SALT Risk Committee

Report to the SALT Board
For the 2015 May Meeting

Darragh O'Donoghue (Chair), Brian Chaboyer, Chris Clemens
Jack Hughes, Eric Wilcots, Lizette Labuschagne, Ismail Osman

1. Introduction and History

The SALT Foundation has had weak risk management for a number of years. With encouragement from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and Department of Science & Technology (DST), more intensive risk management was initiated in 2013. A 1-day retreat prior to the Board meeting in Mafeking was held, led by the South African organizations mentioned above. The output from this was a set of strategic objectives which the Company wished to pursue. This was followed up in 2014 by training in the methodology of risk management by the DST's expert in the topic, Pat Archary. During this training, a risk register for SALT was drawn up, based on the strategic objectives from Mafeking.

This report describes recent activities by the Risk Committee since the 2014 November Board meeting. The membership of the Risk Committee comprises the list of authors in the title section of this report.

2. Risk Committee Meeting

A meeting of the Risk Committee took place by Skype on 2015 May 5. The minutes of the meeting are listed as Appendix A of this report.

Significant points in the meeting:

1. Discussion took place on the amount of work needed to implement the Action Plans associated with the Risk Register, of which there are 27. Most of these Action Plans can only be the responsibility of SALT Board-level members, even if the work is delegated to supporting people. Board members are usually consumed by their busy lives at home, in between Board meetings. How could they be persuaded to get involved and do a share of the work required.

2. To avoid ambiguities in interpretation, Dr. Thomas Auf der Heyde had suggested at the 2015 November Board meeting that the strategic objectives should be expanded from the 3-6 words they comprised. This was carried out and approved by the committee. The strategic objectives can be found in column A of the spreadsheet associated with this report on the Board website.

3. The Risk Register was considered, with particular focus on the causes of eventuation (column F of the spreadsheet) of the 10 risks identified, and the associated Action Plans (column Y of the spreadsheet). It was decided by the committee that the most urgent of the Action Plans should be implemented immediately.

4. The most urgent issue identified was the need for fund-raising in view of the very strained financial situation of the Company. After much discussion it was agreed that:

    - The most promising avenue for fund-raising was selling telescope time or shares to new potential users or partners. This was decided because the alternative, raising money from internal partners, had largely not been successful for some years.
    - Eric Wilcots agreed to take responsibility, at least initially, for getting the Action Plan for fund-raising under way. He hoped to involve the Board Chair and other Board members.

5. Further Action Plans implemented included: (i) the need for Strategic Planning. Jack Hughes kindly agreed to take responsibility for this with help from Darragh O'Donoghue; (ii) the need to improve the effectiveness of usage of the telescope. Darragh O'Donoghue agreed to take responsibility for this, with help from Jack Hughes and other Board members; (iii) the need to compile and publish an Annual Report, a Plan which was already well advanced by Srianand with further input by Darragh O'Donoghue, Lizette Labuschagne, David Buckley and Mike Shara.

Further activities following the meeting led to recognition of 8 further Action Plans that are either "up and running already" or can be approved at the upcoming Board meeting, implementation of another 5 Action Plans, with 10 awaiting implementation.

3. The Role of the Board and Conclusion

The committee would be pleased if Board members would step forward and take responsibility for assisting with implementation of further Action Plans. It is impossible for Committee members to do all the implementation themselves.

In conclusion, risk management in SALT is significantly stronger than hitherto. The Committee is committed to strengthen it even more in the future.

Appendix A. Minutes of the Risk Committee Meeting

MINUTES OF THE SALT RISK COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD BY SKYPE ON 5 MAY 2015

PRESENT

D. O'Donoghue (DOD) – Chair
J. Hughes (JH)
C. Clemens (CC)
E. Wilcots (EW)
L. Labuschagne (LL)
I. Osman (IO)

APOLOGIES B. Chaboyer

	Action
1. How to get the Risk Management Action implemented 1.1 DOD introduced the topic by mentioning that the key components of risk management were the Action Plans. The current risk register has many action plans. The plans are surely the responsibility of the Board (as opposed to SALT Operations personnel). How can the Board members be engaged to help with the work required? 1.2 CC agreed ("guilty as charged") that most Board members returned to their busy lives after Board meetings and were not pro-active in Company affairs. 1.3 After some discussion it was concluded that it was best to start small and appeal to Board members at the upcoming Board meeting to help. **2. Consideration of the Risk Register** 2.1 DOD described the Risk Register (contained in Excel file format), going through the various columns and their meaning. He pointed out that the strategic objectives had now been expanded with some specific details (as suggested by Thomas Auf der Heyde at the last Board meeting). It was agreed that the expanded descriptions were acceptable.	

2.2 DOD proposed that the second strategic objective ("Promoting SALT as a global flagship optical telescope") was not required and it was mostly covered by "Achieving World Class Science". JH asked if it really mattered as the Action Plans were the key ingredients of the risk register. DOD responded that the risks were seen in this process as a "risk of failing to meet a strategic objective". The discussion moved on without the strategic objective being dropped. 2.3 DOD invited suggestions for changes to any of the cells of the risk register. 2.4 He then suggested that the primary outcome of the meeting could be the identification and initiation of the three most urgent Action Plans. 2.5 It was agreed that the financial sustainability of the Company was most at risk and that therefore the fund-raising Action Plan was the most important. 2.6 A long discussion ensued in which various fund-raising possibilities were discussed: • Road-shows to partner institutions: CC, JH and EW agreed that these would not be useful. • It was agreed that fund-raising from existing partners had not proven successful and was therefore less likely to succeed than seeking new people to buy shares or telescope time. EW agreed to take responsibility (at least initially) for getting the fund-raising Action Plan under way, with help from the Board Chair. 2.7 Attention then turned to "Quality assurance of science proposals" as the second most urgent Action Plan. JH warned that meddling with the affairs of the TACs was an unwise approach: at Rutgers, their faculty had their own interests and wished to pursue them and not be told they could not use the telescope in a specific manner. The discussion turned to the need to communicate with TACs and user groups on the lessons learned in effective use of the telescope. DOD agreed to take responsibility for an Action Plan, along with JH assisting. 2.8 Discussion then turned to strategic planning and the SALT White Paper, contributions to which were not readily forthcoming. JH pointed out that strategic planning and the white paper were not the same thing. After some discussion, JH agreed to take responsibility for the Strategic Planning Action Plan with assistance from LL and DOD. The meeting then closed.	**EW** ***DOD, JH*** ***JH, LL, DOD***