



Beltane Fire Society

Annual General Meeting Minutes 2023

Date:	2.30pm 15th July 2023
Location:	The Bongo Club, Edinburgh
Present:	Board Trustees in attendance: C'tri Goudie, Caroline Evans, Stew Wilson, Neil Barton. 40+ members in attendance.
Chair:	Caroline Evans
Minutes:	Taken by Sammi Searle
Apologies:	Mailis Marty and Sophie McCarthy

1. *Welcome*

The meeting was formally opened by the Chair. General housekeeping comments were made and members were welcomed to the meeting.

2. *Approval of Minutes from last year's AGM*

Last year's minutes were approved by a show-of-hands vote.

3. *Chair's Report*

3.1. Review of festival and society activity 2022 - 2023

The Chair presented a report on the previous 12 months of Beltane Fire Society business. The report is available [here](#). The report paid particular attention to:

- Acknowledging Trustees who have had to step back from their roles over this year for various reasons and thanking them for their service, these are; Sarah Barr, Bob Ball, Lindsey Bell and Alex Nuttgens.
- A review of festival activity 2022-2023 with note paid to how the Society is bouncing back with their festivals post-pandemic with much respect given to all those who have volunteered.
- Special thanks to Sara Thomas for organising the Yule 2022 event

3.2. The Chair opened space for members to highlight other memorable points in the year

- Alex Nuttgens thanked those who have organised the social gatherings over this year, including Beth Cobb for organising the weekly pubmeet.
- ZT highlighted the Hillusphere sessions and how they make Beltonia more accessible, and also thanked Alan Howse for his efforts in Beltonia.
- Thanks was given to Alixandra Prybyla for her Imbolc procession in February as well as the inclusion of signing as part of her embodiment of the May Queen this Beltane.

3.3. The year ahead / upcoming issues

- Raised by C'tri Goudie - Issues around transparency: members often don't know that the BFS is a charity and what the board is for and what it does so we are working towards better community-wide understanding and transparency around this.
- Safeguarding - a lot of progress has been made with safeguarding and there was only one serious complaint this year, which indicates good change. A related change to the Articles of Association was touched upon, which is covered in more detail below (see Item 6.1).
- Criminal Disclosure Checks - there are benefits and drawbacks to this policy. Potential members may have a criminal record for things like attending a protest. Some checks have highlighted serious potential issues though, and therefore have been worthwhile.
- We are hoping the next Trustee team will be focussing on recruiting a professional to deal with safeguarding in 2024.
 - Alex Nuttgens - So much Board time is spent on complaints and it was very unpleasant for Board members to sit in judgement over people they know. And it should be a priority for the incoming Board Trustees. Met with great show of agreement from the members

3.4. Governance Issues

- Governance reviews have necessarily been pared down and reviews paused of ongoing policies due to not enough Board Trustees to carry them out.
- Work has been undertaken to ensure we are compliant with GDPR and balancing it with the BFS's needs to retain institutional memory and lore.

4. Financial report (Treasurer - Neil Barton)

4.1. Presentation of completed and approved accounts

4.2. Overview of Samhuinn 2022, Beltane 2023 and Samhuinn 2023 finances

- Attention paid to ticket prices remaining the same but expenditure going up dramatically and the need to replace equipment and items.

4.3. **Where we are now financially, and things to think about for the future**

- Utilities have gone up but most things remain consistent.
- We utilised funds to seek professional opinions on a complaint case
- The lease is up on Beltonia in '26 and will likely go up then
- Beltane is going to be on weekdays for the next three years now so we need to be canny, Samhuinn is less likely to be affected as it finishes earlier.

4.4. **Neil Barton is stepping away from the role of treasurer**

- He received much thanks and applause from members for his service to the Society.

5. *Election of BFS Board of Directors/Trustees*

- All serving Trustees were retired from their positions and an election of new trustees was held.
- Presentations were made by each of the candidates who were present, and a statement was read by proxy for each of the candidates who had sent apologies.
- A secret ballot was held and the following candidates were elected by majority vote; C'tri Goudie, Mailis Marty, Sammi Searle, Sophie McCarthy and Stew Wilson.
 - Voting of YES, NO or ABSTAIN by members via voting slips provided within the meeting; with voting finalised at the end of the AGM. Results to be emailed to membership within 24 hours

6. *Resolutions - Voting on submitted resolutions by members*

6.1. **Resolution One: Amendment to Articles of Association regarding membership termination conditions.**

The proposal was to amend Article 36 from:

"The Company may, by special resolution in general meeting terminate the membership of any person..."

to:

"The Company may, by special resolution in general meeting or by a **majority vote at a board meeting**, terminate the membership of any person..."

The rationale for this change is detailed [here](#):

Caroline Evans explains that there is a conflict of procedure in situations of safeguarding cases where the board is aware of sensitive and confidential information, but the only mechanism for termination of membership for gross misconduct is through an AGM. The case cannot always be effectively put to the membership without compromising confidentiality.

This amendment serves to allow the board to remove members from the society who have been found to be in breach of our code of conduct.

Members in attendance raised concerns about the wording being vague and open to misuse.

Other members suggested a minuted note for context that the membership passes this on the understanding that memberships should not be terminated without fair and due process for the member(s) involved - for example as outlined in the Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures that BFS already follows.

Vote by show of hands, results as follows:

- 38 yes
- 1 no
- 6 abstains

6.2. Recommendation to our guidance document for future trustees in terms of other roles within the society.

C'tri proposes that the role of Chair comes with additional restrictions, specifically that they should not also be a Blue AND head of safeguarding AND responsible for operation of festivals on a super high level.

This change would be to increase the membership faith in the society's structures.

This would not be a hard rule, just a guidance change to suggest this should not happen without PROPER discussion.

There is discussion amongst those present that this not be voted as a hard rule that would limit trustees in future in situations we have not foreseen. It's noted that the consolidation of responsibilities like this can be harmful to charities should the individual become unavailable.

Instead the vote is that this happen only at the board's decision.

A special note is made of thanks to Caroline Evans for taking on extra responsibilities during her tenure.

VOTE: SHOULD IT JUST BE A BOARD DECISION?

Vote by show of hands, results as follows:

- 26 yes
- 12 no
- 5 abstain

After discussion, an additional show of hands was recorded for the members present to indicate whether or not they felt that future boards should stick to this guidance unless strictly necessary.

- Almost everyone agrees
- 0 no
- 2 abstain

7. *Any Other Business*

C'tri - we can vote now reconfirm that the 2020 resolution to remove gendered language from the AoA to be actioned by the board.

This happened and passed, to be actioned by the next secretary.

ZT raises safety concerns within and ongoing issues.

The incoming board of trustees is asked if they can convene a blether to discuss production related matters

8. *Announce Voting Results and Closing Remarks*

- Thank you to everyone who is stepping down