



# CROYDON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

## TRUSTEES' REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2025

### 1. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

<b>REGISTRATION NUMBER:</b>	1187803
<b>LEGAL FORM:</b>	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) formed under the Charities Act 2011 (the "Act").
<b>CHARITY TRUSTEES (COMMITTEE):</b>	7 as at the date of this report (see section 2).
<b>GOVERNING DOCUMENT:</b>	Constitution dated 7th Feb 2020 as amended on 5th June 2021.
<b>OBJECTS:</b>	<p>To advance education in the science of astronomy and related subjects for the public benefit in Croydon and the surrounding area by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) encouraging a popular interest in astronomy and allied subjects;</li><li>b) helping beginners, irrespective of their age, to acquire a knowledge of astronomy and allied subjects; and</li><li>c) providing facilities for practical work and active participation in astronomical observation.</li></ul>
<b>ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:</b>	82 as of 31st March 2025 (for the membership year to 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2025).
<b>BANKER:</b>	NatWest / Charities Aid Foundation / SumUp.
<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<a href="https://croydonastro.org.uk">https://croydonastro.org.uk</a>

## **1. SOCIETY ACTIVITIES**

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

As an ancillary activity, the society maintains the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory in a relatively dark sky location on Kenley historic aerodrome. The observatory is primarily used for outreach and is open to the public every Saturday evening from September to April provided the sky is clear and sufficient society volunteers are available. For larger scale public events (such as watching the Perseids meteor shower) the society uses the public perimeter track around Kenley airfield. Information about such outreach events is posted on the society's Facebook page and website. Visiting groups (youth organisations, schools, U3A etc) are welcomed by prior arrangement at the observatory on weekday evenings for a nominal minimum donation.

The observatory is also available for use by members of the society (with appropriate training). However, members who are interested in observing or astrophotography generally prefer to use their own equipment at home.

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 does not charge a membership fee, nor a fee to attend talks or to attend a public opening of the observatory. The society is funded by donations from its members and visitors.

The society is a member of the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS).

### **Public Benefit**

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

## **Activities During the Financial Year**

### *Talks Programme*

During the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 the public talks took place on Thursday evenings at Trinity School. With effect from May 2025, in response to feedback from members who generally preferred to meet on a Friday evening, the talks venue was moved to Shirley Methodist Church.

During the year the society held 19 meetings (including the Annual General Meeting). Average attendance was 20.8 persons.

### *Outreach at the Norman Fisher Observatory and Kenley airfield*

After a promising start in September and October, we found that the weather prevented us from opening the observatory at all for four months. Because of the limited opportunities to open on a Saturday, we did open on one Thursday (during the school holidays) and on one Sunday. Both times we attracted 80 or so visitors. On one occasion when we did open after a long period when we were closed, we had in the region of 450 visitors.

On two occasions (in May and in August) we were treated to seeing the aurora borealis. This is a rare occurrence for us as we are so far south.

Unfortunately, our planned dedicated solar observing day in July and our Perseid meteor shower observing session in August had to be cancelled due to the weather. However we ran an eclipse viewing in a park near central Croydon which attracted well over 100 visitors. We took part in the London Open House Festival weekend in September at which we also conducted some solar observing. We had approximately 25 visitors, many of whom had no previous interest in astronomy.

In October the society held an observation session at Kenley airfield to observe the comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS and this was attended by about 30 members of the public.

Sixteen observatory group visits took place comprising eight visits from youth organisations, three visits from local schools and five adult groups. In total we welcomed over 250 visitors. In addition three visits were made to groups at their own premises - two to children's groups and one to an adult group.

There is a shortage of volunteers who are willing and able to run such outreach events at the observatory and at the airfield, but we are seeking additional volunteers.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to the date of this Trustees' Report**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role as at the date of this report</b>	<b>Committee as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024</b>	<b>New Joiners - Date Joined Committee</b>	<b>Date Left Committee</b>	<b>Committee as at the date of this report</b>
<b>Tony Roberts</b>	Chair	•			•
<b>Graham Cluer</b>	Secretary & Outreach	•			•
<b>Colin Weightman</b>	Treasurer	•			•
<b>Stefan Blakemore</b>	Membership & Vice-Chair	•			•
<b>Christopher Entwistle</b>		•			•
<b>Laura Quayle</b>		•			•
<b>Carolyn Raishbrook</b>		•			•
<b>Paul Stenning</b>		•			•
<b>Andrew Hossain</b>		•		6 Jun 24	
<b>Gareth Howells</b>		•		6 Jun 24	
<b>TOTAL</b>		10		2	8

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

### **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).

#### **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 6 income and expenditure accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025:

- During the period the society received income of £4,738 and incurred £2,535 in expenditure, giving an overall surplus of £2,203.
- As of 31st March 2025, the Accumulated Fund stood at £12,992 (after deduction of observatory key deposits of £25 which are repayable by the society on the return of the keys).
- Explanatory notes to the accounts are set out on pages 7-9.

This Trustees' Report and Accounts was approved by Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Signed: Tony Roberts, Chair

Colin Weightman, Treasurer

# Croydon Astronomical Society

Amounts in £

## Income and Expenditure for

		Year to 31-Mar-25	Year to 31-Mar-24
<b>Income</b>	<b>Notes</b>		
<i>Donations and Legacies</i>	<b>1</b>	3,755	3,326
CAF Donate		1,305	1,089
Grey Box (cash + contactless)		1,027	1,258
Observatory (cash + contactless)		636	321
Other Donations and Legacies		50	80
Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme		737	578
<i>Charitable Activities</i>	<b>2</b>	860	654
Group Visit Donations		757	449
External Talk Donations		-	80
Refreshments		103	125
Other		-	-
<i>Investment Income</i>		124	119
Bank Interest		124	119
<i>Other Income</i>		-	-
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>4,738</b>	<b>4,099</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
<i>Talks</i>			
Room Hire	<b>3</b>	(972)	(840)
Speakers' Expenses		(139)	(207)
Cost of Refreshments		(52)	-
Computer and technology	<b>4</b>	(548)	(467)
Other		-	-
		<b>(1,711)</b>	<b>(1,514)</b>
<i>Kenley Observatory Maintenance &amp; Costs</i>			
Observatory Buildings		(20)	(1,068)
Observatory Equipment		-	(300)
Electricity		(210)	(207)
Non-Domestic Rates	<b>5</b>	(75)	(72)
Other		-	(72)
		<b>(305)</b>	<b>(1,719)</b>
<i>Other costs</i>			
Website, Email & Videoconferencing	<b>6</b>	(283)	-
Insurance (Public and Employers Liability)	<b>7</b>	(151)	(151)
Membership Fees - SAGAS		(15)	(15)
Bank Charges	<b>8</b>	(70)	(54)
Miscellaneous		-	-
		<b>(519)</b>	<b>(220)</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>(2,535)</b>	<b>(3,453)</b>
<b>Surplus /(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure</b>		<b>2,203</b>	<b>646</b>
<b>Accumulated Fund as at</b>		<b>31-Mar-25</b>	<b>31-Mar-24</b>
Carried Forward	<b>9</b>	<b>12,992</b>	<b>10,789</b>
<i>Represented by:</i>			
Cash at Bank and in Hand		13,017	10,814
Deduct: Deposits for Keys to Observatory		(25)	(25)
<b>Accumulated Fund</b>		<b>12,992</b>	<b>10,789</b>

NB:- Columns may not add due to rounding.

## **Notes to the accounts**

### **Note 1 – Donations and Legacies Income**

Donations and legacies income is, in substance, a gift made to the society 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 society must use the gift to further its purposes.

This includes online donations made through the CAF Donate system (a system set up by Charities Aid Foundation to process donations subject to Gift Aid), 'Grey Box' cash and contactless donations at the society's talks, and the observatory cash boxes and contactless donations.

This income category also includes tax refunds from HMRC under the Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS).

### **Note 2 – Charitable Activities Income**

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 also donations for talks given externally (if any).

Also included in this category is income earned from refreshments provided at the society's meetings.

### **Note 3 – Room hire for meetings**

The termly charge for room hire at Trinity School became subject to value added tax (VAT) for the autumn 2024 and spring 2025 terms. This is because Trinity School was required to register for VAT ahead of the requirement to charge VAT on tuition fees from January 2025.

### **Note 4 – Computer and Technology for Meetings**

A high-definition projector (cost £479) was purchased in preparation for the talks venue moving to Shirley Methodist Church. Additionally it was necessary to replace the Sum-Up contactless terminal at a cost of £69.

#### Note 5 – Non-Domestic Rates – Norman Fisher Observatory (NFO)

The Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023 (NDRA) introduced a new duty to ratepayers to provide the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) with information about themselves and their business, and also about their property to allow the VOA to establish an accurate rateable value.

It was discovered that the previous rateable values of the Norman Fisher Observatory (NFO) related to the Observatory Dome building alone and did not include the Clubhouse nor the Alan Treayes Dome.

The required information was provided to the VOA, and in May 2024 the rateable value of the NFO was re-assessed at £1,725.

At a rateable value of £1,725 the annual business rates cost for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 would have been £172 (0.499 small business rates multiplier less charitable relief of 80%). However transitional arrangements to moderate the speed of any increase in non-domestic rates have reduced the amount payable for the year to £75.

The NDRA has also reduced the period between valuations to three years (previously five), and so the next revaluation of the NFO will take place in 2026.

#### Note 6 – Website, Email and Video Conferencing

This comprises £259 payable to Wix to operate the society's website for three years to November 2027, and £24 payable to 3aIT to host the society's internet domain name *croydonastro.org.uk* for two years until October 2026.

#### Note 7 – Insurance

The society has put in place £10 million public liability insurance (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.

Committee has concluded that it is not possible to obtain insurance on the NFO buildings or contents at the NFO at an affordable cost.

## Note 8 – Bank Charges

Bank charges mainly relate to the costs of using the CAF Donate system.

## Note 9 – Accumulated Fund / 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 (the Alan Treayes 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.