

UK Space Supporters toward a national federation

a reportage by Michael Martin-Smith

ORGANISATION FOR ENABLE EFFECTIVE MUTUAL SUPPORT AND FUTURE LOBBYING

ABOUT THE WORKS OF THE COUNCIL

Space Development Council, a meeting to attempt the creation of an umbrella group for UK Space Organizations, was held on Saturday 8th of april, and went well.

SAA was represented by Stephen Ashworth, myself, and John Broomfield - who very gallantly has become Secretary of the SDC.

We are now composed of SAA, the Mars Society, Spaceguard-UK, the Discovery Society, ASTRA, Space Settlers, and the Solent Rocketry Association, and well as SEDS UK acting as a Youth Wing.

We decided that our priorities were to promote, for Britain:

- Humans in Space
- enhanced Space Education and Astrobiology (research and education)
- Cheap Access to Space/enabling technical development
- and pro space values in general

These being goals we could all adopt as generic to our various groups and interests (no Moon versus Mars type debates at this time).

All told, the SDC now represents potentially about 4000 people, and so with SAA as a fiounding member of the Umbrella organization thereby set up, we have a significantly longer reach!

For year one, the Chairman of the SDC is Mr Andy Nimmo (Space Settlers), while the Secretary is Captain John Broomfield, of SAA.

It is planned that each member organiztion will be asked for a small sub to help co-ordinate the Council's activities; this is envisaged as being about £10 from each group comprising the "umbrella". I will make the contribution for SAA myself when things are organized, and will let you know.

If any Associate has ideas or input for the SDC they are more than welcome to contact myself, Stephen Ashworth (sa@astronist.demon.co.uk) or John Broomfield john.broomfield@virgin.net) once we are properly underway.

IN ATTENDANCE

- Philip Dembo Mars Society
- Bo Maxwell Mars Society
- William Marshall Mars Society
- Peter Loftus Mars Society
- Daniel Loftus Mars Society
- Stephen Ashworth SAA/BIS
- Duncan Lunan ASTRA/Settler
- Johnathan Tate Spaceguard
- Andy Nimmo Settler/Mars Society/ASTRA/SAA
- Ivan Dale Settler/Mars Society/ASTRA
- John Broomfield BIS/SAA
- Robert Law Discovery Space Club
- Michael Martin-Smith SAA/BIS
- Julia Tizard UKSEDS (observer)

INTRODUCTION & OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was commenced at 1105 by PD welcoming all those who had managed to attend especially as many had come from Scotland. Brief Introductions From Each Organisation Represented The British Rocketry Oral History Programme: As no members of the BROHP were present no official introduction was given. However DL was able to describe it as "putting on record those involved in previous UK rocketry attempts" British Interplanetary Society (BIS): It was noted that although the BIS had not formally been invited MMS, SA & JB were members, and they gave a brief description of it's activities. "It is the world's longest established organisation devoted solely to the exploration of space & astronautics."

SPACEGUARD. JT gave a comprehensive brief on Spaceguard. Its aims:

- To promote British participation in discovery & follow-up of Near Earth Objects (NEO's)
- To promote study of asteroid & comets, especially NEO's
- To promote the establishment of an international ground based surveillance network to discover & track NEO's
- To raise UK public awareness of the NEO threat
- Ultimately to see a co-ordinated international Spaceguard programme

It has 250 members in the UK and 2000 members worldwide. Since its inception debates on the subject of NEO's have occurred in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and the setting up of a Task Force on Potentially Hazardous NEO's. They are currently awaiting the outcome of this Task Force.

DISCOVERY SPACE CLUB (DSC): RL informed us that it was set up in 1987 to "Promote Space to the general public". It has 10 members and has held talks, exhibitions and appeared on a morning Radio Programme.

ASTRA: DL represented ASTRA and it was set up in 1953 as the Scottish branch of the BIS. It was now independent and had 100 members in two branches. It aims to "Promote public interest in Space research", which currently includes Waverider and Solar Sails.

UKSEDS: WM & JT explained that UKSEDS had approximately 150 student members in 7 University branches but as their constitution prohibited them from any political activity that UKSEDS would be unable to join the proposed SDC. However they suggested that UKSEDS was an example of what a youth organisation can do to promote British participation in Space and suggested that it could perhaps provide information to young people interested in the aims of the BSC. They also stated that, because of the above, further participation in the days events would have to be as "Youth Representatives" rather than UKSEDS.

SPACE AGE ASSOCIATES (SAA): MMS stated that SAA was primarily an Internet grouping of approximately 18 UK members which promoted the dispersal of Mankind away from Earth. It aimed to interest and inform those who would not normally come into contact with Space and had achieved publication of several articles, an appearance of National Radio and a book published in Italy.

SPACE SETTLERS SOCIETY (SS): AN explained that it's aim was to encourage man to "Settle in Space". In 1992 SS had joined ASTRA to pool resources and act as their political wing with ASTRA focusing on the technical issues. It's achievements include having precipitated the commencement of a Space Committes in the House of Commons, and had twice succesfully campaigned to keep the UK in the International Space Station (ISS) programme before being finally defeated in this by the Major Government.

MARS SOCIETY (MS): BM informed us that the MS was Limited Company set up in 1998 with 300 members (100 in UK) across 40 countries. It had achieved: successful campaign to US Congress resulting in \$55M being returned to the NASA Robotics budget for 98/99. a privately funded \$375K, "Mars Arctic Research Station" to test technologies that might b erelevant to a manned Mars Mission. the "Analogue Rover Project" to design a rover vehicle to be used on Mars. design of a "Direct Mars" mission profile showing how a \$40Bn direct flight to Mars could be made within 10-15 years.

At the end of the formal introductions PD also brought to everyone attention the "Space Pub" which meets on the last Thursday of the month in London, details of which can be found at <http://www.spacepub.co.uk>

GROUP PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Groups were consulted for proposals with the aim of producing a working document No proposals were made on behalf of the BROHP or the BIS.

SPACEGUARD proposals: JT stated that these were already firmly established as:

- the establishment of a National Spaceguard Centre, probably at the Amagh Observatory,
- the construction of a 2m telescope for follow up of NEO's
- the construction of a 4m telescope for the detection of NEO's

As the work had already been done to promote this and he was awaiting the report from the Government Task Force, expected 3rd week of June, he foresaw no immediate need for any further lobbying. Whilst respectfully cautioning about the group about the damage possible to his campaign by over enthusiastic amateurs he agreed that the support of the group would be helpful should the Government's report not be favourable to his cause.

DL suggested an alternative proposal by John Braithwaite for finding NEO's. JT stated that follow up was the major problem as it wasn't as "sexy" as finding NEO's in the first place, and that we had already lost 4 NEO's this year with a non-zero probability of Earth impact! JT agreed to contact John Braithwaite via DL.

DISCOVERY SPACE CLUB (DSC): RL proposed support for UK participation in the ISS, Araine 5 and for manned missions to the Moon and Mars.

ASTRA/SPACE SETTLERS: DL suggested we all subscribe to the European Space Agency's (ESA) Quarterly Bulletin which is free to all EEC citizens, via the ESA publications site at <http://esapub.esrin.esa.it/>. DL also proposed support for the proposals made by ESA's Long Term Space Policy Committee, greater UK funding for ESA's Science budget the commencement of UK funding for ESA's Manned Space budget.

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES: JT supported UK involvement in the ISS. JT stated that the problem with this was that it was "nothing new" and that Government could best be encouraged into funding programmes by identifying where the UK could take a lead.

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES: WM brought to our attention the existence of the Space Education Council, 6 Borough Rd, Kinston-upon-Thames, Surrey, KT2 6BD and their web site at: <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/sec/sechome.htm>

SAA: MMS proposed support for Astrobiology on the ground that it was an emerging science and an area in which the UK could take a lead. SA advocated encouragement of the humanistic values developed as a result of stepping into Space and having a new "Global" perception of ourselves. He also suggested various merchandising and social events to further interest in Space. JB proposed encouraging the general public interests in Space issues in order to gain popular support for any further public funding for Space projects. Also supporting development of Single Stage to Orbit Vehicles as the next vital step in greater access to Space.

SETTLERS: AN proposed motivation of the general public to support a UK manned space effort.

MARS SOCIETY: BM proposed support for a UK astronaut in the European Astronaut Corps (EAC), and for the UK Space budget to be administered in a different way. A group discussion brought forward the feeling that the current system of administration through BNSC and PPARC resulted in a strong bias towards astronomy rather than manned Space projects. It was agreed in general discussion that sufficient common interest existed among the groups present to form an "Umbrella Organisation" and lunch was convened at 1315.

ACTION: JT to contact John Braithwaite via DL.

ALL: subscribe to ESA Quarterly Bulletin

-- Michael Martin-Smith