were unnecessarily restricted. A better solution may be timed tickets for entrance to the house on the night. The Flamsteed got very little publicity for the event, despite providing most of the volunteers and finding the venue. This should be addressed this year.

We would like to do a Woolwich solar viewing event again as it was so good last year, but this would require liaison with the BBC and the local authority.

9. **AOB:** A discussion on possible new and exciting speakers for next years' season at Flamsteed.