



Rules and Policies for Members of the Croydon Astronomical Society

1. Introduction and Objects

Croydon Astronomical Society (the society) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation 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 which are published on the society's website and on the society's Facebook page. These typically take place on a Thursday evening during school term time in the Staff Dining Room at Trinity School in Croydon (please see the website and a map of how to get to the Staff Dining Room from the school Main Reception in the appendix). 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 on Saturday evenings in the darker evenings between September to April provided the sky is clear and sufficient Authorised Members (see Rule 11) are available. We also welcome pre-arranged visits from groups (scout movement, U3A etc) and dates and times for these are posted on the Group Visit Calendar in the Observatory section of the society's website. 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);

Many members of the society subscribe to a web-based forum on google groups called "croydonastro" which is available to discuss aspects of astronomy – mostly astrophotography. Please note that although the majority of those subscribed to the forum are current and past members of the society, others who have never previously had an association with the society may join.

3. Governance and Structure

The society is governed by the following documents which are available at <https://www.croydonastro.org.uk/members-resources:->

- (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) Trinity Rules - rules for attending our Thursday meetings at the Trinity School; and
- (4) Observatory Rules - rules for attending the Norman Fisher Observatory at Kenley;

If there is a conflict between any rule and the society's constitution, the constitution will prevail.

The management of the society is vested in the 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.

We welcome membership applications and participation in the society's activities by members of other astronomical societies.

- (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. Members joining the society between the annual general meeting and 31st August will be deemed to have joined for the remainder of that membership year and also for the following membership year.
- (2) To either join the society or renew your membership for a further membership year, applicants are required to complete the society's online membership application form in respect of that membership year.
- (3) Unlike other astronomical societies, we operate a relaxed approach to joining and for membership renewals. However, for the purposes of voting, 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 clear day period prior to any general meeting. Any applications for membership made during this period will be considered after the annual general meeting; and
 - (b) if a member (other than a life member) has not renewed their membership prior to 14 clear days before the annual general meeting held in that membership year. their membership is deemed to have expired. However they are welcome to re-apply to the society after that annual general meeting has taken place.[S9(4)(a)(v)].
 - (c) Non-members are welcome to attend general meetings, but must not participate or vote.
- (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) Members should, at all times, show courtesy and respect to other members of the Society and to members of the public. No member shall act in a way that might cause the name of the society to fall into disrepute.

6. Membership Fee and Donations

- (1) The society does not charge an annual membership fee or an entrance fee to its Thursday meetings or to the public openings of its observatory. It is financed by donations from its members and visitors.
- (2) At the society's Thursday meetings there is a suggested donation amount of £3 (Please note that we charge 50p for refreshments). The donations can be made in cash using the wooden 'Little Grey Box' (which dates from the society's beginnings in 1956) or using contactless payment.
- (3) At the society's public openings of the observatory cash donations can be made using one of the donations boxes. A QR code allows a visitor to make a £5 donation using Apple Pay or Google Pay.
 - (a) 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 charge £3 per person (excluding leaders) with a minimum charge of £30.

- (4) Some members like to give one off donations. If you can Gift Aid your donation, as a registered charity, the society can claim 25p from HMRC for every £1 of donation that you make. To process Gift-Aided donations the society uses the CAF Donate online system (run by Charities Aid Foundation). A link to the society's CAF Donate page is available on the society's website.

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 at least 21 clear days before the date of annual general meeting so that your name, proposer and seconder 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 on Tuesday evenings using Microsoft Teams.
- (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. The majority of

members of the Observatory Board must be charity trustees and the Chair of the Observatory Board (Observatory Manager) must be a charity trustee.

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 late May or June each year, and the date of the annual general meeting will be posted at the latest during April.
- (2) Formal notices of general meetings will be published by email at least 14 days in advance with papers made available through the members resources section of the society's website.
- (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.
- (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 Thursday 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:
 - may only do so with the express written permission of the Observatory Manager;
 - must acknowledge in writing that their equipment is left at their own risk, and
 - must remove their equipment within 21 days of being requested to do so.
 - 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. A £25 deposit is required.

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 <https://www.croydonastro.org.uk/members-resources>
- (2) Current policies in force
 - (a) Rules for visiting the observatory
 - (b) Rules for visiting Trinity School
 - (c) Child Protection and Protection of Vulnerable Adults
 - (d) Use of Sky Laser pointers.
 - (e) Forum Etiquette
 - (f) Pre-booked Group visits
 - (g) Data Privacy Policy
 - (h) Website Cookie Policy
 - (i) Society Financial Policies
 - (j) Social Media Policy

14. Contacting any member of the Committee

You can contact us at chairman@croydonastro.org.uk, secretary@croydonastro.org.uk, treasurer@croydonastro.org.uk or membership@croydonastro.org.uk as appropriate, or please use the “Contact” tab on our website: <https://www.croydonastro.org.uk/contact-us> 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 bi-annually and update and amend as necessary.

Date written	January 2020
Date modified	October 2024
Document owner	Secretary
Date of next review	by October 2026

Appendix
Directions to the Staff Dining Room from the Main Reception of Trinity School

