

# SUTHERLAND TELESCOPE USERS' COMMITTEE (STUC)

## 19 FEBRUARY 2016 MEETING, HELD VIA SKYPE

### PRESENT:

Ted Williams (TW) (SAAO Director)  
Ramotholo Sefako (RS)  
Chris Engelbrecht (CE)  
John Menzies (JWM)  
Brian van Soelen (BvS)  
Nadeem Oozeer (NO)  
Amanda Sickafoose (AS)

### APOLOGIES:

Quentin Parker (QP)

**CHAIR:** Chris Engelbrecht (CE)

**Action items (for next meeting) in red**  
**Continuing items in blue**

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1. Welcome

2. Future meeting dates

CE – Dates set in advance for 2016, Thursday is not the best day. Teaching schedules may cause a problem. Propose third Monday or Tuesday in June and November, 10am. Next meeting scheduled for 21 June at 10:00 and 22 November at 10:00.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

Minutes circulated and approved.  
No objection to recording of minutes.

Action 2.6 – website links to other telescopes.

CE – sent the request to RS recently.

RS – it is on the SAAO website.

CE – add message to the STUC website that links to all telescopes on site can be found on the SAAO page. **Action: RS?**

BvS - Typo on the URL, the link does not work.

**Action – RS to fix typo.**

Action – list of publications

CE – who should request for publication information be sent to.

TW – new librarian and will be able to provide the information.

**Action: CE**

Action – Current membership and nominations

CE – need to get nominations now, must be discussed at June meeting for new membership.  
Further discussion under point 6 of the Agenda.

**Action: CE**

Action – replacement of Giraffe spectrograph

TW – A new spectrograph which will be low to medium resolution capability and will be used on several telescopes is being led by Lisa Crause in collaboration with Goettingen Univ and Univ of North Carolina.

CE – the action item relates to users providing input to their requirements, this has not been done.

TW – broadly solicit the community on instrumentation they would like to see developed on all the telescopes and that could include CE, AS and TW. If others need to be involved then that will happen.

CE – will initiate the discussion via email and a questionnaire can then be developed.

**Action: CE**

Item 12 – Science Advisory committee

TW – there is a draft ToR that has been sent to Nithaya Chetty for comment and approval. It is in progress and will be finalised once approval is received from Nithaya Chetty.

**Action (if NC has replied): TW?**

4. STUC Website and enhancement of communication with User community

CE – an address list of users has been created, propose to update annually with new users.

AS – allow users to request to be removed from the list.

CE – will add the option to the email. Initial email to users was sent out and 2 responses have been received.

**Action: CE**

5. Inputs from user community based on last minutes

Request from Vanessa McBride, email circulated to STUC.

TW – the goal is to make the 74inch remotely operable. There are software upgrades moving in that direction. There should also be an agreement with the astronomer on duty, but that would require a policy change and cooperation from the user.

CE – there is a formal procedure on the 40inch for service observing but not the same. Should the user community be canvassed or should the SAAO devise a policy to handle this request?

AS – other observatories have a notice allowing astronomers who have TOO precedence and the astronomer on duty is notified of this when awarded the time.

RS – there are challenges if instrument changes will be required.

**CE – revisit this topic every 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.**

TW – This can guide priority issues at SAAO and would welcome STUC input after consideration.

CE – should take this to the broader community

BvS – isn't the proposal for the new 1m to have the capability to do TOO.

AS – will happen the capability but further down the line.

**Action: CE – Alert users that minutes are on the website and direct them to the certain points where these items are raised.**

Request from Peter de Cat, pipeline reduction software.

RS – his request might be more related to software reduction software he could use.

AS – IT was looking into the problem, but no **staff** currently working on pipeline reduction software.

TW – possibility of one of the new PDP's who would be capable of working on this.

AS – there might be staff at SAAO who are able to assist him.

**Action – AS and RS to explore what would be possible.**

6. Nominations for next membership elections

CE – STUC must receive the names and prepare a shortlist to discuss at June meeting.

**Action – CE: STUC to approach users and to send nominations by 22 March**

7. Telescope Status / developments

CE – circulated document, Sutherland Telescope Activities, for discussion, this summarises the usage statistics.

TW – funding has been acquired to build a next generation polarimeter for the 40inch. The new 1m will be running before this is built. HIPPO will remain on the 1.9m.

CE – how does the committee feel about the amount of time that will be available to polarimetry, 3 main user telescopes or 1/3 of capacity measured by time will be used for polarimetry.

JWM – polarimeters can be used as photometers.

TW – include this in the survey to broader users.

**Action: CE**

AS - a fraction of time has been agreed to but other instruments are not ruled out.

CE – encourage users to provide graphs or interesting items from the telescopes and include KMTNet.

**Action: CE**

RS – the 74inch mirror was aluminised in November and was successful. This week the 40inch was successfully aluminised.

8. Instrumentation status / developments

CE – summary from Stephen Potter circulated via email for discussion and comments.

AS – significant work planned for engineering time in May. Currently working on the new 1m and ensuring dome was modified correctly, everything is proceeding. Instrumentation has been working on the commissioning instrument, the SHOC camera will be used with a moveable mount. WINCAM progressing well.

9. Software developments

AS – the SHOC software was overhauled and work is being finalised on this. Software updates will be done a few days before to avoid any problems or delays. Developing instrument diagnostic tools, and rolling out web-based software more generally across the observatory.

## 10. Status of the STAC

There has not been much flexibility for KMTNet time allocation.

RS – we have circulated a document describing KMTNet capabilities, but the user community needs more education about the opportunities. There are 71 users on the mailing list, but not all are active.

CE – 90% of proposals come from same national and international user groups.

TW – would like to see more subscriptions for the telescope from a broader user base.

CE – request users to post results from telescopes and this may draw more interest. A vibrant web presence will make people more aware worldwide, will work on making the website more visible.

**Action: CE**

## 11. Other issues

### 11.1 vehicles on site

A user has indicated that vehicles on site are very old and rust is building. There is no maintenance on the site vehicles and they feel unsafe. Request that vehicles be properly checked and maintenance undertaken.

CE – supports this request.

TW – the faults must be reported in the logs so that they can be followed up on. The SAAO does recognise that this is an urgent matter and has been raised through the step increase to the NRF, however funding has not been provided yet.

RS – will speak with site staff in Sutherland regarding the maintenance.

CE – The STUC should submit a formal letter in support of this request to the NRF.

**Action: CE**