

Northumberland Astronomical Society



Constitution

September 25, 2011

1 Title

- 1.1 The Society shall be called Northumberland Astronomical Society, hereafter to be referred to as “the Society”.
- 1.2 The short version of the Society name, for use in logos and promotional materials shall be “NASTRO”.

2 Objects

- 2.1 The aims of the Society are
 - (a) to promote and encourage astronomy education within the Northumberland community.
 - (b) to bring together those with an interest in astronomy.
 - (c) to carry out observations and astronomical research.

3 Membership

- 3.1 Membership of the Society shall be open to any person, regardless of race, age, gender, or ability, who completes a membership application form and pays the relevant yearly subscription as determined by the Annual General Meeting of the Society Members.
- 3.2 A term or year of membership lasts from the November 1st of one calendar year to 31st October of the following calendar year.
- 3.3 There shall be six classes of membership available. These are:
 - (a) Full member
 - (b) Junior member (under 18 years of age)
 - (c) Family membership
 - (d) Senior citizen/unwaged
 - (e) Family membership unwaged
 - (f) Honorary member
- 3.4 The Committee reserves the right to ask for proof of eligibility for participation in family and/or unwaged memberships.
- 3.5 The membership year is divided into four quarters: (1) November to January, (2) February to April (3) May to July and (4) August to October.
- 3.6 New membership applications received during the first quarter require payment of 100%, the second quarter 75%, the third quarter 50% and the last quarter 25%, of the appropriate annual fee.
- 3.7 All existing members wishing to continue membership must apply for renewal of membership by paying the appropriate subscription fee, where applicable, at the end of the current membership year.
- 3.8 Existing members wishing to continue membership but unable to renew on time may request an additional ‘grace’ period until the Ordinary Meeting at the end of the following month. Membership will be deemed to have expired if no renewal is forthcoming at the end of this period.

- 3.9 Honorary Membership, which is membership without the need to pay fees, is granted or awarded by the Committee on a case by case basis. This award may be given for exceptional, consistent and long term work beneficial to the Society. The duration of the honorary membership is decided by the Committee.
- 3.10 Membership records will only contain information pertinent to that membership and will be treated with confidence. The Committee will make reasonable provision to safeguard those details. A member's details may only be made known outside of the Committee with that individual member's consent.
- 3.11 For ease of administration, reasonable steps will be taken to securely store electronic membership records and information. They will be held for the Society's purposes only. This information will be held confidential to the Society and will not be used for any other purpose.
- 3.12 The primary mode of communication between the Society and its members is electronic mail (email). It is the responsibility of the member to provide a valid email address.

4 Officers

- 4.1 The Officers of the Society are as follows
 - (a) President or Life President.
 - (b) Chairperson.
 - (c) Vice Chairperson.
 - (d) Secretary.
 - (e) Treasurer
 - (f) Events Officer
 - (g) Training Officer
 - (h) Members' Representative
 - (i) Observatory Caretaker

5 General Committee

- 5.1 A General Committee comprising of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Events Officer, Training Officer and Members' Representative of the Society shall control the affairs of the Society.
- 5.2 The General Committee shall meet at agreed intervals and not less than three times per year.
- 5.3 General Committee positions are to be elected positions. The Committee can only appoint positions if they become vacant during the Societal year.
- 5.4 The President and Observatory Caretaker may attend Committee meetings but shall not be entitled to a vote on the Committee.
- 5.5 The duties of the General Committee shall be:
 - (a) To control the affairs of the Society on behalf of the Members

- (b) To keep accurate accounts of the finances of the Society through the Treasurer. These should be available for reasonable inspection by Members and should be audited before every Annual General Meeting. The Society shall maintain a bank current account, which will require two signatures from the Authorised signature list for Society cheques.
- (c) To co-opt additional members onto the Committee if the Committee feels this is necessary. Co-opted members shall not be entitled to a vote on the Committee.
- (d) To make decisions on the basis of a simple majority vote cast for or against. In the case of equal votes, the Chairperson shall be entitled to a casting vote.

6 Meetings

- 6.1 The meetings of the Society shall consist of Ordinary Meetings (OM), Committee Meetings (CM), Annual General Meetings (AGM), Extraordinary Committee Meetings (ECM) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM). The venue for these meetings will be communicated to members at a Meeting and by email if one has been provided.
- 6.2 Ordinary Meetings are where all members are invited to attend, on the last Thursday of the month (except December) and the second Thursday of the month. Ordinary Meetings are where lectures and the like are given, constitutional changes voted upon, observing sessions held and Society matters are open to formal and informal discussion.
- 6.3 Committee Meetings are where matters arising in the running of the Society are open to both formal and informal discussion, resolution and action, where only the elected or appointed Committee members normally attend, and where other members may attend upon the Committee's invitation.
- 6.4 Extraordinary Committee Meetings (ECMs) are Committee meetings called for by any Committee member(s) for attention to any matters which are deemed necessary and cannot wait until the next Committee meeting.
- 6.5 Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) are where all members may attend to discuss and vote on such matters as may be deemed to require a decision of the whole membership, such as changing the Constitution.
- 6.6 Any of the above meetings will be chaired by a Committee member; this person in the Chair, hereinafter referred to as the Chairperson, shall direct the order of that meeting but will not vote (unless a casting vote is required). The Chairperson reserves the right to compel a disruptive member or visitor to leave that meeting.
- 6.7 The AGM shall be held at the end of October at the date of the OM, or at the next available OM if that is not possible. Notice of the AGM shall be given to members at no later than the corresponding meeting one month earlier. Notice will be given verbally to members, by email and by posting a notice on the Society website.
- 6.8 Members must advise the Secretary, by email, of any business to be moved at the AGM by the date of the prior meeting. The Committee has the discretion to move business deemed to require further substantial discussion to the next OM or an EGM following the AGM. The Secretary shall circulate or give notice of the agenda for the meeting to Members not less than seven days before the meeting.
- 6.9 The business of the AGM shall be to:
 - (a) Confirm the minutes of the previous AGM and any EGMs held since the last AGM.

- (b) Receive the audited accounts for the year from the Treasurer.
 - (c) Receive the annual reports of the Officers of the Committee.
 - (d) Elect the Officers of the Society and other Committee Members.
 - (e) Appoint an Observatory Caretaker from the membership and recommend the appointment of a President or Life President to the AGM (if the positions are vacant).
 - (f) Review subscription rates and agree them for the forthcoming year.
 - (g) Transact such other business received by the Secretary from Members.
- 6.10 A quorum for an OM shall be five Members and three Officers of the Society including two from the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.
- 6.11 At all OMs, the chair will be taken by the Chairperson or, in their absence, by the Vice Chairperson or a deputy appointed by the Society or by Members attending the meeting. An acting Chairperson shall only have a casting vote if one is needed.
- 6.12 The Committee may call for an EGM, either as a result of a decision taken during a Committee meeting, or on receipt by the Secretary of a request in writing from not less than three Members of the Society. Notice of the EGM must be given at the next OM. In all other respects an EGM follows the rules governing an AGM.

7 Voting

- 7.1 Decisions shall be made by a simple majority of votes cast for or against from those Members attending the meeting. Members may abstain from voting.
- 7.2 Election of Officers at the AGM must be conducted by ballot. Ballot papers should be made available and two temporary, independent (non-candidate) returning officers, appointed by the Committee, will count the votes.
- 7.3 Each eligible Member of the Society shall be entitled to one vote.
- 7.4 A Member must be aged 14 years old or over to become eligible for voting.
- 7.5 The Chairperson will not participate in voting unless votes are tied. In this case the Chairperson shall be entitled to a casting vote.

8 Election and appointment of Officers

- 8.1 All Officers, except the President and Observatory Caretaker, shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Society, from, and by, the Members of the Society.
- 8.2 All Officers, except the President, are elected for a period of one year, but may be re-elected to the same office or another office the following year.
- 8.3 The Committee shall be empowered to recommend to the AGM the appointment of a President or Life President. The President or Life President shall be an Honorary Member with the same privileges as an Ordinary Member. The President or Life President shall be entitled to attend all Committee meetings but will not be entitled to vote at those meetings.
- 8.4 Nomination of candidates for election of Officers shall be sent by email to the Secretary by the OM prior to the AGM. Nominations can only be made by Members and must be seconded by another Member.

- 8.5 Two members seeking nominations cannot engage in reciprocal proposing or seconding of the nomination of the other.

9 Alterations to the Constitution

- 9.1 Any proposed alterations to the Society Constitution may be considered at an OM, AGM or EGM convened with the required written notice of the proposal. Any alteration or amendment must be proposed by a Member of the Society and seconded by another Member. Such alterations shall be passed if supported by not less than two-thirds of those Members present at the meeting, assuming that a quorum has been achieved.

10 Discipline

- 10.1 Any member who acts in such a way as to contravene this Constitution, damage equipment, misappropriate Society funds or property, disrupt meetings, harass other members, or in any way acts irresponsibly, or brings the Society into disrepute with the public or its members, or acts in the opinion of the Committee, in any way outside of the spirit of the Society's aims, shall render themselves liable to disciplinary action.
- 10.2 Disciplinary action may entail withdrawal of certain privileges of membership or expulsion from the Society and any action resolved by the Committee will be final.
- 10.3 In the event that the Committee considers it appropriate to discipline or expel a member, the Committee shall invite the errant member to attend a Committee meeting or Extraordinary Committee Meeting, and shall inform the errant member, verbally or by email, by the date of the prior OM, along with the purpose of and the reasons for calling the meeting.
- 10.4 The errant member shall be invited, verbally or by email, to defend themselves at the above meeting.
- 10.5 If the member being disciplined does not attend the meeting without submitting good reason, in writing by way of a letter via recorded delivery to the committee, which will amount to proof of receipt by the Committee, the Committee reserves the right to conduct the meeting in that member's absence, the Committee reaching a decision regarding discipline or expulsion as the Committee deems necessary.
- 10.6 The Committee's decision shall be communicated to the errant member at the meeting or as soon as possible afterwards, either verbally or by email. The results of this meeting shall be communicated to members by email or verbally at the next Society meeting.
- 10.7 The errant member's actions will be deemed his or her own and the Society cannot be held responsible for them.

11 Dissolution

- 11.1 If, at any Ordinary Meeting of the Society, a resolution were passed calling for the dissolution of the Society, the Secretary shall immediately convene a Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society to be held not before the date of the OM in the following month.
- 11.2 If, at that EGM, the resolution is carried by at least two-thirds of the Members present at the meeting, the General Committee shall thereupon, or at such date

as shall have been specified in the resolution, proceed to realise the assets of the Society and discharge all debts and liabilities of the Society.

- 11.3 After discharging all debts and liabilities of the Society, the remaining assets shall not be paid or distributed amongst the Members of the Society, but shall be given or transferred to some other voluntary Society having objects similar to those of the Society.

A Duties of the elected Officers

Chairperson

- To chair meetings and ensure that the rules of the constitution are adhered to.
- To encourage the Committee and Membership to engage with the Objects of the Society.
- To act as a figure-head and spokesperson for the Society
- To act as a point of contact in the Society's relationship with the Northumberland Wildlife Trust.
- Liaise with the Vice-Chairperson and Committee over the timing and organisation of Committee Meetings and other Extraordinary meetings.
- Take the lead in applying for sources of funding.
- Organise the venue for Society meetings if necessary.
- Act as signatory for the Society bank account.
- Provide support to other committee members.

Vice Chairperson

- To deputise for the Chairperson.
- To liaise with other local astronomical societies.
- To co-ordinate the hire of the Society's instruments where available.
- Provide support to other committee members.

Secretary

- Maintain current email distribution list of members.
- Maintain appropriate members' record.
- Ensure FAS membership and details remain current.
- Receive and distribute FAS newsletter.
- Ensure public liability insurance remains current.
- Ensure observatory insurance remains current.

- Record, write and issue minutes of AGM, EGMs and ECMs.
- Issue notices and information to members regarding AGM, EGMs and ECMs.
- Collect and issue nominations for Officer positions for AGM.
- Send out information to members regarding meetings, information received from other sources and general information.
- Gather, collect and disseminate information as required.
- Act as signatory for bank account.
- Provide support to other committee members.

Treasurer

- To regulate and account for the Society's financial affairs.
- To advise the Committee of the financial position throughout the year.
- To ensure that payments are made promptly.
- Act as signatory for bank account.

Events Officer

- Plan and organise a calendar of events for the Ordinary Meetings.
- Seek out professional speakers from external organisations.
- Liaise with local community groups to instigate outreach events
- Liaise with the Committee and the membership to actively plan outreach opportunities with regard to the Objects of the Society.
- Gather feedback from members or participants in outreach for future planning
- The planning of social events.
- Communicate details of the events with the Secretary.
- Provide support to other committee members.

Training Officer

- To investigate and identify the training needs of the membership particularly in regard to achieving the Objects of the Society.
- Implement training sessions or programmes based on the current needs of the membership.
- Provide opportunities for members to become trained to use the observatory or other equipment.
- Provide input to the Society's outreach programme.
- Provide support to other committee members.

Members' Representative

- To liase with the general membership of the Society.
- To act as spokesperson for non-Committee members requests, proposals or other such affairs at Committee Meetings.