



# Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society

## Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to April 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

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## Annual Report for the year ended April 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

The Trustees of the Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

## 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 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

<b>Mr Jonathan Bingham</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
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 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and last amended 15<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 2024.

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.

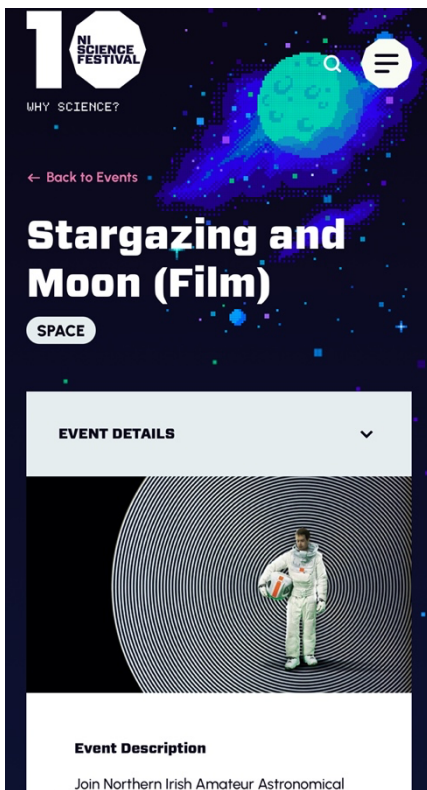
We do not charge any fees to these organisations however voluntary donations at the events are readily accepted.

## Achievements and Performance

### Old Church Event, Cushendun

We were pleased to take part in a new event this season at the Old Church, Cushendun. Thanks go to the National Trust for inviting us and hosting this event to be included as part of NI Science Week.

Several telescopes were setup in front of Glenmona House and just a short walk through the gardens NIAAS member Philip Matchett was giving a talk in the beautiful Old Church. The weather was a bit hit and miss on the night, but most of the 50 members of the public in attendance got a quick look through the telescopes. As you can see in the pictures, the event went down really well and the public got to finish off the evening with the film 'Moon' shown on a large screen in the Old Church.





### Community Educational Outreach

As you can see, the NIAAS really got out and about this season. Thanks to all our committee and members who helped out at these events. This is a record for community outreach events for the society.

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023, NIAAS Talk to 1<sup>st</sup> Antrim community group

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023, NIAAS Talk to Antrim Scouts @ All Saints Parish Centre

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023, NIAAS Talk to Portstewart U3A Group

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024, NIAAS Talk and Stargazing, North Belfast Girl Guide Group

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024, NIAAS Talk and Stargazing with Lurgan Cubs

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024, NIAAS Talk to Bangor U3A Group

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024, NIAAS talk to Ballymena Probus Group

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



Pictures from the Lurgan Cubs Event



## Public Events

We took part in four public events this season:

25th August 2023 – Stargazing event with the National Trust @ Mussenden Temple and Downhill Demesne (50 people were in attendance)

1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 – Stargazing event @ Burr Point with the Bangor/Ards Council (100 people were in attendance)

16<sup>th</sup> February 2024 – Stargazing event with the National Trust for NI Science Festival @ the Old Church, Cushendun (50 people were in attendance)

24<sup>th</sup> March 2024 – Irish Astronomy Week, talk in Ballymena Library (15 people were in attendance)

## 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.

2023/2024 Season

September 4<sup>th</sup> – Lawrence Hanna & Stevie Beasant (NIAAS) – Novae and Supernovae Types & The Summer Triangle

October 2<sup>nd</sup> - Dr. Ernst de Mooij (QUB) – Investigating the Atmospheres of Alien Worlds

November 6<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Jorick Vink (AOP) – First Light with the James Webb Telescope

November 20<sup>th</sup> – NIAAS Beginners Night

December 4<sup>th</sup> - Dr. Marc Sarzi (AOP) – Integral – Field Spectroscopy in Astronomy

January 8<sup>th</sup> – Philip Matchett, Simon Slone, Neil Patterson (NIAAS) – What type of amateur telescope is the best? – The Big Debate

February 5<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Matt Nicholl (QUB) – Fantastic Bursts and Where to Find Them

March 4<sup>th</sup> – Dave Lillis (Limerick Astronomy Society) – In the Shadow of the Earth – A trip through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Lunar Eclipses

April 8<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Stefano Bagnulo (AOP) – Night Time Astronomy with Sunglasses

May 13<sup>th</sup> – Members Talk – Stevie Beasant & 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

The observing group made it out as often as the weather permitted, although it has been disappointing weatherwise in recent times.

A group of members made a trip to Donegal this year, the search for the best dark skies is still ongoing!

## 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 620 members and new members are joining to seek help and advice on equipment. This is also the place that members can buy and sell their equipment.

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 1.8K 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?'

X: Our X following is also growing steadily, we now have over 400. 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 NIAAS society was included in BBC Sky at Night magazine in their Society in Focus Section

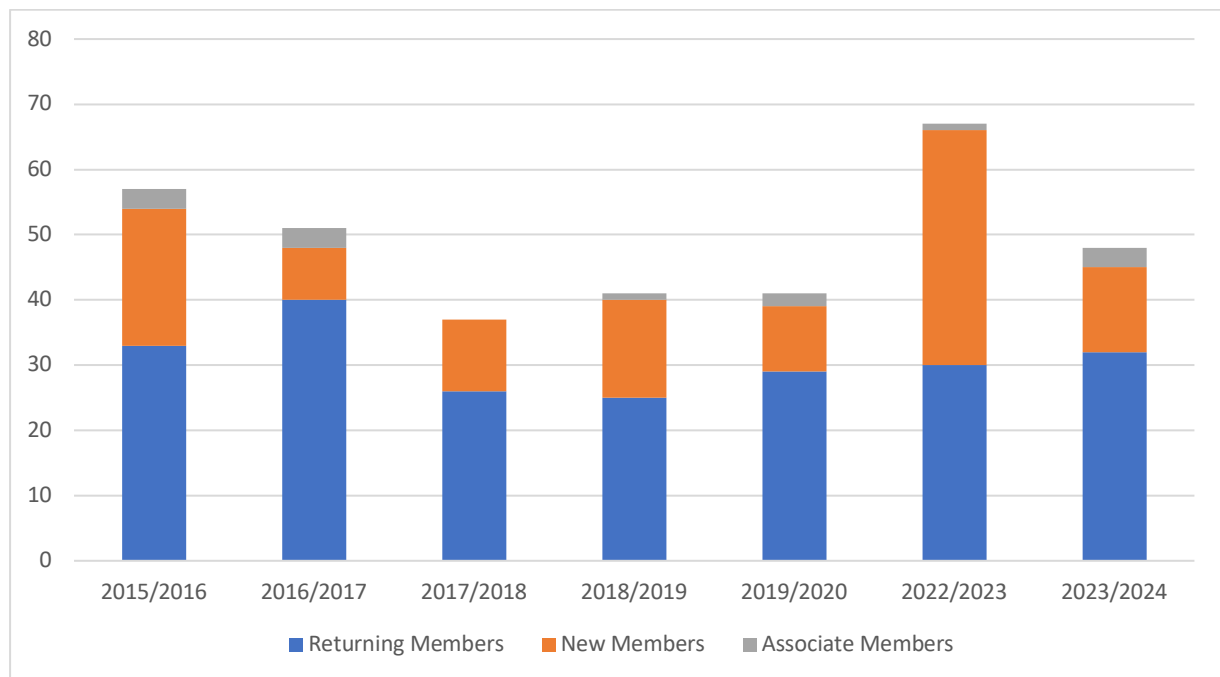
Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 NIAAS Chairman Jonathan Bingham was interviewed on Highland Radio Donegal, the topic being the solar eclipse.

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 down slightly on last year, but are still higher than before Covid. This year we welcomed a total of 48 members of whom 13 were new to the society. We are really pleased that there is still this high level of interest in astronomy and the NIAAS.

### Membership Trend Over the Last Six Seasons



## Financial Review

### Financial Management

This is the eighth 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 second time we have received gift aid from HMRC to the sum of £245.81. This was claimed in January 2024 and I'd like to thank our members for allowing us to collect this on their tax paid.

Outreach donations came in at £790 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.

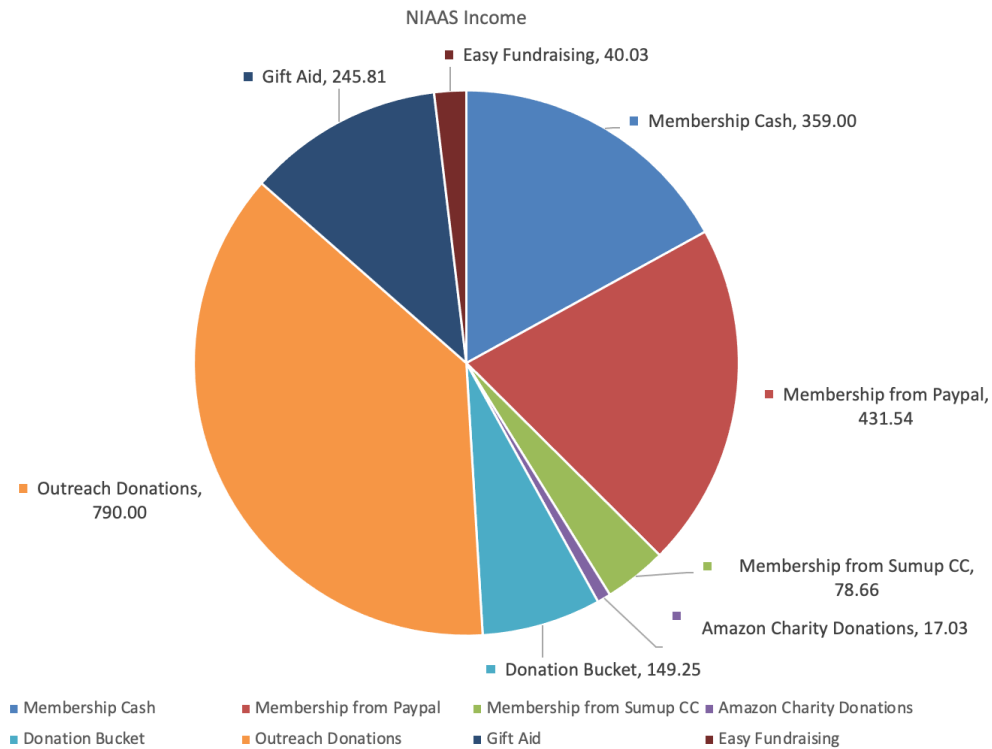
As expected, our largest expenditure this season was for the hire of the school hall, a deduction missing from last year's expenditure because of Covid and is post meetings, this was £450 for the season.

The second highest expenditure was for speaker fees, which included an overnight stay in a hotel, fuel and a meal.

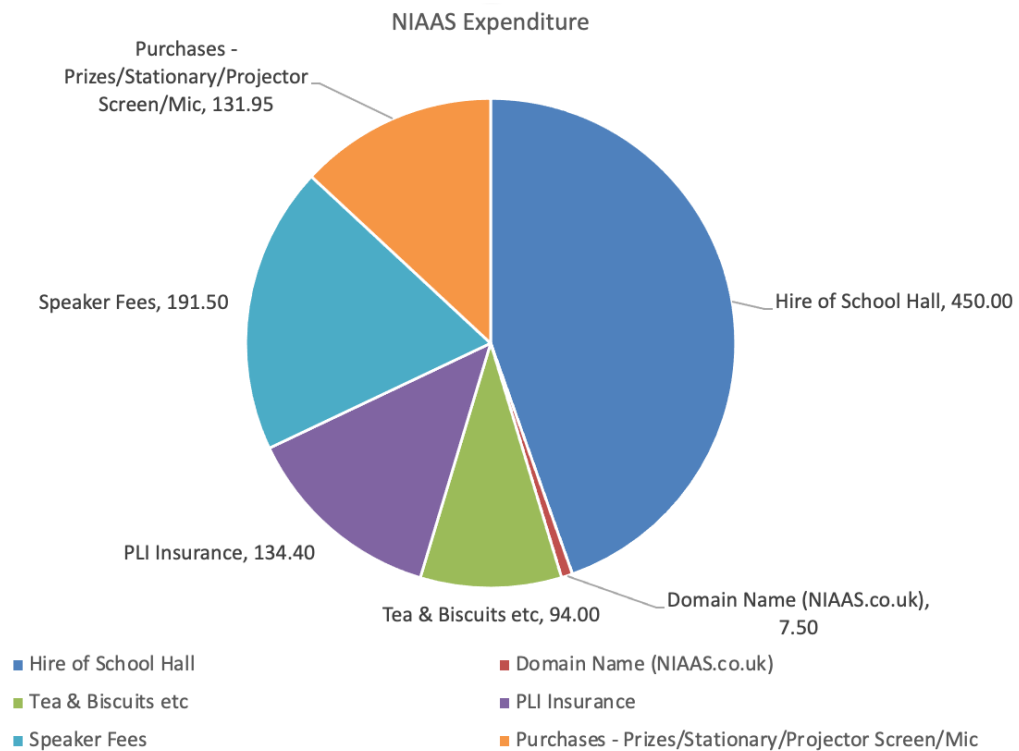
We made some additional purchases this season, notably a projector screen for outreach events and a new head microphone for our lectures. Both have become a valuable asset to the society.

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





## Chairman's Note

This season has been a great success.

We had a good variety of speakers throughout the season, from Queens University, Armagh observatory and Limerick.

There were also talks by society members, attendance was very steady throughout the season with several new members coming along on a regular basis.

There were several outreach events throughout the season, with request now picking up after the lull due to the pandemic.

These events are an important part of our society, and everyone who participated in them thoroughly enjoyed it.

The society magazine, Azimuth, was published every two months.

The observing group made it out as often as the weather permitted, although it has been disappointing weatherwise in recent times.

We are looking forward to the 2024/2025 season, and we are already looking at speakers for the new season.

I'd like to thank Abigail Matchett who volunteered with us for 3 months as part of her Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Thanks to all our members for their support and contributions to the society over the year.

Jonathan Bingham

NIAAS Chairman