

2021 ASDC Annual General Meeting - Minutes

Wednesday 1st September 2021, 10.30am – 12.00pm

Venue: Zoom

Time	Topic
10.30	<p>Welcome and Chair's report</p> <p>Stephen Breslin (CEO, Glasgow Science Centre and Chair of the ASDC Board)</p> <p>Stephen Breslin (CEO, Glasgow Science Centre) opened the AGM by reflecting on the year past, team changes and recognising the work of the former CEO Dr Penny Fidler who stepped down in April 2020 and now has a baby girl. Stephen also thanked his predecessor Ben Ward for all the work he did as part of the campaign Science Centres for our Future, Ben stepped down as Chair of the Board of Trustees at the beginning of the year. It was noted that Abi Ashton, Project Manager at ASDC has moved on to a role at Edinburgh Royal Observatory.</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were approved.</p> <p>Stephen went on to thank the current team for their resilience and hard work on behalf of the sector and handed to the Acting CEO Shaaron Leverment for the report on ASDC activity.</p>
	<p>CEO's summary of the year, Shaaron Leverment ASDC</p> <p>The UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC) exists to serve and support the ASDC membership by fostering learning, innovation and shared practice within the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education and engagement for the public benefit. The ASDC membership includes independent and non-independent UK science centres, science museums, environment centres (e.g. eco-attractions), learned societies and research councils. In recent years, together the ASDC network has engaged over 25 million people each year, with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) through their science exhibitions and activities via school, public and community engagement programmes.</p> <p>Since the April 2021 Board meeting, ASDC has lost 2 key full-time members of the team: Dr Penny Fidler (CEO) and Abi Ashton (Project Manager).</p> <p>Current staff members (as of 1st September 2021) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaaron Leverment, Acting CEO: 0.8 FTE • Cait Campbell, Project Manager: Full time • Rachael Tapping, Communication & Digital Manager: 0.8 FTE • Two new members joining the team part time <p>Shaaron thanked her team members for their work and support throughout the past few months. Shaaron also thanked the supportive board of trustees and in his absence thanked Ben Ward, CEO of Winchester science centre who worked tirelessly as Chair of ASDC during 2020.</p> <p>Thanks Stephen Breslin and Donna Speed who have stepped into the chair and deputy chair role for the organisation this spring.</p>

	<p>During this period of change ASDC has refreshed the organisation's Vision and Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Vision is of a society where science is accessible, inclusive and valued by all as a fundamental part of everyday life. • Our Mission is to champion our members, bringing them together to achieve collective impact and reach through connection, advocacy and insight • Our Core Values are at the heart of our organisation; they define who we are, how we work, what we believe in and stand for: Inclusion - Collaboration - Connection - Sustainability - Curiosity - Innovation
	<p>ASDC Performance 2020-2021</p> <p>Response to Coronavirus (support and advocacy)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2020, and throughout the year, ASDC played a central leadership and support role for UK Science and Discovery centres, by re-focusing significant resource running weekly, then bi-weekly, national Coronavirus resilience meetings. • These meetings were open to the wider sector and ASDC collated hundreds of resources such as re-opening guidelines, latest information on announcements of funding, and strategies to support staff at all levels. • Resources can all still be found in the National Impact section of the ASDC website. • ASDC collated UK-wide data, providing it to senior government officials to lobby for funding to support the sector. • As part of the lobbying, we launched the campaign 'Science Centres For Our Future' with an open letter to Boris Johnson, Rishi Sunak and Alok Sharma, signed by over 150 leading scientists and business leaders. • Lobbying continues, with a Parliamentary debate held on 24th March 2021 secured by Dr Ben Spencer MP celebrating the importance of science and discovery centres in supporting education in science, and broadening access to future careers in STEM. <p>Following the debate, further meetings have been held, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28th June, Shaaron Leverment and Chas Bishop virtually met with Michelle Donelan MP (Minister for Universities), Caroline Dinenage MP (Minister for Digital and Culture) and Amanda Solloway MP (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation) and Ben Spencer MP • 17th August, Shaaron Leverment, Chas Bishop and Bridget Holligan met again with Ben Spencer MP <p>ASDC continues to champion the impact of the national ASDC membership for wider recognition for the sector.</p>
	<p>Bringing the membership together, to share knowledge, ideas and inspiring practice</p> <p>ASDC also convened a variety of professional development and knowledge exchange events, meetings and conference calls for science engagement practitioners across the UK. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing together the education practitioners to support the background technology for delivering professional, interactive digital school engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wellbeing session for staff in centres or on furlough. Our main conference was cancelled in 2020, but knowledge and information share continued with our weekly coronavirus resilience calls, and newly created web resources such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The accessibility website developed with support from STFC, launched in 2020 and recently refreshed, this website driven by volunteers on furlough from Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium, raises awareness and shares good practice to support science and discovery centres on their journey to becoming fully accessible social spaces for children and adults with additional needs. ○ The Climate Hub supported by The Scottish Government. A hub for science engagement professionals to share activities, shows, resources and digital materials to engage children and families with climate change. Following Rachael Tapping, who joined our team March 2020, there is a continued, increasing commitment to regular communications with members across digital platforms such as the ASDC newsletter and social media channels Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.
	<p>National and International STEM Programmes</p> <p>Despite closures, the team continued to work closely with centres to deliver 12 national and international projects during this timeframe. The national impact of these programmes, and their ongoing success, is testament to the ingenuity, adaptability and perseverance of the staff within science centres this year. Science centres and museums have adapted content and expanded their delivery, structurally shifting to serve the needs of the communities they are prioritising.</p> <p>A full list of all successfully delivered national and international STEM programmes 2020-2021:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Destination Space 2B: A national space exploration programme funded by the UK Space Agency 2. Destination Space 2C: A Spaceports programme for remote communities 3. Explore Your Universe: Phase 4, funded by STFC 4. Operation Earth: A National Environment Programme funded by NERC 5. Project Inspire, the Digital Engagement and Leadership Programme 6. Equity@Ecsite international inclusion framework, funded by Ecsite 7. The Climate Hub, supported by The Scottish Government 8. The Audience and Impact Research Programme, funded by UKRI 9. Science Museum Group Academy (Science Capital in Practice) 10. Mars – Artwork by Luke Jerram 11. The STFC 2020 Programme (Community Partnerships and best practice) 12. The STFC 2021 Programme (Supporting the Digital Divide)
	<p>Future Insights Membership</p> <p>As of 1st September 2021, ASDC has a strong current membership of 41. New members (2021-2022) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armagh Observatory and Planetarium • Centre of the Cell • Lakeland Wildlife (returning members) • The Scottish Seabird Centre (returning members)

[Listening to our Membership – survey results](#)

During this last quarter, ASDC has been committed to listening to the voice of all team members, our trustees and membership. We have conducted informal Interviews with members (CEOs, senior management) outside of the 'usual suspects' to understand the value of membership for them, alongside a light-touch, anonymous membership survey to reach levels within science centres:

41 respondents from 31 Science Centres have exposed a great deal of value in ASDC alongside areas where we could do better.

- 89.5% felt that ASDC supported their team in achieving their centres mission.

Of those that disagreed, comments added included that:

- ASDC is at times too English focused, not recognising the differences within the devolved nations
- ASDC feels like an organisation for the larger science centres and the 'usual suspects'
- That the sector is not just science centres but also science museums

Wider opportunities that ASDC could provide and will be considered included:

- Supporting funding to reach diverse audiences
- Support to write better applications using the experience of members
- Support to share ideas and navigate the sustainability of operations in an increasingly digital world
- Benchmarking against other science centres for activities and knowledge sharing

The most valued benefits of ASDC membership and where we will focus our current efforts:

1. Networking opportunities (87.7%)
2. Being part of ASDC Projects (75.6%)
3. Opportunities for CPD (56.1%)

[1. Networking opportunities](#)

ASDC is restarting opportunities for sector-wide virtual meetings to bring together communities of practice within the membership. These meetings will be on requested and urgent topics for discussion, taking place monthly on the first Wednesday of every month:

- 1st September – ASDC members forum 'reopening strategies'
- 6th October – ASDC members forum 'measuring impact'
- 3rd November – ASDC members forum 'increasing staff diversity'

The ASDC 2021 National Conference is running virtually (online) with the theme 'Sustainable Futures' on 24th & 25th November.

Three key strands have been highlighted from this theme, currently still open for members submissions:

- Sustainable Futures: Resilience
- Sustainable Futures: Diversity
- Sustainable Futures: Environment

2. ASDC Projects

ASDC continues to run National Programmes that align with our vision, mission and values. Operation Earth and Destination Space have new phases open for applications currently. Explore Your Universe and Project Inspire is also in delivery.

Projects enable us to deliver sector-wide support, share knowledge, bring together communities of practice, and contribute to the sustainability of the charity.

However, we also recognise the urgency to explore more opportunities for core funding as a reliance on project delivery presents risks to the charity, is not sustainable and not what the membership requires of us.

3. CPD Opportunities

An opportunity for future exploration is providing professional development courses for the sector. The data and evaluation from the current Emerging Leaders Programme will help inform our future decisions.

Finally

ASDC reserves, as of 31st March 2021, were £218,446 pounds. These reserves are reduced from March 2020, which is likely to be a common narrative across the sector. The full presentation and consideration of the annual accounts for 2020-21 followed this report.

Presentation of the ASDC annual accounts for 2020/21

Scot Owen, ASDC Treasurer presented the ASDC Accounts

Total Income	£571,994
Total Expenditure	£647,388
Net expenditure for year	£(75,394)
Total reserves at 31st March 2021	£218,446

Income

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Project Income	529,161	357,678	425,140	527,732
Subscriptions	28,200	32,580	30,880	31,990
Other Income (including Annual Conference)	28,463	51,516	56,248	12,272
Total Income	585,824	441,774	512,268	571,994

Expenditure

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
External Costs of Projects	346,267	175,768	274,461	277,672
Costs of Provision of Services	282,841	267,336	254,920	368,416
Governance Costs	1,200	1,200	1,300	1,300
Total Expenditure	630,308	444,304	530,681	647,388

ASDC Reserves

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Re-appointment of Examiners

Re-appointment of independent examiners, Corrigan Accountants Limited. Approved by Chris Godden and the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Elections

The elections were carried out using a voting app called Mentimeter. Each member organisation is allowed one vote.

First category: Trustees standing for re-election

1. Chas Bishop, CEO, National Space Centre – was re-elected to the Board, receiving 100 % of the vote
2. Stephen Breslin, CEO, Glasgow Science Centre - was re-elected, receiving 100% of the vote
3. Hermione Cockburn, Scientific Director, Dynamic Earth – was re-elected, receiving 100% of the vote
4. Bryan Davies, Trustee, Catalyst Science Centre - was re-elected, receiving 100% of the vote

	<p>5. Tudor Gwynn, Head of Operations and Projects Manager, Eureka! The National Children's Museum - was re-elected, receiving 100% of the vote</p> <p>Second category: New candidates standing for election</p> <p>Each new candidate gave a short speech stating why they wish to join the ASDC Board of Trustees. The members then voted</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jenni Chambers, Head of Public Engagement and Skills, STFC - was elected to the Board, receiving 100% of the vote 2. Bryan Snelling, CEO, Aberdeen Science Centre - was elected to the Board, receiving 100% of the vote 3. Victoria Denoon, Head of Visitor Experience, W5 - was elected to the Board, receiving 100% of the vote <p>Thanks to trustees retiring by rotation.</p> <p>Stephen Breslin announced Alison Robinson, NERC has stepped down from the Board of Trustees and thanked her for her valuable contribution over the years.</p>
	<p>Vote on proposed ASDC constitutional changes</p> <p>ASDC proposed to change the Articles of Association to allow non-ASDC members to be elected onto the Board of Trustees in the future. The reason for this, to be able to include people on the board from outside of the sector to benefit from a wider range of voices and skills. If the members vote for these changes they will be put in place in time for the next AGM in 2022.</p> <p>Changes in the constitution (in order to diversify the board) could be done alongside a change for ASDC from a charity to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation).</p> <p>The move to becoming a CIO involves the removal of the requirement to file the accounts at the Charities commission and at Companies House (no longer required at Companies House, instead we file an annual Confirmation Statement). All other finance requirements are exactly the same and becoming a CIO keeps us incorporated and registered as a charity.</p> <p>As a member of the Foundation for Science and Technology, Keith Lawrey, who established the charity in 2009, will be supporting the re-word to our constitution and change to CIO status if this is deemed an appropriate move.</p> <p>ASDC asked its members to vote for or against these changes via the Mentimeter app.</p> <p>Results: 12 people voted for changing the constitution, 0 people voted against or abstained.</p>
	<p>ASDC members were given chance to raise discussion points and ask questions.</p>
12.00	Close of AGM