

Cleveland and Darlington Astronomical Society
Minutes of extraordinary committee meeting held on Thursday, January 23rd, 2014 at 19:20.
Venue: 48 Linden Road, West Cornforth, Ferryhill, DL17 9NR

Present: Jürgen Schmoll in the Chair (JS), Rod Cuff (RC), Peter Hanna (PH), David Lewis (DL), Ian Riach (IR). Sue Barnes (SB), Ed Restall (ER), Ian Morris (IM), Julia Goudge (JG).

Apologies: Neil Haggath (NH), Malcolm Bannister (MB)

1. Public observing event at Nissan plant, Sat 2014 Feb 08, 6-10pm

CaDAS has been invited to take part in this event. JS announced this to the committee, asking for replies of interested members to go.

ER mentioned he had many STARGAZING LIVE calendars we could give away to the public.

2. Planetarium transfer

Being the main reason for this meeting, all discussions focused on this.

In the following, “we” or “us” refers to the organisation that will run the planetarium.

2a: Current lease offer of SBC with update of meeting of PH, IR and ER with Kelly Dickerson (SBC valuer)

The SBC meeting took place in a fruitful and positive atmosphere and had resulted in improvements. Kelly had been open for discussion on changes proposed by CaDAS, and later reacted quickly by getting out a new lease proposal just in time for tonight's committee meeting.

The shared asset concern with respect of the long term lease got clarified. It is apparently quite normal that the lease is short term to start with. If we get into a situation that funding sources require longer leases, SBC is going to change the length of the lease, even up to a transfer of the building to us. Also the outside area usage got clarified.

There was a discussion about assets. SBC would insure the building but charge us, about £386 per year for the building itself, or £500 including the contents (ER: £386 includes both – to be clarified). Another option would be that we insure our contents separately and SBC insures the building only. According to ER the contents are quoted at a value of £208000.

Business rates: £665 if there is a government subsidy or about £1300 without it. This will change once we become a registered charity. Then we get at least 80% relief, with the other 20% being discretionary.

Annual cost: £500 insurance, £1300 max for business rates, peppercorn rent (if charged), £1000 electricity, £500 materials. There should not be water rates. Alarm callouts are about £45 each, with some of them per year being free of charge.

State of the building: Kelly agreed that a new survey is required and that the guttering is in bad state of repair. She agreed to put that right before the lease is signed. The survey could be performed by SBC surveyors and Kelly can provide us with a quote. However, we may opt for our own independent surveyors. After any faults are put right, we can sign the lease. Electric testing has to be done by SBC. Also the electricity meter will be put in. ER reminded us that the cabling to the observatory has to be sorted out as well.

THE NEW HEADS OF TERMS

Going through this document ...

- Ad hoc used areas: 3 days notice is useful for daytime events like solar observing while this area may be used otherwise, e.g. for parking.

- Insurance split between SBC (building) and us (contents), plus obligation to keep building safe.
- Point 21: Child protection – needs to be changed as CRB checks for everybody are not feasible. We can provide a policy ourselves in accordance with the FAS child protection guidelines.
- Permitted use: Profit making business not allowed ? Gambling clause – what about fundraising raffles ?
- Council's health and safety policy cannot be followed, but we can comply with the health and safety law.

ACTION[all]: Go through document and send questions to PH. Deadline end of Sunday Jan 26th.
 ACTION[PH]: Discuss document with Kelly.

2b: Steering group meeting at the planetarium, 2014 Jan 09

ER gave a presentation to interested parties. About 16 people turned up. An email address list has been circulated amongst them to keep in contact. There were some interesting funding source suggestions. One suggestion was an open evening to possible funding bodies.

There were no firm decisions yet of who may join us to run the planetarium, as it was a rather informal information event.

Strategy: Inviting possible funding groups to an event to show who and what we are and show our need for support.

SB mentioned that we do not have the EGM go-ahead of CaDAS members and although CaDAS does not need to be involved their input would be greatly welcomed. In order to use CaDAS as a safe haven for any upfront funds that may be received from SBC, permission would be needed from the membership.

IM mentioned that we require a business plan to present to funding bodies during the event.

2c: Grant funding sources

Big Lottery Funding

Masons: Apparently 2nd largest funding source after the lottery grants.

Rotary Club: Stockton and Billingham branches exist. ER has some contacts to them as they visited the planetarium in the past.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Cleveland Scientific Institution

Leonard Ropner Trust

2d: Parachute payment

Not part of lease agreement, hence not being mentioned there.

£9000 – is this classified as taxable income ? Depends on tax threshold for small businesses.

ER: We need have in writing that we get this payment.

ACTION[PH]: Contact Damian McCann and Richard Bradley about it.

2e: Environmental Trust wind-up funding

ER clarified that the park used to have the Environment Trust that applied for lots of funding for the park. All came to a stop in December 2010 as funding cuts got in force. The Trust fizzled out and there is some residual fund. The trust's constitution allows that the £336 can be given to another body. So CaDAS can use it for legal work or a survey. Remaining trust members need to agree to this solution either directly or by a meeting. ER will know more on Monday Jan 27th.

If agreed, these funds can be transferred into a CaDAS account for the purpose of passing them on to the new planetarium management body.

2f: Business plan

IM and ER prepare a draft. This should be done within approximately two weeks.

ACTION[IM, ER]: Prepare business plan draft.

2g: Star shows from April onwards

According to the new agreement draft, even without a tenancy we will be allowed access as "tenant at will". ER will not accept any school booking after March.

Public events: Two in April (the last two of the winter season, the last ones with connected observing).
April 04 and April 18.

PH: Require volunteer to coordinate the bookings. Also rules should apply (e.g. no children under six, as ER reports). A mobile phone should be given to the coordinator to get bookings. On the long run, online bookings should be enabled.

SB informed the committee that she had provisionally booked the Village Hall in Thorpe Thewles as a backup venue from April. It was decided to keep this booked for now in case things do not go to plan.

Star shows need to be written.

ACTION[PH, ER]: Write star shows.

ACTION[JS]: Visit a public star show to experience the format of it.

2h: Public observing from April onwards

These sessions usually stop at the end of April. There is the option to do it every Friday night, depending on number of volunteers. If we advertise it, we have to be there. ER suggests we keep it as it was until end of season (end of April), then reorganise for September when the new season starts.

IM pointed out that we maybe have to start charging when we have to run the planetarium as a business. Donation boxes may be an option as charging on the night might prove difficult.

ACTION[PH]: Coordinate observing for the rest of the season.

2i: Telescope club resumption

According to ER, the old format has been:

1st Friday starshow & observing

2nd Friday CaDAS meeting & observing

3rd Friday starshow & observing

4th Friday telescope club & observing

Hence, the telescope club can be integrated into public observing nights. Donations may be given for sorting out telescope problems.

Other fundraising sources may include selling hot drinks etc.

ER pointed out that charging for everything may not sit well with grant applications where we stress we are open for the public. A voluntary donation may be a better option.

2j: Time line towards April 2014

Key tasks:

- Lease negotiation
- Survey (could be asked for at Jan27 – 3 weeks at latest)
- Legal lease review
- Business plan (next 2 weeks)
- Public star shows
- Inform CaDAS members about negotiations
- EGM
- Bank accounts
- Name of the organisation
- Sign lease (April 1st earliest)

IM: Need two time lines – one for the formal things and one for the ongoing planetarium operation.

ACTION[PH]: Create operational time line

ACTION[IM]: Create business time line.

2k: Name and bank accounts for new legal body

Name still TBD. PlaTO=PLanetarium And Tees Observatory ? Need to check that name or similar one is neither registered yet by another company nor a registered trade mark.

A bank account needs the foundation of the new body first. To be decided by the treasurer of the new organisation.

2l: Impact on web site

The current one will carry on, but ER may migrate it elsewhere. Don Martin might be asked to do a rework, removing SBC stuff etc.

2m: EGM date for members vote and EGM presentation to them

EGM date: 2014 March 10, 19:00 to 21:00.

PH: What question will we ask the CaDAS members ?

Question to ask members: Do you want CaDAS to have at least one CaDAS representative on the board of the new entity running the planetarium ?

Representatives may be CaDAS chairman plus members put forward by him.

RC: People may say yes but then not volunteer. This may be a risk.

With CaDAS involved, there is at least a pool of potential volunteers.

After some discussion the agreement was to present our findings and plans to the membership in the first instance by sending it to them so they have time to reflect before the EGM: "This is our plan, do you have any objections ?".

Consequences of the decision have to be presented.

PRO: Free storage of equipment, free access to building.
CON: A lot of volunteer time will be needed.

YES → Things remain as normal

NO → Subscriptions may go up as the planetarium has to charge for storage and access

Information sent out to members: 1st week in March. The information should be sent off a few days before the EGM.

ACTION[ER, PH, IM]: Collate information together for evening presentation and abstract to be sent out.

2n: Provision in case of negative outcome of EGM vote

CaDAS members may be still part of the new body. However, they will be completely on their own and not linked to CaDAS. The provision on storage for CaDAS assets will remain a problem.

There may also be a problem in not being able to use the CaDAS account as a place to hold money until the new management body is established.

3. AOB

ER: Pole Star Planetarium has expressed interest in demonstrating a digital projector they have on offer. £1500 for a 5000 Lumen projector, plus £1000 for mirror system and £1000 for software.

End of meeting:22:52 UT.

This is version 2.3, produced 2014 March 03 by JS.