

Constitution of North Essex Astronomical Society



Name

The Society shall be known as the North Essex Astronomical Society and is referred to below as 'the Society'.

The Organisation

The Society is a not-for-Profit alliance of individuals formed to promote, enable, and engage in astronomy for the benefit of the members.

Aims of the Society

Primary aims for members

- To foster an encouraging, friendly environment.
- To create the opportunities where members can learn and expand their knowledge of astronomy.
- Endeavour to provide access to observing facilities for members.

Secondary aims for Public

- Exchange of ideas and information about astronomy in general.
- Providing an astronomical education to the general public via meetings, news submissions to the media and talks to schools and other organisations.

Equal Opportunities

The Society will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexuality, disability, religious or political belief, pregnancy and maternity, marital status/civil partnership, or age.

Membership

- The Society shall be open to anyone with an interest in astronomy.
- The Society offers a range of memberships, these are detailed in the finance policy.
- The annual fee for membership is agreed at the AGM.
- Membership renewals are due annually twelve months from the start of their subscription. Members have one month to renew their subscription before benefits of membership are withdrawn. In the case of exceptional circumstances this period may be extended at the discretion of the Officers of the Society.
- Members must read to and agree to key documents as indicated when taking out membership and at renewal.

Membership specifically entitles you to:

- Use of the Society observatory
- Free newsletter via email
- Borrowing of society equipment: loan telescopes/equipment, books, magazines, etc. (subject to training and availability)
- Attendance at additional functions, events, and meetings
- Voting rights at AGM and EGM meetings

- Affiliated membership of societies, where available.

Ceasing Membership

Should a member wish to discontinue their membership, prior to renewal, then no fees will be returned.

Removal of Membership

The Committee shall have, at its absolute discretion, the power to remove from membership any person whose conduct at Society functions or elsewhere is objectionable, aggressive, or likely to bring the Society into disrepute. No such member shall have any claim on the Society for monies paid. That member or another member may appeal in writing against the decision within 28 days. The Code of Conduct gives further details on the process.

Annual/Extraordinary General Meetings

- The AGM will be held in September every year and should:
 - Receive minutes from the previous AGM.
 - Set annual subscription rate and other money due.
 - Statement of accounts
 - A summary of the year's activities
 - Allow discussion and resolutions from the general membership on the management and activities of the Society.
 - Elect Officers of the Committee and other committee positions.
- The outgoing Chairperson shall conduct the AGM until the new Committee has been elected.
- At the AGM every member has a vote in all matters apart from those that would make the committee personally financially liable, in which case the views of the society will be taken on board and the final vote will be with the committee. All motions will be passed by a simple majority, in the event of a tie the Chair will have the deciding vote.
- Extraordinary General Meetings may be called for on receipt of a written request from at least 10 percent of the members to the Chairperson, or by committee resolution. The Membership shall receive a minimum of 10 days advance warning of the EGM date.

Election of Committee

- All posts are up for re-election every year at the AGM. Notice for these posts will be sent out at least 6 weeks before the AGM commences.
- Nominations must be made up to one week before the start of the AGM/EGM. Nominations can be self-nominated. Nominated persons must be at least 18 years of age and can only sit on the committee if they are a paid member.
- Nominated persons will have the opportunity to address the membership and where there is more than one nominated person for a post then a vote will be held.
- Members will have the opportunity to vote by email (using the address we have on record for them) if they are unable to attend the meeting. Any email votes must be received before or on the day of the vote; any received after will not be counted. Proxy votes will not be allowed.
- If only one nomination is received for a post, then the nominated person will be elected to the post.

Committee and Committee Meetings

- The Committee will be elected at the AGM held every year.

- Committee meetings will be throughout the year. There will be a minimum of four per year. The dates and times are at the discretion of the committee. All meetings are led by the Chair. In their absence another officer of the committee will lead the meeting.
- Minutes will be available for inspection by all members and will be sent out as soon as possible by email
- The Committee shall comprise, as a minimum, a Chair, a Treasurer, and a Secretary, these are the officers
- Up to twelve more positions within the Committee exist. The exact titles and roles will be decided before the AGM. These roles may be elected at the AGM or co-opted. The total size of the Committee will not exceed fifteen members.
- Committee members are expected to read the key documents associated with being on the committee, these will be shared by the Officers.
- Positions can be co-opted at the discretion of the Committee in the fulfilment of the Society's aims; however, co-opted roles will be limited so that they cannot make up more than 50% of the Committee. Should we be in a position where more than 50% is required an EGM will be called.
- Decisions affecting the day by day running of the Society shall be made on the basis of one committee member, one vote, with a simple majority carrying the vote. In the event of a tie the Chair shall cast a deciding vote.
- The Committee may setup sub-committees involving the general membership of the Society to help fulfil the aims of the Society. A sub-committee will come up with their own terms of reference to help fulfil the aims of the Society, these terms will be ratified at the next full committee meeting.
- A standard quorum will be 50% of members of the committee. In unusual/urgent circumstances a lesser number may be accepted. In this latter case, all decisions taken will be reassessed and re-approved at the next full quorum meeting.
- A committee member shall cease to hold office if they are absent without the permission of the Committee from all their meetings held within a period of six consecutive months and the Committee resolve that their office be vacated.
- The Committee are to pay subscription fees, but at the reduced rate of half the standard rate.

Finances

- A bank account will be maintained on behalf of the group at a bank agreed by the Committee. There may be a PayPal account maintained by the Treasurer to allow for online transactions.
- All financial accounts will require two signatures one of whom will normally be the Treasurer. The signatories will be the Officers, they must not be related nor members of the same household; in extraordinary circumstances this could be someone outside of the officers.
- Records of income and expenditure will be maintained by the Treasurer and a financial statement given to each meeting.
- An annual statement of accounts will be presented to the Annual General Meeting.
- All money raised by the Society will be spent solely on the aims laid out in the constitution.

Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to the constitution may only be made at the Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting.

Any proposal to amend the constitution must be given to the Secretary in writing. The proposal must then be circulated with the notice of meeting.

Any proposal to amend the constitution will require a two thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote.

Dissolution

If a meeting, by simple majority, decides that it is necessary to close down the group it may call an Extraordinary General Meeting to do so. The sole business of this meeting will be to dissolve the group.

In the event of the society dissolving the following will happen

- Unspent grants will be offered back to the originating organisation(s).
- All debts will to be settled, subject to Society funds.
- Remaining assets will be offered for sale, and monies distributed to other organisations with similar aims. In the first instance the Committee will seek out local organisations. If the Committee identifies more than one organisation, the views of the membership will be sought.

Document History

Date	Author	Version	Comments
17/09/25	Clare Lauwerys	10	Number of committee meetings reduced from 6 to 4.
22/09/22	Clare Lauwerys	9	Dissolution Clause rewritten to be more precise
15/02/21	James Hannan, Cheryl Matthews, Clare Lauwerys, Andy Styles	8	Update to reflect the growing size of the society and to bring inconsistencies into line. Update to 'Aims' and 'Meetings'. Inclusion of 'Amendments to the Constitution', 'The Organisation' and 'Equal Opportunities'. Re-organisation of various bullet points to allow for better reading fluency. Levels of membership removed as these need to be more fluid and will be detailed in the finance policy.
3/8/18	James Hannan	7	Update on membership, no longer pro-rata, membership will be 12 months regardless on joining date.
5/8/16	James Hannan	6	Updated, highlighting key components that constitution was missing e.g. voting for new committee members