



Rules and Policies for Members of the Croydon Astronomical Society

1. Introduction and Objects

Croydon Astronomical Society (the society) is a charity registered in England and Wales (No: 1187803) and is regulated by the Charity Commission.

The objects of the society [C3] are to advance education in the science of astronomy and related subjects for the public benefit in Croydon and the surrounding area by

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

2. Activities

The society meets its objects through two main activities:-

- (1) We arrange public talks on astronomy and related subjects. These typically take place on a Friday evening during school term time in the Junior School Hall at the Royal Russell School. Members and visitors under the age of 16 are required to be accompanied by a responsible adult (such as a parent / carer / guardian or group leader);
- (2) We have a self-built observatory – the Norman Fisher Observatory - located within the conservation area of the historic airfield at Kenley. The observatory is open to the public every Saturday evening provided it is clear and dark, and sufficient Authorised Members (see Rule 11) are available. We also welcome pre-arranged visits from groups (scout movement, U3A etc). Outside these times the observatory is available to Authorised Members and to members (provided that there is an Authorised Member present). Members and visitors under the age of 16 are required to be accompanied by a responsible adult (such as a parent / carer / guardian or group leader);

The society also runs a web-based forum on google groups called “croydonastro” which is available to discuss aspects of astronomy – mostly astrophotography. Although the majority of those subscribed to the forum are current and past members, the society does allow others who have never previously had an association with the society to join.

3. Governance and Structure

The society is governed by the following documents which are available at <http://www.croydonastro.org.uk/membership.html> :-

- (1) the Constitution - references in this document to the relevant (and often more detailed) clause in the constitution is shown in square brackets prefixed by the letter “C” e.g. [C1];
- (2) rules and policies for members of the Croydon Astronomical Society (this document);

- (3) RRS Rules - rules for attending our Friday meetings at the Royal Russell School;
- (4) Observatory Rules - rules for attending the Norman Fisher Observatory at Kenley; and
- (5) Forum Rules - etiquette for using the society's web-based discussion forum.

If there is a conflict between any rule and the constitution, the constitution will prevail. The management of the society is vested in our Committee. Each member of the Committee is a "charity trustee" in the eyes of the law and have responsibilities under charities law [C12(1)].

The society is structured as a "Charitable Incorporated Organisation" (CIO) which means that the society has a separate legal personality to its members, and therefore its members and charity trustees have limited liability [C8].

4. Membership

- (1) Membership of the society is open to any person who is interested in furthering its purposes, and who, by applying for membership, has indicated his or her agreement to become a member and acceptance of the duty of members, which is "to exercise his or her powers as a member of the society in the way he or she decides in good faith would be most likely to further the purposes of the Society" [C9].

It is our policy that no one will be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, impairment, political or religious beliefs, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, language, HIV status, age or any other conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justified.

- (2) The society may confer life membership on any members who have contributed exceptional services to the society. Life members have the rights and obligations of being a member of the society, but are not required to renew their membership on an annual basis – although they are requested to let the society know if their contact details change.
- (3) The society may also confer country membership on any person who has contributed to the society, and who has subsequently moved away and therefore do not meet the membership requirement of living within a reasonable travelling distance of Croydon. Country members do not have the rights and obligations of being a member of the society [C9(6)]. Country members are not required to renew their membership on an annual basis, but are requested to let the society know if their contact details change.
- (4) The society may also confer honorary membership on any person who has made a contribution to astronomy. Honorary members do not have the rights and obligations of being a member of the society [C9(6)]. Honorary members are not required to renew their membership on an annual basis.

5. Conditions of Membership

- (1) The society's membership year runs from 1st September to 31st August the following year.
- (2) To either join the society or renew your membership for a further membership year, applicants are required to complete the society's membership / renewal form in respect of that membership year.
- (3) We operate a relaxed approach to joining and for membership renewals. However we do need to establish society membership ahead of general meetings and so:

- (a) we do not allow non-members to join the society within the 14 day period prior to any general meeting; and
 - (b) if a member (other than a Life, Country or Honorary member) has not renewed their membership prior to 14 days before the annual general meeting held in that membership year. they are deemed to have terminated their membership, but are welcome to rejoin the society after that annual general meeting has taken place.[S9(4)(a)(v)].
- (4) Further rules in relation to membership of the society (with the exception of Country or Honorary membership) are set out in the constitution [S9].
 - (5) Visitors often attend for a period of time whilst they determine whether membership of the society is suitable for them;

6. Membership Fee and Donations

- (1) The society does not charge an annual membership fee or an entrance fee to its Friday meetings or to public openings of the observatory but is financed by donations from its members and visitors and participation in the society's raffles.
- (2) Donations are often made at the same time as the membership application / renewal form is completed.
 - (a) If you can Gift Aid your donation, this allows the society to claim 25p from HMRC for every £1 of donation that you make.
- (3) Cash donations can also be made anonymously throughout the year in one of the society's donation boxes such as our "Little Grey Box" which is available at our Friday talks. We also have a donations box at the observatory.
- (4) Please note that when we open up the observatory for a pre-agreed visit from a group (which usually take place during the week) we ask for a donation of £3 per person.

7. The Committee of Charity Trustees

- (1) The management of the society is vested in a governing body of charity trustees which is called the Committee. The Committee consists of a minimum of three and a maximum of ten charity trustees. The functions, duties and eligibility requirements of the society's charity trustees are set out in [C12].
- (2) The key offices of the Committee are the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Other offices include Vice Chair, Programme Secretary, Membership Secretary and Outreach Co-ordinator..
- (3) With the exception of the charity trustees holding the offices of Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, each charity trustee must retire at each annual general meeting, and will immediately be eligible for reappointment. Each charity trustee holding the office of Chair, Treasurer or Secretary must retire at every alternate annual general meeting with the Chair and Treasurer retiring in the same year and the Secretary in the alternate year. Retiring trustees will continue from the annual general meeting until the immediately following committee meeting in an acting capacity only, pending the appointment of a successor.
- (4) Members are encouraged to consider standing for election to the Committee. If you are interested in joining the Committee as a charity trustee, you need to:
 - (a) confirm in writing that you have read the relevant sections in the constitution [C12 to C19];

- (b) have a proposer and seconder who are members of the Society; and
 - (c) confirm in writing that you are willing to stand as a committee member
 - (d) let the Secretary (for contact details see clause 14) know three weeks before the date of annual general meeting so that your name can be circulated with the papers for the meeting.
- (5) Additionally the Committee has the power to co-opt a member to fill a vacancy on the Committee and such appointees shall have the same voting rights as elected members. Such appointees shall always retire at the following annual general meeting [C13(6)].

8. Committee Meetings

- (1) Committee shall meet at least 6 times a year, with the first meeting being as soon as practicable after the annual general meeting. Meetings are usually held at the Observatory.
- (2) Members wishing to put items onto the Committee's agenda shall email the secretary (for contact details see clause 14).

9. Observatory Board

The Committee may delegate certain decisions relating to the maintenance and operation of the observatory to a sub-Committee called the Observatory Board. All members of the Observatory Board must also be charity trustees.

10. General Meetings and Financial Year

- (1) General meetings shall, except where the Committee may otherwise decide, be held in Croydon. The annual general meeting is expected to take place during May or June each year, and the date of the annual general meeting will be posted during April.
- (2) Formal notices of general meetings will be published at least 14 days in advance.
- (3) A member may request that additional items be added to the agenda by giving written notice to the Secretary (for contact details see clause 13), supported by two other members, at least 28 clear days before the date of the general meeting to allow the items to be included on the agenda of the meeting. In exceptional circumstances Committee may allow the item to be added to the agenda with less notice.
- (4) The society's financial year end is 31st March.

11. Volunteering

- (1) The society welcomes and relies on donations of time and expertise from its members.
- (2) In particular we would like assistance with
 - (a) Observatory maintenance
 - (b) Welcoming the public and visiting groups to the observatory
 - (c) Giving a talk at a Friday meeting

12. Members' Use of the Observatory

- (1) Members are required to comply with the Observatory Rules.
- (2) Only Authorised Members are allowed to use the equipment at the Observatory unsupervised, and provided the equipment is not being used for a Public opening or a visiting group. Any problems with the equipment should be reported to the Observatory Manager.
- (3) Members can become Authorised Members if they satisfy the Observatory Board that they are competent to operate the equipment at the Observatory.
- (4) Members' Equipment at Observatory – for those members who actively observe and/or image using the site at the Norman Fisher Observatory there is very limited capacity to store equipment at the Observatory. Any members wishing to leave their equipment at the Observatory:
 - (a) may only do so with the express written permission of the Observatory Board;
 - (b) must acknowledge in writing that their equipment is left at their own risk, and
 - (c) must remove their equipment within 21 days of being requested to do so.
 - (d) must clearly and robustly mark their equipment as belonging to that member.
- (5) Loan Equipment – Certain items of the society's equipment may be available to loan to a member subject to prior written approval from the Committee.
- (6) Observatory Keys – A limited number of Observatory Keys are available for Authorised Members on a one year loan subject to renewal every year – please approach the secretary (for contact details see clause 14) for details.

13. Policies

- (1) Members are required to comply with the society's policies as reviewed and updated from time to time. The policies are set out at <http://www.croydonastro.org.uk/membership.html>
- (2) Current Policies in Force
 - (a) Child Protection and Protection of Vulnerable Adults
 - (b) Use of Sky Laser pointers.

14. Contacting any member of the Committee

We are intending to issue new email addresses to committee members. However, in the mean time please use the "Contact" tab (Get In Touch (General Enquiry)) on the website: <https://astrocroydon.wixsite.com/mysite/contact> and please state who the message is for.

15. Complaints

- (1) Our procedure for dealing with complaints is set out in the constitution [C27].
- (2) The complaint should first be raised with the Committee before escalating further.
- (3) If you have a serious complaint about the society you can also raise the matter with the police, the fundraising regulator or the Charity Commission. Further information is set out on the following web-page - <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

16. Review and Document Ownership

The Committee will review these rules at least annually and update and amend as necessary.

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