

Beltane Fire Society Board Meeting Minutes

Date and Time:	Monday November 18th 2024; 1915 for 1930 start
Location:	Beltonia, and dial in option on invitation
Invited:	All Board members, Blues, EC and other Contractors
Present:	Present in person: Jenny Bloom, Neil Barton, Jenny Glover, Robert Lee, Andy MacLeod, Franklyn Reinhart, Steffie Sutherland Present electronically: Tom Watton, Rob Thorburn, Simone Last (Resolutions), Luca Gallici (Blue), Gabbi Sloss (Comms), James Turner (Blue), Ella Humphries (Front of House)

Item	Time	Details	Action
1. Welcome	1930	Welcome from Jenny Bloom, hosting the meeting. I, II - There were no apologies. There was a round of informal check-ins from all present.	
2. Review of minutes and action points	1940	I. The Minutes of the last meeting were approved. II. Action points were checked (listed at the end of the Minutes). It was considered that there was nothing which was absolutely urgent.	
3. Operations: Blues and general Steward issues	1945	I Blues update: The Blue representatives considered that the GO debrief on November 12th had been a bit rough, with some finger pointing (though no doubt well intentioned). The general feeling is that Blues and Tom will decide on future venues (probably Calton Hill for Beltane 2025, but as yet unknown for Samhuinn 2025). The BFS membership may have some views on future venues, however, there are other factors which must be considered eg lead times, dates after which the choice of venue cannot be changed, how long before the proposed festival date should a decision about changing the venue be made (this may be several months to a year in advance). The feelings of the local community must be considered and there must be complete transparency about plans, to allay or prevent local grumbles eg bike path, lack of access for dog walkers. One comment mentioned by several groups is that the Summer Queen procession had been extremely fast. It was emphasised that, at no point, had the Blues or production team asked the performers to move faster - Blues have been blamed for this, and they were innocent. The festival did, however, start 25 minutes late. This was due to the first aid people arriving late (the festival could not start until they were in place). It was suggested that some performers thought they had to rush, because of the curfew (there was a strict time when the performance had to be complete).	

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

		<p>The Blues made a comment about roaming groups. Roaming groups will have no steward escorts. That means that the roaming groups will require mandatory crowd control training and the question on the next festival's application form to the effect that "Do you require stewards outside the main procession?" should be highlighted.</p> <p>Although some groups had scheduled a night rehearsal at Holyrood, not all had, and there had not been a night rehearsal for everyone. A wider understanding of what a dark space at a festival looks like, and how and where people could move within it is crucial, and should happen for future festivals. (Note here: a night time rehearsal performance, though useful, would not include the crowds at the actual performance).</p> <p>In conclusion, there were some definite big issues to tackle in future festivals. Both Jenny B and Jenny G had made notes at the GO debrief, and these, when combined, should be made available to the Board. Jenny G has passed notes to Jenny B already.</p> <p>II General Steward comments There was some discussion about the availability of stewards. Some groups had the expectation that they would automatically be allocated stewards. (Note here: There were 28-29 Stewards, of whom 15 had been enrolled close to the festival date, so had not had the benefit of full steward training).</p> <p>It was suggested that there is work to be done on managing group expectations about Stewards and that the Steward GOs need to be more proactive with managing communication between groups and Stewards. (Note here: Board to consider future Steward applications to see if this point is covered and how future Steward GOs will deal with groups eg roaming groups, which might wish to provide their own stewards).</p> <p>Andy MacLeod (former Steward GO) asked if there should be a deadline for steward allocation requests, in a parallel action to the fact that there is a deadline for Tech requests and Ella Humphries (Front of House) recommended that there should be more steward related conversations. However, Ann Landmann (Steward GO) had communicated and given deadlines, but perhaps people had not paid sufficient attention to this.</p> <p>Some groups may wish to provide helpers to hold space, especially those involving fire or fire spinners. It was commented that the plans for fire related groups moving through crowds might have been a bit ambitious, and not appropriate for the size of the groups.</p>	<p>Ella Humphries & A Macleod (action 5.1)</p> <p>Tom Watton (action 5.2)</p> <p>Jenny Bloom (action 5.3)</p> <p>Board (action 5.4)</p>
--	--	---	---

Beltane Fire Society Board Meeting Minutes

4. Operations: Feedback from the Event Coordinator (Tom Watton)	2005	<p>The notes, feedback and discussion were very detailed and took a considerable amount of time. Tom Watton has offered to make his notes available to the Board, however, notes were taken at the time by the Secretary, as is normal for any Board meeting and these notes are listed below.</p> <p>General comments about the Festival: Tom, as Event Organiser, was extremely busy in the run up to the Festival, however, he did consider that the festival was a success on many levels.</p> <p>The Remembrance space was good and gave opportunity for private ritual to both performers and audience witnesses.</p> <p>The Queens' fights were compelling. There was an infectious energy and strong storytelling involved. The Queens brought the concept of a coherent court to the Festival.</p> <p>There were some issues with darkness. (Note here: there were some complaints from audience witnesses, including not being able to see what was happening, leaving early and asking about ticket refunds).</p> <p>There was an infectious, happy energy level to the Festival, which felt very much like it was at pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>The Samhuinn Festival has been held at Holyrood Park before, and Tom thought that this was the best iteration of how the Park had been used so far.</p> <p>General comments about meetings: There needs to be a larger venue for the Open Meeting in February 2025. Tom said he had tinnitus following the last meeting.</p> <p>For GO meetings, the new venue is ok (Note: new venue is Epworth halls at Nicolson Square). There was the occasional mix up, where a zoom meeting was arranged, though a room had been booked. However, online meetings were very useful for some types of meetings, such as those when planning movements of groups and it is recommended that some online meetings are planned for Beltane 2025.</p> <p>The processes for recording decisions from meetings and from break out areas needs to be improved. Quite often these are lost, but are vital for Blues and Contractors and actions are not always communicated.</p> <p>The meeting planner is a good place to keep people on track.</p> <p>Communications with GOs can be frustrating. At present the lines of communication are: Email updates, Slack, Discord, Telephone and/or text. This needs to be simplified, especially as not all GOs regularly read messages on these items, with reference to such things as planning the event and troubleshooting.</p> <p>General comments about ticket sales;</p>	<p>Tom Watton & Andy MacLeod (action 5.5)</p> <p>Tom Watton & Andy MacLeod (action 5.6)</p> <p>Andy MacLeod & Jenny Glover (action 5.7)</p> <p>Tom Watton (action 5.8)</p>
--	------	---	--

Beltane Fire Society Board Meeting Minutes

	<p>There were 6,232 paid for tickets and 6,290 people attended the Samhuinn festival. There was a waiting list of over 1,000 people. As a general principle, if a license for over 5,000 attendees is requested, then 7,000 tickets need to be sold to make it worthwhile, however in this case, Tom said that the extra 1,232 ticket sales covered the extra cost of the license.</p> <p>There were some issues with Citizen Tickets, and the Citizen Ticket process needs to be reviewed, possibly including membership accreditation and how to identify and deal with false tickets (there were about 30 false tickets presented to the box office). There was some negative feedback from members of the public and BFS members about tickets, especially people who were sold false tickets without realising that they were false. It was suggested that issues on social media ("box jumping") were linked to the sale of false tickets.</p> <p>General comments about the weather, derig and the venue surroundings The weather was mostly dry, just occasional interludes of fine rain.</p> <p>The derig, with a professional crew as well as Tech and some non-Tech helpers, was done in one night. (To use an extra day to clear the site would have cost the BFS an extra £4,000-£5,000).</p> <p>There were some issues with distractions on or around Arthur's Seat and the verges of Holyrood Park: some fireworks and some runners with head torches.</p> <p>General comments about audience communications There were some reports about some audience witnesses being "grumpy" about not opening emails and so not being aware of what would happen. This led to some people leaving early and not wearing suitable shoes eg high heeled shoes. Some of the audience witnesses were not able to or could not scan the QR code given or open emails. It was recommended that, for future festivals, there should be a return to a printed programme. It was also pointed out that the festival programme was sent out late, and needed amendments on the day of the festival.</p> <p>General comments about in house security There was a new contractor and things mostly went well. On the night, about half of the people deployed were agency workers, but all had had suitable training. There was smooth access.</p> <p>General comments about medical services (first aid) The company used was Skylight Medical Services. On the night, the company workers arrived half an hour late, which meant that the gates for access to audience witnesses could not be opened until they arrived. There is a meeting with this company scheduled for the New Year when their risk assessment will be discussed. (The level of quality from this company has previously been good). Their laptop failed, so they had to use hard copy printouts.</p> <p>The accidents on the night seem to have involved one member of the public who got an ember or part of an ember in their eye and one</p>	Tom Watton (action 5.9)
		Tom Watton Gabbi (action 5.10)
		Tom Watton (action 5.11)

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

		<p>performer member who got some of the blue powder used by the Torchbearers to colour the flame in their eye. Both cases were dealt with by eye washes and both people were not seriously injured.</p> <p>General comments about stage build There were some issues with the structural build of the stage. It appears that there were several events that night which required professional resources and the current company (Five Star) allocated a "B" team to the BFS. This team did an ok job on the stage build, but it could have been done better. It was suggested that perhaps experienced Beltane Tech people could build the stage for future festivals, rather than using this company again.</p> <p>It was also pointed out that there is no Quartermaster or Quartermaster committee for Beltonia at present. This might be something which can be requested from some of the volunteer Trustee Assistants.</p> <p>Tom said he could give training to anyone who wished to volunteer for Quartermaster duties.</p> <p>Ella Humphries pointed out that the Quartermaster role ties in with her job, though it was recommended to use social media to get people involved. There is a need to discuss the role and how to go forward with Jenny Bloom and Tom Watton.</p>	<p>Tom Watton (action 5.12)</p> <p>Jenny Bloom & Tom Watton (action 5.13)</p>
--	--	--	---

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

5. Operations: Feedback from Front of House (Ella Humphries)	2025	<p>Generally, everything was ok. The gates were ready to open on time, but the medical services arrived late leading to a 25 minute delay in opening the gates (this is mentioned above).</p> <p>What went right: The gate access was less stressful than last year and the change of security was also less stressful. Queue management and spacing was also better than last year.</p> <p>The Front of House helpers were helpful and friendly and worked hard to let the people onto the site. It was recommended that future training might involve more character work.</p> <p>Stewards did well in some circumstances (but not so well in others). Four Stewards were recruited following discussions at the Volunteer Fair and Ann Landmann (Steward GO) did brilliantly and deserves a medal for GOing the group.</p> <p>The Standing Stone was good and worked well. It could be flat packed.</p> <p>Fire proof flags would be useful as a winter project (to be done in the quiet period between festivals).</p> <p>What went wrong: The wristband idea did not work as it was not clear if people were giving consent or declining it - this will be improved for future festivals, perhaps by having the message of "No, thanks" or "Leave me alone".</p> <p>Some people missed the signs for entrances and exits (the signs could not be too high up, because of the high winds).</p> <p>Ella made a mistake with transporting items, and has apologised to Tech.</p> <p>There was a shortage of Stewards, but it was considered better to have inexperienced Stewards rather than no Stewards at all.</p> <p>Although there was more signage than usual, it might have been a little confusing for audience witnesses.</p> <p>Suggested improvements/future training suggestions: Improvements for how space is held by Blues are needed.</p> <p>Training is needed for people moving through and in crowds. Suggest "Princes Street Gardens" to improve how to hold space and to hold performative space.</p> <p>This may also be suitable for Stewards, who need more crowd control training.</p> <p>There was a suggestion that there is almost a hierarchical divide between the balance of Stewards providing a minimal commitment and people holding space. How people in the BFS regard Stewards needs discussion and a greater understanding of the Stewards' role is needed.</p>	<p>Ella Humphries (action 5.14)</p> <p>Ella Humphries (action 5.15)</p> <p>Ella Humphries (action 5.16)</p> <p>Blues (action 5.17)</p> <p>Ella Humphries (action 5.18)</p> <p>Ella Humphries (action 5.19)</p>
---	------	--	--

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

		<p>General comments about the Remembrance Space: The Remembrance Space worked very well. It was estimated that 1,000-2,000 people went through the space during the evening, though people didn't spend too much time there. The theme of feeling missed the mark a little, but had better communication than usual.</p> <p>Some people said there was not enough communication from Ella, but she did her best (she admitted that typing is not her skill set).</p> <p>General comments about the Family Samhuinn: The Family Samhuinn was lovely. The Scottish Storytelling Centre is very happy to host BFS events and has asked when the BFS will return for another event. The room was filled with people from the Trax festival (which was on at the same time as Samhuinn).</p> <p>It is hard to get helpers for this event and face painters are in special demand.</p> <p>Ella suggested that perhaps it is time for someone else to run the event - it will be good to have some new ideas.</p>	
6. Operations: Feedback from Rob Thorburn (Production)	2045	<p>Rob mentioned that he was not a great fan of Holyrood as a venue, but made several very constructive suggestions for improvement.</p> <p>General impressions: The run up went quite smoothly with external work - the BFS has good relationships with most of the companies involved. Build and de-rig went smoothly, apart from some minor Tech issues and issues with Black Star.</p> <p>Rob made some assumptions and thought they would go ahead, given the experience of the Tech team, but realises now that things have to be clearer about what is expected. However, the volunteer Tech group have done astonishingly well, though a good debrief is an essential for the future.</p> <p>We were very lucky with the weather (dry, but with a small amount of fine rain). Rob thinks that the organisers may have struggled if there had been more heavy rain.</p> <p>Holyrood Park is convenient in many ways and does not have as many accessibility challenges as Calton Hill. Nevertheless, some people are not keen on Holyrood Park as a festival venue.</p> <p>On the whole, though, it was a great festival from the Production point of view. It was well lit. Build and de-rig were done quickly and smoothly and thumbs up to everyone involved from him.</p> <p>General points on possible improvements: Black Light had several other events which clashed with Samhuinn. This meant that Rob and his team had to get quite a lot of equipment from the Glasgow area, which was very tiring. He suggests that it's important</p>	

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

		<p>to get orders in very early for the Beltane production to prevent this happening again.</p> <p>There were good and bad aspects to having a “pretend” stage in a different location from where the real one would be and maybe that needs consideration for future festivals. Rob made the point that Beltane and Samhuinn are completely different festivals in different venues and so both performers and audience witnesses should have different expectations. He did suggest that if Samhuinn returns to Holyrood in 2025, then the setup should be the same as for 2024. Holyrood is a much larger space than Calton Hill (for Beltane) and, being relatively flat, it can be difficult for the audience witnesses to see what is going on.</p> <p>The Queens had absolute freedom with their roles, and there were no expectations about what they would do, apart from the general conflict between summer and winter. Given that people are already thinking about future court roles, perhaps there should be discussion about whether there should be a set formula about the themes of Samhuinn; if this is decided, then BFS members need to be informed well in advance.</p> <p>General comments on what went wrong: The GO debrief was frustrating. GOs had a lot of expectations for the festival, not all of which were communicated and some of which could not be met, including lighting, stewarding and notice paid to important things.</p> <p>Rob suggested that it might be a good idea to change the format of the debrief. Groups are asked to provide very little information and there are common factors, such as the route or the interactions needed. This means that some areas of concern are not covered, and, at the debrief, there was pressure to finish the meeting (that is, perhaps there should have been more time allocated for the meeting).</p> <p>Rob also mentioned that there were a lot of factors mentioned in the debrief which would not have been problems if they had been mentioned or made clear earlier in the process.</p> <p>Just general comments: There is the impression that audience witnesses expect the same level of performance for Samhuinn as for Beltane. However, there is more preparation time for Beltane and the general themes and procession layout are generally familiar to almost everyone.</p> <p>However, although Samhuinn has the season Monarchs and the Cailleach, it is virtually reinvented every year. Perhaps there is scope for a group wide discussion on what exactly Samhuinn should be.</p>	<p>Rob Thorburn (action 5.20)</p> <p>Board (action 5.21)</p> <p>Board (action 5.22)</p> <p>Refer to action 5.21</p>
7. Operations: Comment from Chair	2105	The debrief comments took up most of the time allocated for the Board meeting, and so several items will have to be postponed until the next Board meeting. The Chair suggested that in future the debrief should be separate from the monthly Board meeting.	Jenny Bloom & Tom Watton (action 5.23)
8. Operations: Suggested dates for Beltane	2110	The Beltane poster design needs to be finalised before the end of the year. Gabbi will organise this with some support from the Board on decision making and selection (the poster art is a paid role).	Gabbi Sloss and Jenny Bloom (action

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

		<p>The Open Meeting (when groups present their vision) can be held between mid February and early March. The Blues prefer a later Open Meeting, but there are implications of burnout and insufficient time for practice if that happens (eg with acro).</p> <p>It was pointed out that an earlier meeting may lead to lack of momentum and a high drop out rate from groups which have a low commitment (eg Stewards).</p> <p>However, if there is a tight run-up, the Open Practices may be compressed, meaning that people may not be accepted into their group of choice.</p> <p>It was suggested to have the Open Meeting on February 16 or 23, depending on venue availability.</p> <p>The GO training weekend would be February 15-16. There needs to be 7-12 days between the GO selection and training, which would mean that the GO application deadline would be in late January.</p> <p>Green Man interviews would be January 25-26 or January 18-19.</p> <p>It was noted that some people leave it until the last minute to submit GO applications, which means that the Board does not have much time to consider any GO issues. It was pointed out that there is a high rate of acceptance for GO applications.</p> <p>Walkthroughs are suggested for April 13 and 27, with the proviso that there will be no further changes after the 2nd Walkthrough.</p> <p>The Beltane GO Debrief will be May 5 or 13, but there needs to be time to allow groups to feed back their experiences to their GOs.</p> <p>Tom will check with the usual venues, and also follow through with potentially booking space in the University sites.</p> <p>Note: These dates are not yet confirmed. Tom Watton will arrange the dates and venues, with the support of the Festival Secretary, and inform the Board as soon as the dates are set firmly.</p>	<p>5.24)</p> <p>Refer to action 5.25</p> <p>Tom Watton & Andy MacLeod (action 5.25)</p>
9. Operations: Photo Storage	2120	<p>Robert Lee has been working on this proposal with the support of James Turner (Blue). The company selected is cost effective, Europe based, reliable, compliant and suitable for long term use. No other option is cheaper. The agreement is not locked in for the long term, so it will be possible to change companies quite easily, if required.</p> <p>Photopoint will need to assess what is being archived and for whom. Nate Kelso is working on a Lore Drive project. Action for Robert Lee to inform Photopoint and Nate Kelson of this, if possible.</p>	<p>Robert Lee (action 5.26)</p>
10: Safeguarding. Safeguarding	2130	<p>Simone Last has been appointed. She is very efficient and competent. The Board Chair will introduce Simone to the work load. The Board will consider if there is a need for an extra safeguarding person in a couple</p>	<p>Jenny Bloom (action 5.27)</p>

**Beltane Fire Society
Board Meeting Minutes**

personnel		of months' time. Also, two further cases have been closed: no details given in here for confidentiality reasons.	
11. Finance & Income Generation <i>[Governance]</i>	2135	<p>The Charity bank setup is completed.</p> <p>There are bank forms to fill in.</p> <p>Names on the bank account need to be checked to see if they are still active BFS members.</p> <p>Accounts were presented for October 2024 and the year to date.</p> <p>The Bongo Club drum booking situation was explained.</p>	<p>Jenny Bloom & Steffie Sutherland (action 5.28)</p> <p>Tom Watton (action 5.29)</p>
12. Community Issues	2145	<p>There is a suggestion that some members of the BFS community do not feel that Board and Blue feedback has any point - this is demoralising for everyone involved.</p> <p>Hopefully, this feeling will be improved with the use of the Trustee Assistants by finding ways to disseminate the feedback, perhaps by a revolving document on the web site, to give fast feedback results in a systematic way and to let the membership know about big ticket items.</p> <p>Comments on Debrief Notes: The Chair is working on a redesign for the Group debriefs. Tom Watton will give the chair access to the old debrief notes.</p> <p>Proposal for future BFS exhibition: [Community Member] has asked about organising a BFS exhibition for Beltane, following the Samhuinn exhibition at Cafe Kweer.</p> <p>Yule meal: There will be a donation bucket at the event.</p> <p>The host is Cinder Bloom.</p> <p>The Comms information will need to emphasise that this is a BFS event for members only and not open to the general public.</p>	<p>Robert Lee & Steffie Sutherland (action 5.30)</p> <p>Jenny Bloom Tom Watton (action 5.31)</p> <p>Jenny Glover (action 5.32)</p> <p>Gabbi Sloss (action 5.33)</p>
13. AOB	2155	<p>As mentioned above, the Festival Debrief will be held separately from the monthly Board meeting in future. This may be combined with the Contractor Debrief, at which Board presence is requested.</p> <p>Discussion to create a better system for virtual meetings. I.e. a tv set up in Beltonia.</p>	<p>Tom Watton Refer to action 5.23</p> <p>RL, NB & SS</p>
14. Next Meeting	2200	The next meeting will be held on Monday December 16th, 2024, 1915 for 1930, at Beltonia, electronic option available.	