



Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to April 30th 2023

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Annual Report for the year ended April 30th 2023

The Trustees of the Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period 1st May 2022 to 30th April 2023.

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name

Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society also known as NIAAS

Charity Number

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland, No. NIC100233

Inland Revenue Charity No. XT18196

Charity Trustees as of April 30th 2023

Mr Jonathan Bingham	Chairman
Mr Jason Christie	Vice- Chairman
Mr Stephen Beasant	Secretary
Mr Philip Matchett	Treasurer/Webmaster
Mr Lawrence Hanna	Committee member
Dr Jacqueline Crosby	Committee member
Mrs Geraldine Gribben	Committee member

Past Trustees

There have been no resignations during this season.

Advisors

Banking	Santander	PayPal (UK) Limited
	54 Main Street	5 New Street Square
	Larne	London
	Co.Antrim	EC4A 3TW
	BT40 1SS	
Insurance	Public Liability Insurance supplied by Policy Bee	

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document and Constitution

The Society is unincorporated, governed by a constitution adopted on 5th January 2009 and last amended 15th May 2014.

The Society is run entirely by its members who pay an annual membership donation

Trustee Selection and Management

The Society is managed by an elected committee, which consists of all the appointed trustees. The committee is elected at the AGM by the method noted in the constitution. A number of trustees also hold offices within the society as noted in the list of current trustees.

The committee typically meet at least four times in the society year.

At these meetings spending is discussed and approved. The meetings also offer a chance to discuss recent activities and planning of future activities. Outreach events and our programme are also normally on the agenda.

The committee also hold discussions on the running of the society in a private section of our forum.

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts are approved by the trustees and then presented to the committee at the Annual General Meeting.

Related Organisations

The NIAAS is a member of the Irish Federation of Astronomical Societies. Mr Stephen Beasant and Mr Jonathan Bingham are the society's representatives with this organisation.

The society's lectures are held at Ballyclare High School. The NIAAS hires the Lecture Theatre in the school from the school board.

Objectives and Activities

Charitable Objects

The object of the society as set out in its constitution is the advancement of education for the public benefit in astronomy and its associated sciences.

The society aims to promote astronomy as a recreational activity for its own sake but also aims to promote public awareness and understanding of science and the scientific method.

Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of the Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society confirm that they have complied with their duty regarding the Charity Commission's Guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has been fulfilled in the activities of the society in the year ending April 30th 2023.

In evaluating public benefit, the trustees note that membership of the society is open to all who share an interest in astronomy and its associated sciences. While we would encourage those with an interest in astronomy to join our ranks, we also strive to make our services and knowledge available to non-members.

Summary of Main Activities

The core activities of the society are:

- Delivery of a monthly meeting programme during our season covering a wide range of astronomical topics
- Offering support and advice to members of the public on matters related to astronomy
- Holding public events at key astronomical moments throughout the year
- Providing an outreach programme available to other organisations

Our philosophy is to offer access to all regardless of personal circumstances, race, gender, ability or faith. Although the society programme of meetings takes place in Ballyclare, Co. Antrim the society strives to hold events in all areas in Northern Ireland.

We do regular outreach events with organised groups such as schools, Scouts, BB, GB and more increasingly with National Trust locations. As well as doing talks at these organisations we also strive to bring our telescopes and do some visual observing.

We do not charge any fees to these organisations however voluntary donations at the events are readily accepted.

Achievements and Performance

Burr Point Event

We held a successful evening of astronomy outreach in conjunction with Ards and North Down Borough Council on Thursday 22nd September 2022. The society provided 8 telescopes with 100 people in attendance that were treated to views of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, along with a host of other objects in the sky on a beautiful clear September's evening. The event was a huge success and planning is in progress for another event this late summer at Burr Point.





Community Educational Outreach

A great example of our educational outreach events, took place at four children's organisations this year.

On Friday 24th November 2022 the NIAAS held a stargazing event for Bangor Scouts/Cubs Group. 15 to 20 children had the opportunity to see the night sky through our telescopes. As well as enjoying the views, they were treated to a live guided tour by our most experienced member.

On Friday 2nd December the NIAAS gave a talk to 25 very enthusiastic P3 children in Ballycraigy Primary School, it was enjoyed so much we were invited back on Monday 23rd January to give a talk to another 25 children of the P6 class.



On Friday 17th February 2023 the NIAAS visited the Coleraine Scouts. Unfortunately the evening was cloudy and wet so the telescope was set up inside. We gave an interactive presentation to over 20 children who were really enthusiastic and asked lots of questions.

At the other side of the age spectrum, our Secretary was invited to give talks at Bangor and Portstewart U3A groups. These are always well received and have become a bit of an annual event.

We have already been booked for more of these types of outreach events next season.

Public Events

We took part in two big public events this season:

22nd September 2022 – Burr Point Event (Details above)

23rd March 2023 – Irish Astronomy Week, stargazing at Armagh Planetarium

Meeting Programme

This season the society has put together another great mixture of speakers on varying subjects relating to astronomy. We had four new speakers to the society this season.

2022/2023 Season

September 5th - Stevie Beasant (NIAAS) – Autumn Skies and Observing

October 3rd - Dr. Meg Schwamb (QUB) - Satellite constellations and the impact on our night sky

November 7th – Prof. Chris Watson (QUB) - Habitability beyond our solar system

November 28th – NIAAS Beginners Night

December 5th - Dr. Samuel Grant (QUB) - Observing the modern sun

January 9th - Prof. Michael Burton (Armagh) - History of Armagh, Birr and Dunsink Observatories

February 6th - Prof. Francis Keenan (QUB) - The science of superheros

March 6th – Dr. David Eden (Armagh & UK) - Star formation in the milkyway and beyond

April 3rd – Dave Lillis (Limerick Astronomy Society) - Where is everybody?

May 15th – Members Talk – Derrick McCourt, Quiz – Philip Matchett & AGM

We are enjoying another good year of turnout at our meetings with an increase to an average of 35/45 attendees per night.

Members Events

Ballinskelligs Star Party (Kerry): 3 of our members travelled together and attended this star party this year. They reported back that they had another enjoyable time here.

Website and Social Media

The website and social media side of the society is a great way to communicate with the public and highlight what the society is all about! All these avenues are free to the public and open to all!

Forum: Our Forum is showing over 500 members and new members are joining to seek help and advice on equipment. This is also the place that society-observing sessions are announced.

Website: The website is the place to go to find out about the society, members of the public can join the society here and find out our contact details and the programme of meetings and events. We have a massive section on astronomy articles in our learning zone and an ever-growing gallery containing images, mostly taken from N.Ireland.

Facebook: We have over 1000 followers on Facebook now and this is a fantastic avenue for the society to advertise its events. As well as putting details of our events online, we also put up the latest astronomical news from around the Internet. It is a great way to notify people instantly of 'happening now' events like aurora notices. We get great feedback from our followers, and plenty of help is given out to questions such as 'what should I buy as my first telescope?'

Twitter: Our Twitter following is also growing steadily, we now have over 300. As with Facebook the same information is shared here!

Media

This year we have been advertising our meetings on the 'What's On NI' website.

The media is an important way of getting the NIAAS name out to the public and letting people know what we do.

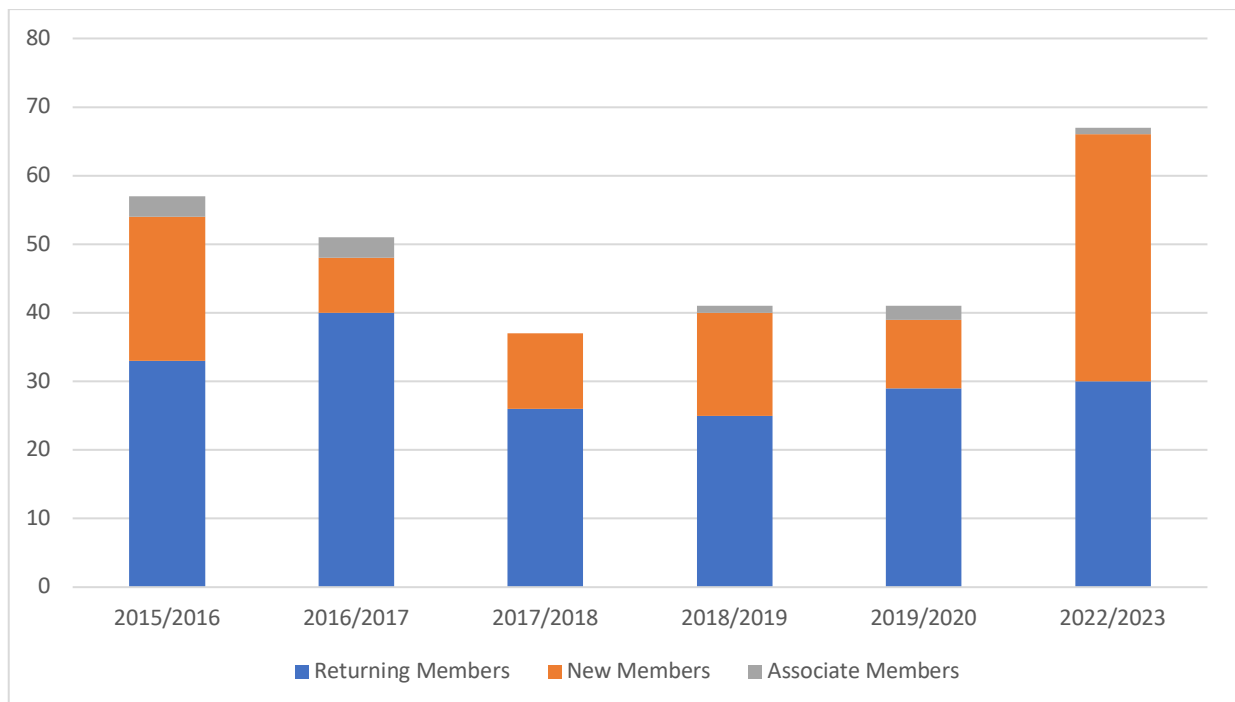
Membership

Total membership numbers are greatly increased on previous years. This year we welcomed a total of 67 members of whom 36 were new to the society. This is the highest number of members for many years. We are really pleased that there is still this high level of interest in astronomy and the NIAAS, especially since we haven't been able to hold any events for over 2 years because of Covid.

This year we awarded two long time members with honorary member status. In September 2022 Mr Ralph Gault and Mr Derrick McCourt were presented with gifts for their contribution to the society. They join our other two honorary members: Mr Robert Dick and Mr John McConnell.



Membership Trend Over the Last Six Seasons



Financial Review

Financial Management

This is the seventh year our finances will be presented to the Northern Ireland Charity Commission and in such will be undertaken in accordance with their requirements.

The General Fund is unrestricted and is used for the day-to-day running of the society.

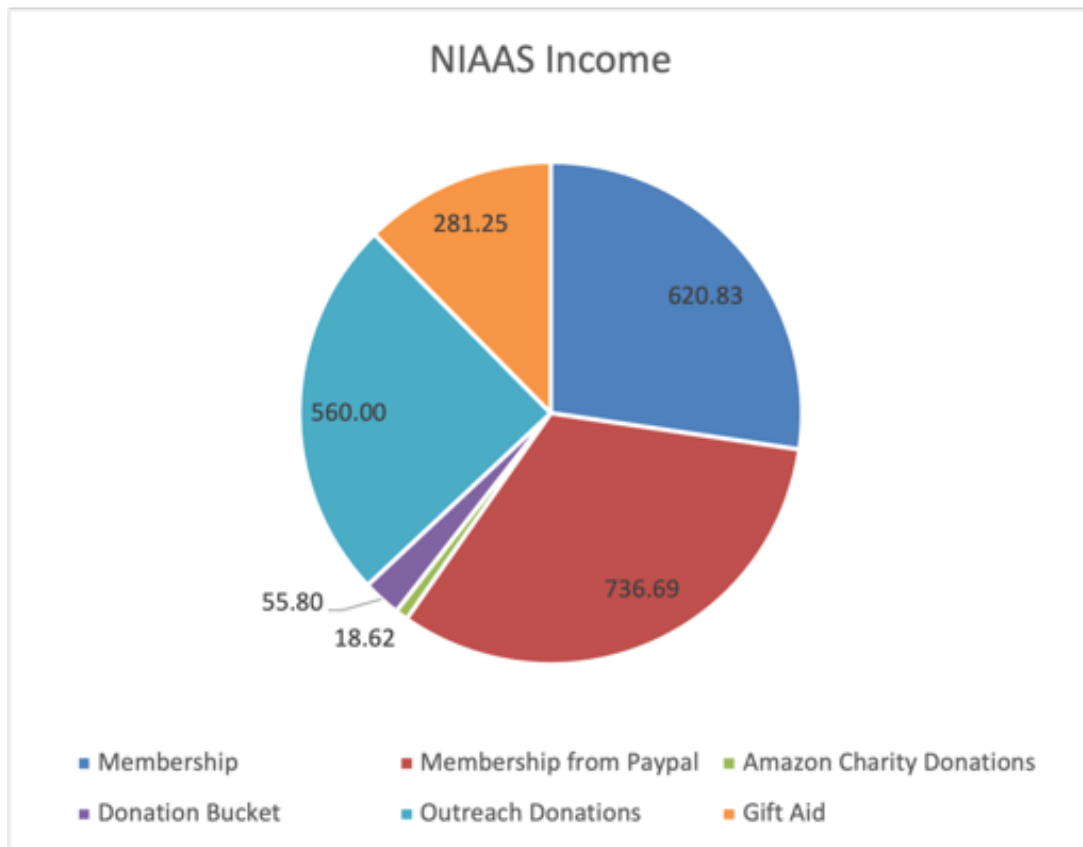
I'm pleased to say, for the first time we have received gift aid from HMRC to the sum of £281.25. This was claimed in January 2023 and I'd like to thank our members for allowing us to collect this on their tax paid.

Outreach donations came in at £560 and I'd like to thank these organisations for their very generous contribution. As always, we pride ourself as an organisation in not charging to hold events but are always welcome of donations to the society.

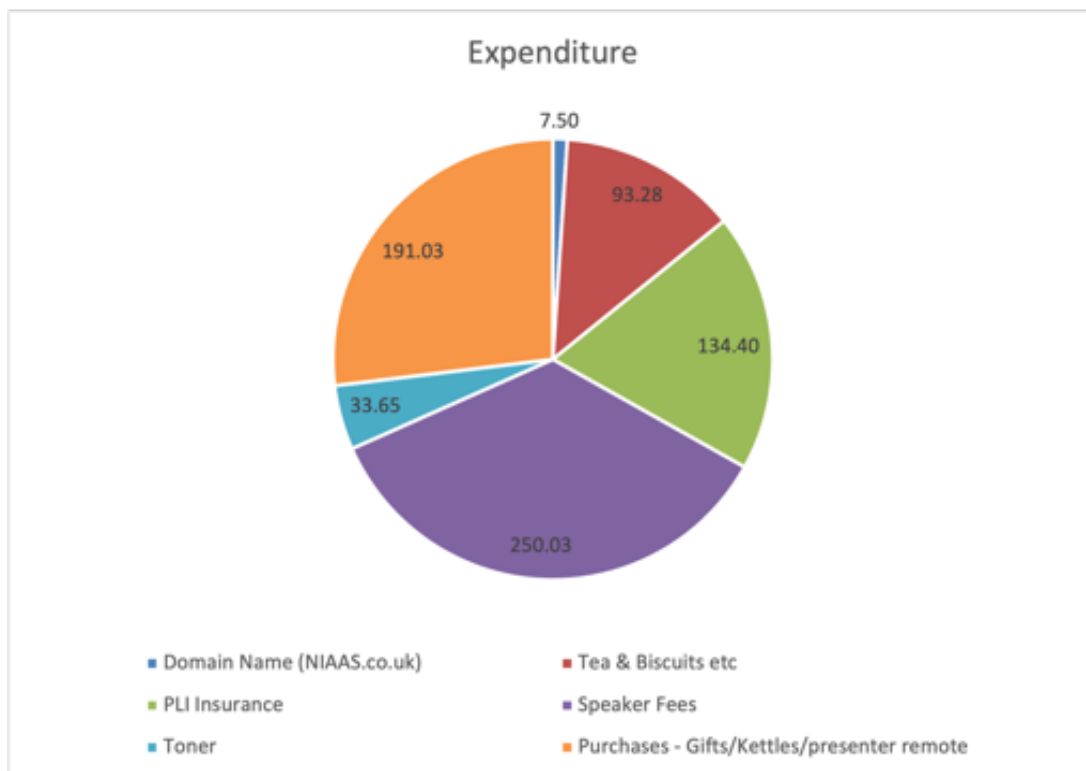
As expected, our largest expenditure this season was for speaker fees (Hotels, travel etc), this was £250.03 for the season. One point to note, which offsets these figures is that no payment has been made for hire of the school lecture theatre. This payment is always made in July/August and is paid post meetings, and since there wasn't any meetings last season, the finances are higher than they would normally be.

I would also like to again thank our website hosting company 34SP.com. They provide our website hosting for free, which is an annual saving of over £120.

Income



Expenditure



Accounts for the year ended April 30th 2023

NIAAS BALANCE SHEET FOR 1st May 2022 - 30th April 2023

Starting Balance in Bank Account	562.16
Petty Cash	244.83
Starting Total	£ 806.99

<u>Money In</u>			<u>Money Out</u>		
Membership	£	620.83	Hire of School Hall	£	0.00
Membership from Paypal	£	736.69	Domain Name (NIAAS.co.uk)	£	7.50
Amazon Charity Donations	£	18.62	Tea & Biscuits etc	£	93.28
Donation Bucket	£	55.80	PLI Insurance	£	134.40
Outreach Donations	£	560.00	Speaker Fees	£	250.03
Gift Aid	£	281.25	Toner	£	33.65
			Purchases - Gifts/Kettles/presenter remote	£	191.03
Total	£	2273.19	Total	£	709.89

starting total		806.99
plus income	+	2273.19
		£ 3080.18
minus outgoings	-	709.89
Final Balance	£	2370.29

Santander Account 2175.64
Petty Cash 194.65

Other Points

Child Protection Policy

The Society runs a child protection policy, with Mr Philip Matchett and Mrs Geraldine Gribben being the two named officers. I am pleased to say there have been no reported incidents!

Risks and Accidents

The society endeavours to carry out a risk assessment for any of their events and for the meetings at Ballyclare High School, Mr Jonathan Bingham and Mr Derrick McCourt are the named fire officers. We have a sign in book at every meeting in the event of a fire.

We are pleased to report that there haven't been any reported accidents this year!

Chairman's Note

After a two-year abeyance of holding our meetings due to covid 19 restrictions, I am pleased to say we got the club back up and running, holding monthly meetings this 2022/2023 season.

It was heartening to see a good interest in the club with regular and new members coming back to enjoy the friendly, relaxed atmosphere the club prides itself with! An excellent programme of speakers were provided and went down well with the members. Our beginner's night was a great success with a good variety of scopes on display and many questions answered.

Our bi-monthly newsletter Azimuth is produced throughout the season. I would like to thank both Mr. Stephen Beasant who is the editor and Mr Philip Matchett the publisher for their continued hard work.

The observing group made it out on a few occasions this season, with visits to Newferry and a new venue of Davagh OM Dark Sky Park outside Cookstown, this is a purpose-built facility with an observatory housed in its main building. There are purpose built observing areas in the carpark which suits our needs perfectly. It's an excellent site and central to all for members to meet up for observing sessions.

All members are encouraged to attend these sessions and to join the observing group.

I look forward to the 2023/2024 season ahead and especially welcoming back our members for another exciting season of meetings and events. Thank you for your ongoing contributions and support of the NIAAS.

Jonathan Bingham

NIAAS Chairman