



CROYDON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31st MARCH 2024

1. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

REGISTRATION NUMBER: 1187803

LEGAL FORM: Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) formed under the Charities Act 2011 (the "Act").

CHARITY TRUSTEES (COMMITTEE): 10 (see section 3).

GOVERNING DOCUMENT: Constitution dated 7th Feb 2020 as amended on 5th June 2021.

OBJECTS: To advance education in the science of astronomy and related subjects for the public benefit in Croydon and the surrounding area by

- a) encouraging a popular interest in astronomy and allied subjects;
- b) helping beginners, irrespective of their age, to acquire a knowledge of astronomy and allied subjects; and
- c) providing facilities for practical work and active participation in astronomical observation.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: 31 as of 31st March 2024 (for the membership year to 31st August 2024).

BANKER: NatWest / Charities Aid Foundation.

WEBSITE: <https://croydonastro.org.uk>

1. ACTIVITIES IN PERIOD

The society meets for talks about astronomy (and related subjects) approximately every two weeks during school term time on a Thursday evening. The talks are held at a school located close to, and with good transport links with, central Croydon.

Our general aim is to alternate between having a 'short talks' meeting where two or three members of the society each present a short talk, and a 'long talk' meeting where we invite an expert third party speaker such as from a university or from another astronomical society. Increasingly external speakers join the meeting using Zoom.

As an ancillary activity, the society maintains the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory. The observatory dates from 1979 and is located on a small plot of land in a relatively dark sky location on Kenley historic aerodrome. The observatory site is within easy reach by car from central Croydon, but it is not close to public transport links.

- The observatory is open to the public every Saturday evening when it is clear and dark, provided qualified volunteers are available. Information about observatory openings and other outreach events is posted on the society's Facebook page and website.
- Pre-arranged visiting groups (youth organisations, schools, U3A etc) are welcomed at the observatory at other times during the week.

The croydonastro Forum (hosted on Google Groups) has been set up by members of the Society to allow current and previous members to discuss various aspects of astronomy and astrophotography. It should be noted that a few members of the Forum have never been a member of the Society.

The society is unusual amongst astronomical societies in that it is funded by donations from its members and visitors and does not charge a membership fee.

The society is a member of the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS). The society has not renewed its membership of the Federation of Astronomical Societies with effect from 1st April 2024.

Regular Activities

Talks Programme

- During the year to 31st March 2024 the society held 19 Thursday meetings (including the Annual General Meeting). Average attendance was 25.5 persons.
- From January 2024 the Thursday meetings have been held in the school's staff dining room. This is a larger and more informal location than the previous meeting room, and has the benefit of a higher definition video screen.

Norman Fisher Observatory

- *Outreach*
 - During the year to 31st March 2024:
 - the observatory was opened to the public 11 times with the number of visitors on each evening varying significantly with some evenings attracting in excess of 100 people!.
 - nine group visits took place comprising six visits from youth organisations, two visits from a local schools and one adult group.
 - There is a shortage of volunteers who are willing and able to run such outreach events at the observatory and, if this situation does not change, regrettably the society will need to scale back or even cease such activities entirely.
- *Members' Evening*
 - For several years it has been apparent that few members use the observatory. Those interested in observing or astrophotography generally prefer to use their own astronomical and photographic equipment choosing to set up at home (or another convenient location) rather than making the journey and then setting up at the observatory. With the change of the day of the week for talks to a Thursday in 2023, Friday evenings have been set aside as an informal Members Evening. So far, uptake has been quite limited.

Special Outreach Activities

Solar Observing Event

- The society hoped to run a mid-summer solar observing event at the observatory to allow the public to safely view the sun both in white light and in hydrogen alpha light. The first scheduled date had to be cancelled due to heavy rain. The event ran on the back-up date, but, despite promising weather forecasts, persistent cloud cover meant that the sun was only visible briefly. The event attracted around 10 visitors.

Astronomy at the RAF Kenley Historic Airfield

- Unfortunately, the society had to cancel its annual Perseid meteor shower event in August due to cloudy weather.

London Open House Festival Event

- The historic RAF Kenley airfield is recognised as the most intact fighter airfield remaining from World War 2 and was listed with the London Open House Festival which took place in September 2023. Recognising that this listing would attract additional visitors to the area, the society listed the Norman Fisher Observatory for one of the festival afternoons, and this attracted 25 visitors.

Other Notable Changes

During the period:

- Substantial maintenance work has taken place on the clubhouse. The felt roof was replaced and the heavily deteriorated plywood cladding on the east side of the clubhouse was replaced with shiplap.
- The dome doors were further reinforced with woodfiller.

Public Benefit

- Committee members confirm that they have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

2. COMMITTEE AND VOLUNTEERS

The society's Committee can have up to ten charity trustees.

- All Committee members (apart from the offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) retire at every AGM.
- Those holding the offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are required to retire at every second AGM, with the Chair and Treasurer retiring in the same year and the Secretary in the alternate year.
- Retiring trustees are immediately eligible for re-election.

Committee Members during the period 1st April 2023 to the date of this Trustees' Report

Name	Role as at the date of this report	Committee as at 1 st April 2023	New Joiners - Date Joined Committee	Date Left Committee	Committee as at the date of this report
Tony Roberts	Chair	•			•
Graham Cluer	Secretary & Outreach	•			•
Colin Weightman	Treasurer	•			•
Stefan Blakemore	Membership & Vice-Chair	•			•
Christopher Entwistle			14 Jun 23		•
Andrew Hossain			8 Jun 23		•
Gareth Howells			8 Jun 23		•
Laura Quayle		•			•
Carolyn Raishbrook		•			•
Paul Stenning		•			•
<i>Martin Gaiger</i>		•		8 Jun 23	
TOTAL		8	3	1	10

No charity trustee was paid during the period (other than for out-of-pocket expenses).

In addition to the Committee there were 5 volunteers.

3. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Basis of Accounting

- The society has elected to prepare accounts on a 'receipts and payments' basis.
- The 'Accumulated Fund' represents the cash at bank and in-hand adjusted for observatory key deposit liabilities and for significant accruals or prepayments (if any).
- The society's income is now reported using the categories set out in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS102).

Accounts Examiner

- It is our practice to ask a member of the society (the 'CAS Accounts Examiner') to examine the society's accounting records and confirm to the Committee that nothing has come to their attention that would cause them to believe in any material respect that accounting records were not kept in accordance with Section 130 of the Act, or that the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

Financial Review

We present on page 8 income and expenditure accounts for the year to 31st March 2024:

- During the period the society received income of £4,099 and incurred £3,453 in expenditure, giving an overall surplus of £646.
- As of 31st March 2024, the Accumulated Fund stood at £10,789 (after deduction of Observatory Key Deposits of £25 which are repayable by the society on the return of the keys).
- Income
 - Donations and legacies income is, in substance, a gift made to a charity on a voluntary basis, and which does not provide any significant benefit to the donor in return for their payment other than the knowledge that the charity must use the gift to further its purposes.
 - This includes online donations made through the CAF Donate system, Grey Box cash and contactless donations at Thursday meetings, and the observatory cash boxes. This also includes tax refunds under the Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS).
 - Included in the Other Donations is an amount of £60 which was a refund made under the Government's Coronavirus Additional Relief Fund to substantially offset the cost of business rates incurred in 2021.

- Charitable activities income is earned from the supply of goods or services under contractual arrangements for the charitable purposes of the charity.
 - This includes group visits to the observatory where the society sets a minimum required donation amount and donations for external talks. Also included in this category is income earned from refreshments provided at the Thursday meetings
- Investment Income represents the interest earned on the society's instant access Business Reserve Account.
- Expenditure
 - The computer and technology expense of £467 represents the purchase of an additional laptop for Thursday meetings. This is a reconditioned machine, and has a significantly higher specification than the existing club laptop which is slow to update and struggles to run Zoom software. The existing laptop remains satisfactory to run powerpoint presentations for group visits to the observatory.
 - The Observatory Buildings expense includes the costs of re-felting the roof of the clubhouse, replacing the outer sacrificial layer of plywood on the east side of the Clubhouse building and further strengthening the observatory dome doors with filler. The time expired fire extinguishers have been replaced with 'service-free' powder extinguishers.
 - Observatory Equipment expenditure of £300 represents the cost of the assessment of the condition of two Coronado Personal Solar Telescopes (PSTs) that were donated to the society and the repair of one, with the other deemed to be economically irreparable.
 - In April 2023 the rateable value of the Observatory Dome building was increased by the Valuation Office Agency to £1,325 from £650. Transitional arrangements have reduced the business rates that would have been payable for the financial year from £136 to £72.
 - Bank charges of £54 principally relate to the costs of using the CAF Donate system.
 - In September 2023 society has resigned from the Federation of Astronomical Societies public liability insurance (PLI) scheme and has put in place £10 million PLI and £10 million employers' liability insurance (ELI) through Hiscox Insurance. ELI is necessary to protect members who volunteer for the society and who would therefore not be covered by PLI.

Croydon Astronomical Society

Amounts in £

Income and Expenditure for	Year to 31-Mar-24	Year to 31-Mar-23
Income		
<i>Donations and Legacies</i>	3,326	3,771
CAF Donate	1,089	1,320
Grey Box (cash + contactless)	1,258	1,513
Observatory Cash Boxes	321	110
Other Donations and Legacies	80	247
Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme	578	581
<i>Charitable Activities</i>	654	951
Group Visit Donations	449	648
External Talk Donations	80	140
Refreshments	125	163
Other	-	0
<i>Investment Income</i>	119	20
Bank Interest	119	20
<i>Other Income</i>	-	-
Total Income	4,099	4,742
Expenditure		
<i>Cost of Thursday Meetings</i>		
Hall Hire	(840)	(990)
Speakers' Expenses	(207)	(115)
Cost of Refreshments	-	(60)
Computer and technology	(467)	-
Other	-	(18)
	<u>(1,513)</u>	<u>(1,183)</u>
<i>Kenley Observatory Maintenance & Costs</i>		
Observatory Buildings	(1,068)	(831)
Observatory Equipment	(300)	(200)
Electricity	(207)	(187)
Council Tax	(72)	(67)
Other	(72)	(15)
	<u>(1,719)</u>	<u>(1,300)</u>
<i>Other costs</i>		
Website, Email & Videoconferencing	-	(145)
Insurance	(151)	(32)
Membership Fees (FAS and SAGAS)	(15)	(45)
Bank Charges	(54)	(60)
Miscellaneous	-	-
	<u>(220)</u>	<u>(282)</u>
Total Expenditure	(3,453)	(2,765)
Surplus /(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure	646	1,978
Accumulated Fund as at	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-23
Carried Forward	<u>10,789</u>	<u>10,143</u>
<i>Represented by:</i>		
Cash at Bank and in Hand	10,814	10,143
Deduct: Observatory Key Deposits	(25)	-
Accumulated Fund	10,789	10,143

NB:- Columns may not add due to rounding.

Reserves Policy

- Committee is required to retain only those cash reserves that are appropriate to the society's needs and ambitions. However, in reviewing the amount of the reserves to be retained, Committee's aim is to ensure the society will be able to continue to fulfil its charitable objectives even if there is a temporary shortfall in donation income or if unexpected expenditure arises.
- A significant item of expense (and Committee time) is the ongoing maintenance of the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory. The observatory is located within a small fenced-in site within the RAF Kenley historic aerodrome with access provided by the London Loop long distance footpath which runs directly through the society's land. The observatory consists of a brick-built building with a fibreglass dome which was constructed in 1979 to house the society's then self-built 18-inch telescope, and a substantial self-built felt-roofed wooden clubhouse which was constructed and then extended in the 1990s. Additionally, there is a small commercially made fibreglass dome which is believed to be of a similar date to the clubhouse.
- The site is in an elevated and exposed position. The buildings are likely to require substantial future maintenance.
- Although the observatory and clubhouse were originally self-built, some items of ongoing building maintenance may need to be done professionally. The substantial costs of professional maintenance, the limited number of members who now use the facilities, and the shortage of volunteers to run outreach events at the Observatory need to be balanced against the society's other priorities, its limited income and Committee time. At some stage Committee may conclude that it is appropriate to reduce the size of the Observatory facilities, and funds will be required to make this adjustment.

This Trustees' Report and Accounts was approved by Committee on 23rd April 2024.

Signed: Tony Roberts, Chair

Colin Weightman, Treasurer