

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 26 MARCH 2019 AT 11.00 A.M. IN THE KEPLER ROOM**

Present: Mr J Briggs (Chair), Mr S Brown, Mr B Hannam, Professor L Harra, Professor M Mathioudakis, Dr M McKay, Professor R Oudmaijer, Professor T Ray

Apologies: Canon Hilliard, Mr P McGurgan, Professor M Merrifield

In attendance: Professor M Burton (Director), Mrs C Corvan (Head of Corporate Services), Dr M Sarzi (Head of Research), Mr L Knox (Head of Finance), Mrs L Brown (Corporate Manager)

**1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies were recorded as above.

1.2 At the outset the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular Lynne Brown who was attending her first meeting in her role as Corporate Manager.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 The Chair reminded members and officers of the need to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest associated with any item on the Agenda either now or at the relevant stage during the meeting.

**3. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2018**

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 10 December 2018 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

4.1 The Committee had no further issues to raise and noted the completion of one of the matters previously arising.

4.2 The Chair drew attention to the presentation from Hamilton Architects scheduled for 12.30 pm.

**5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

5.1 The Chair reported that significant progress had been made in relation to the furtherance of the AOP Vision, arising from the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) visit in December. In addition to the support from SIB, Architects had been engaged to assist AOP with proposals for development of the entire site, including how it related to Armagh City and not just the Leisure Village.

- 5.2 In terms of Membership of the Management Committee, the Chair informed the Committee that, following legal advice, the Department for Communities (DfC) had advised that terms of office for Mr Brown, Professor Harra and Mr McGurgan would be extended for a further term. In relation to the vacancy created by Mrs Wilson's retirement, DfC had been asked to consider how the skills gap in respect of Heritage could be addressed. There remained one vacancy from the Board of Governors.
- 5.3 In relation to the three vacant Board of Governors co-option positions the Chair explained that DfC had advised that the Management Committee could make a specific case to have those positions filled. He considered that it was important to form a closer relationship with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (the Council).
- 5.4 The Committee agreed, in principle, to request the Board of Governors, at its meeting in May, to consider offering a position on the Management Committee and the Board of Governors to the Council to fulfil a specific skills gap e.g. Tourism, Heritage or Outreach and Education, the detail to be brought forward to the next meeting. **Action 26/3/2019 – 01 The Chair to approach the Board of Governors regarding co-option to Management Committee from the Council.**
- 5.5 The Chair advised that, facilitated by Susan Lindsay, SIB, work on what will be required to complete the Outline Business Case was progressing. Further guidance would be brought forward in due course.

## 6. REPORT FROM DIRECTOR

- 6.1 Professor Burton guided the Committee through his report, elaborating briefly on the matters for discussion. The Committee noted the matters and some of these were discussed in detail.
- 6.2 In relation to the Summer Events Programme – One Giant Leap, the Chair reported that the engagement event had been a success. He extended congratulations to everyone who had been involved in developing the programme.
- 6.3 Mrs Corvan reported that the US Consulate had expressed an interest in hosting an event in Armagh. The Committee noted that this was an excellent opportunity to showcase AOP offering to those who may not have visited previously.
- 6.4 In response to a query from Professor Ray, Mrs Corvan confirmed that the mobile dome could possibly be brought to the US Embassy in Dublin.
- 6.5 Mrs Corvan took the Committee through the Juno Action Plan which had been circulated at the meeting elaborating on particular points in response to queries.
- 6.6 In terms of the action in respect of gender imbalance on the Board and Management Committee, Mrs Corvan reported that there was an opportunity to participate in the Board Room Apprentice Scheme which provided aspiring Board Members with skills and experience to apply for public appointments and that AOP could particularly request a female. Mr Hannam reported that SIB had successfully participated in the Scheme for the past two years and was very content with the quality of apprentices.
- 6.7 The Committee agreed to make application to the Board Room Apprentice Scheme. **Action 26/3/2019 – 02 AOP to apply for participation in the Board Room Apprentice Scheme.**

- 6.8 Discussion ensued regarding the need to address gender imbalance in PhD Students during which it was noted that there were currently 4 female AOP students but that all were in the final stages of study. From a position of 50% female students AOP could potentially have none. Based upon the experiences outlined by Professors Harra and Mathioudakis, the Committee noted that the number of female applicants to PhDs in the field was decreasing and not everyone was staying on for PhDs. By contrast, Mr Brown reported that forensic science was attracting more females than males.
- 6.9 In response to a query from Professor Ray, Professor Mathioudakis confirmed that Queen's students were required to complete an end of year project but none of these were in AOP.
- 6.10 Dr Sarzi recognised the need to strengthen AOP's relationship with QUB and in response to a suggestion from Professor Oudmaijer about advertising AOP's opportunities in Queen's, Professor Mathioudakis pointed out that QUB had primarily NI applicants whereas AOP attracted international applicants.
- 6.11 The Committee approved the Juno Action Plan.
- 6.12 The Committee noted that AOP was now formally approving Met. Observers as part of the PhD programme, with Rok Nezic, Conor Byrne and Kerem Cubuk all now approved and participating in this activity.
- 6.13 Professor Burton reported that the business case for replacement of the Planetarium projector system had been submitted. In response to a query from Mr Brown, he advised that there was no need to upgrade the shows, however, all components of the projector system were past the expected lifetime and needed to be replaced.
- 6.14 The Committee noted the other matters included in the Director's report. The Chair asked if the members were content to accept the Director's report and this was confirmed.

## **7. REPORT FROM HEAD OF RESEARCH**

- 7.1 Dr Sarzi took the Committee through his report, elaborating on the matters for discussion. The Committee noted the matters and some of these were discussed in detail.
- 7.2 In relation to the Review of Research Professor Ray pointed out that as one organisation the Education and Outreach work of AOP also needed to be reviewed in terms of the programmes being delivered and how they were being delivered in other institutions, pointing out that AOP had a unique situation with the combination of Research and Outreach. Professor Burton advised that he had commenced discussions regarding the development of the Education and Outreach programme beyond Primary Schools.
- 7.3 Discussion ensued regarding the research quality evaluation process during which the advantages and limitations of using REF were considered and it was recognised that the primary objective was ensuring the quality of the research.
- 7.4 Mrs Corvan briefly elaborated on the HR situation that had enabled the AOP Fellowship proposal to be brought forward. Professor Mathioudakis expressed concern that the return on the £100K investment in solar physics in Armagh would not be realised if the staff astronomers took a lower

profile. Professor Oudmaijer expressed concern that at the end of the funding term DfC may no longer support the initiative, however, the Chair pointed out that AOP worked very closely with the Department and as a result DfC had gained increasing confidence in AOP.

- 7.5 Professor Ray suggested naming the Fellowship after Dame Jocelyn Bell-Burnell. He felt that her NI link would be attractive to DfC and it may also attract females. Professor Harra pointed out that there was already a Bell-Burnell Fellowship but that perhaps the Jocelyn Fellowship might be appropriate. **Action 26/3/2019 – 03 AOP to explore suggestion of naming the Fellowship after Dame Jocelyn Bell-Burnell.**
- 7.6 The Committee approved the suggestion and the Chair thanked Dr Sarzi for his report.

## 8. UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)

- 8.1 Mr Hannam informed the Committee that Internal Audit had completed an advisory audit in relation to GDPR from which some actions were under way. A formal audit would be conducted in 2020.
- 8.2 In terms of the Internal Audit Follow up report, Mr Hannam advised that most of the 26 recommendations had been implemented, with two not implemented. The key red risk relating to governance arrangements required a review of all policies and procedures which had been a large task. This was substantially complete with a target date of September 2019.
- 8.3 Mr Hannam reported that the Annual Assurance Report had attracted a satisfactory rating, the first time in the past number of years. The ARAC had recognised the excellent progress and expressed congratulations on this achievement.
- 8.4 The ARAC had approved the Internal Audit Plan 2019/20 which included the areas of IT Systems and Security; Financial Management and Reporting and Human Resources Management.
- 8.5 Mr Hannam advised that a new format of Risk Register which identified a smaller number of key risks had been considered. There remained one red risk – Failure of the Digistar equipment.
- 8.6 Discussion had taken place about the new format and it was noted that a workshop under the guidance of the Department was planned. This matter would be reviewed at the next meeting.
- 8.7 Mr Hannam reported that the Committee had approved the draft Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (Oct-March); the draft Governance Statement 2018/19; the draft Annual Board Assurance Statement 2018/19; the NIAO 2018/19 Audit Strategy and the draft ARAC Annual Report 2018/19.
- 8.8 In terms of the 2018/19 expenditure, Mr Hannam reported that significant sums of money had been secured late in the year, which had presented difficulties in terms of compliance with procurement regulations. An assurance had also been given that the full budget would be spent by the end of the financial year.
- 8.9 Dr McKay referred to the volume of work undertaken and identified a minor amendment required to the Governance Statement.

- 8.10 The Chair concurred and recognised the work the Chair of the Committee and Management Team had undertaken, adding that having the risk register approved and a satisfactory assurance helped everything else AOP was doing.

**9. UPDATE FROM THE STAFFING POLICY AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE (SPRC)**

- 9.1 Professor Ray provided a summary of the matters discussed at the SPRC. He reported that the Committee recommended changing PDRA salary scales from UCEA to QUB scales, having a small impact and affecting one post-holder.
- 9.2 In relation to the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES), the background to which had previously been reported, Professor Ray advised that the Committee recommended that AOP use the funding available from the retirement of a staff member through the VES to create a 3-year Fellowship on a rotating basis.
- 9.3 Professor Ray advised that the Committee recommended the extension of the Head of Finance and Income Generation's contract for a further 12 months.
- 9.4 The Committee noted the appointment of Sinead Mackle as Education and Outreach Manager and that the 2017/18 pay increase had been approved and would be paid in the March payroll.
- 9.5 The Chair asked if the Committee was content to accept the report and approve the recommendations from the SPRC and this was confirmed.

**10. PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUSINESS PLAN – Corporate Plan Objectives, KPIs and Finance**

- 10.1 The Committee noted the papers.

**11. AOB**

- 11.1 The Committee noted the availability of training.

**12. DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS**

- 12.1 The remaining meetings for 2019 were noted as

24 June  
23 September  
16 December

- 12.2 The Annual Visitation by the Board of Governors was noted as 22 May.
- 12.3 A visit by the Permanent and Deputy Permanent Secretaries was scheduled to take place before the Annual Visitation on 22 May.
- 12.4 With reference to the Local Government Elections scheduled to take place at the beginning of May, the Chair pointed out that there would be little formal engagement with the Council until

after then and as a consequence, he considered that the 23 September meeting would probably be a very important one.

The meeting was temporarily suspended at 12.35 pm and reconvened at 12.40 pm.

The Chair welcomed Susan Lindsay, Strategic Investment Board and Tara Florence, Hamilton Architects who were in attendance to provide an update on progress in respect of AOP Vision.

At the outset, Ms Lindsay set the project in context in terms of the Minister's Vision; the Strategic Outline Case and the MAG report and highlighted the four work packages under way as:

- Scope and delivery plan for an Outline Business Case (OBC);
- Proposals for Governance framework;
- AOP project Master Plan; and
- Landscape-led Master Plan

Ms Lindsay explained that her role related to the first two work packages and reported on progress to date and next steps in respect of both strands.

Ms Florence advised that her role was connected to the third work package - facilitating the development of a Master Plan for the AOP project. She outlined the key elements of the Pre-OBC scoping study in relation to the AOP Vision and Objectives in respect of each of the topics of Heritage, Research and Outreach.

Displaying a series of maps, Ms Florence outlined the contextual analysis of the project in terms of the proposed Armagh Leisure Village; Royal School; Links to the Armagh historical narrative and wider projects and Landscape-led Masterplan approach to the site development (MAG), highlighting the constraints and opportunities, where appropriate and she outlined topics for engagement with the Council. She also displayed the areas currently associated with the Planetarium, Historical Observatory and Estate Development and talked through a number of possible development scenarios. In conclusion, Ms Florence identified areas for further consideration.

The Chair thanked Ms Lindsay and Ms Florence for their presentation and explained that there were no definitive recommendations or decisions required, rather the presentation was to update the Committee on the progress and current proposals and to make sure that Members were happy with the approach.

Mrs Corvan pointed out that viability and sustainability were paramount considerations in delivering the AOP Vision and it was important to understand how the Committee and Board felt about opening up to development on the site.

Ms Lindsay reiterated that there would be no Departmental capital support for development and so it would be a matter of determining what could be achieved through commercial or grant funding opportunities.

With reference to AOP's geographical positioning, Mrs Corvan felt that, with its links to the City Centre, it was well-placed to capitalise on Robinson's legacy and that there were opportunities in terms of the Greenway Strategy.

The Chair considered that the way forward was a partnership arrangement that delivered more value than AOP development in isolation, whilst still protecting AOP land.

The Committee noted that recommendations would need to be made to the Board of Governors; the Board of Governors may wish to consider the issues and the approval of the Board of Governors would be required.

Professor Burton pointed that in order to make AOP development possible it needed to be innovative.

The Chair advised that there were three meetings scheduled with the Council in the coming weeks.

Mr Brown considered that a sense of architectural cohesion for the whole development was really important. The Chair concurred, adding that how the site related to the City of Armagh and the Armagh Leisure Village and the movement of people was critical. It was also pointed out that the MAG was interested in walking and connectivity and the AOP site was ideally located to support this and to contribute to the NI public transport strategy.

The Committee confirmed it was content with progress and the proposed way forward and the Chair undertook to bring forward the views of the Committee to the Board of Governors.

The meeting concluded at 13.25 pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting



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(Chair)

Dated:

24th June 2019.

## Updated Actions as at 15 March 2019

Reference	Action	Owner	Progress
MC29/01/15 - 01	Dr McKay to explore within ESA if exhibits could be provided to the Planetarium	Dr McKay	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>10 December 2018:</b> Dr McKay advised that he and Professor Burton would endeavour to progress the matter relating to the exhibits.</p> <p><b>21 June 2018:</b> Dr McKay advised that he has been unable to progress this due to his contact being on exceptional leave. He will endeavour to resolve this before his retirement.</p> <p><b>17 November 2017:</b> Continuing to explore opportunities with Dr McKay</p> <p><b>1 September 2017:</b> Dr McKay advised that he will introduce Mr News to the ESA PR.</p> <p><b>23 August 2017:</b> John News has been appointed as temporary HECO and will pursue this matter with Dr McKay</p> <p><b>29 March 2017:</b> It is hoped that a temporary Head of Education &amp; Outreach will be appointed shortly and this matter will be pursued at this time.</p> <p><b>20 September 2016:</b> Dr McKay has spoken to ESA PR in HQ (Paris). ESA would like to understand the direction AOP intends to follow and what support they could provide. It has been decided to wait until the new Head of Education &amp; Outreach is appointed before pursuing further.</p> <p><b>28 January 2016:</b> Dr McKay to introduce Planetarium representative to the ESA teams to pursue potential exhibits.</p>
MC21/06/18-01	The Chair and DfC to discuss timing of confirmation of extensions	Chair/DfC	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>10 December 2018:</b> Professor Harra advised that the term for Mr McGurgan, Mr Brown and herself had been extended for 6 months, until 31 March 2019.</p> <p><b>10 September 2018:</b> DfC advised that the process is underway to reappoint 3 members. There are no plans to appoint a replacement for Primrose Wilson in the absence of a Minister.</p>
MC19/09/18-03	The Chair to take forward the appointment of a qualified accountant to the Committee with DfC	Chair/DfC	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Discussions have taken place between DfC, the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Chair of the Management Committee in relation to Committee vacancies.</p>
MC10/12/18-01	The Chair to bring paper to March 2019 meeting regarding engagement with Council	Chair	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Governance arrangements being progressed in discussion with SIB. Presentation of paper postponed until June 2019.</p>



MC10/12/18-02	Research to be included as permanent item on Agenda		<b>Propose to Close</b> Included on Agenda
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