

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SOCIETY'S MEMBERSHIP FEES

Issue: Should we increase our Membership Fees?

Recommendation: We should increase our Membership fees on a two tier basis, whereby members opting to receive the Journal only digitally pay £13 per annum while those receiving the printed Journal pay £18 per annum, with the new rate being implemented immediately for renewals and new subscriptions.

Discussion:

Our membership fee has been £10 per annum for UK residents since 2007. Membership of the Society enables individuals to support its activities, and have a say in what it does. Members are entitled to free entrance to the Herschel Museum, and pay a reduced entrance fee to attend our monthly lectures at the BRLSI.

Members also currently receive a copy by post of our biannual Journal, unless they have opted to receive just the digital version by email. While the Journal is a popular and useful way of communicating what the Society does, the costs of printing and distributing the printed version have recently amounted to 70% or more of the Society's subscription income of around £2000 per annum. This limits the funds available for more direct support for our Society's objects, and is not justifiable or sustainable in the longer term.

The Committee discussed various options to bring this more into balance. The simplest would probably be to increase our membership fee by a flat amount, to, say £15 per annum, which would still be much lower than other local astronomical societies, and would roughly reflect inflation since 2007. But we felt, on balance, that since the printed Journal is the cost driver, we should introduce a price differential whereby Members who wished to continue to receive the Journal in this form paid £5 more per annum, broadly reflecting cost per head. We also propose to remove the additional £3 p.a currently charged to members outside the UK and EU. While there are some additional postage costs for these members, they are also much less able to take advantage of the various discounts available for members in Bath. Taking these two points together, we propose that the fee should be increased to £13 pa (digital only) and £18 p.a. (printed journals) irrespective of geography. We propose to introduce the revised fee arrangement immediately for both renewals and new subscriptions.

We realise that this differential membership fee might in time diminish demand for the printed journal so much as to make it uneconomic. That is not our intention, but we recognise that it is a possibility, and of course a common problem in the age of digital media. We are clear that we will wish to continue the regular digital publication of our Journal in any event.

Charles Draper

Chairman