

Beltane Fire Society

Chair's Report for January 2021- June 2022

Chair's report 2022

As reported to the BFS Membership at the 2022 AGM (*held in-person and digitally on the 12th June 2022*)

The Board of Trustees for January 2021 - June 2022

At the last AGM (January 2021), the following trustees were elected on by the membership present and the legally defined roles that were taken on by some:

- Caroline Heavens
- Dex De Cruz (Company Secretary)
- Neil Barton (*Treasurer*)
- Tom Watton(Chair)

During the tenure of this term, we also co-opted three additional board members, with one cooptee being replaced in february 2022 in order to get the festival running :

- Robin Crane (January 2021)
- Katie O'Neill (November 2021)
- Alex Nuttgens (February - 2022)

Sadly during the tenure of the term, we also had one trustee who resigned from the board:

- Robin Crane - February 2022

I want to thank every trustee that participated in this board term, for helping to guide BFS during a most interesting time and for bringing their skills and knowledge to continue to improve what we do. Without those people coming forward, safeguarding BFS's future would have been a lot harder!

AGM timeline - in order to facilitate a smooth run up to the Beltane Fire Festival it was deemed appropriate that the AGM be held in June 2022, meaning that 17 months would have elapsed between Annual Membership Meetings. It was felt by the directors that this course of action was appropriate given the COVID restrictions that were in place at the start of the year and the uncertainty that this caused.

What does the Board do?

The board are the individuals who are legally responsible for BFS the charity with three key areas of focus:

1. GOVERNANCE: Meeting legal requirements for BFS and thinking strategically to safeguarding its future
2. OPERATIONS: Enabling key BFS activities to happen to meet charitable objectives
3. COMMUNITY: Engaging with BFS membership

Focusing on Governance

The Board paused the work of the Governance Review

With this board term being one in which the trustees were outnumbered by the task in hand, the trustees took the decision to pause the ongoing review.

All policies adopted by the previous board were maintained and the ongoing timescales for reviewing adopted policies was increased.

Updates to the articles of association made at the previous AGM and EGM are not in a position to be adopted as OSCR were not notified within the timescale (3 months), so by show of hands I will seek to extend permission to notify OSCR Of the previous changes to the articles of association made at AGM, and I will commit to notify OSCR and update the articles for future use.

It has been clear from the Safeguarding cases that have been brought to the attention of the board of trustees that articles 33-40 of our articles of association in relation to removal from membership require a rethink.

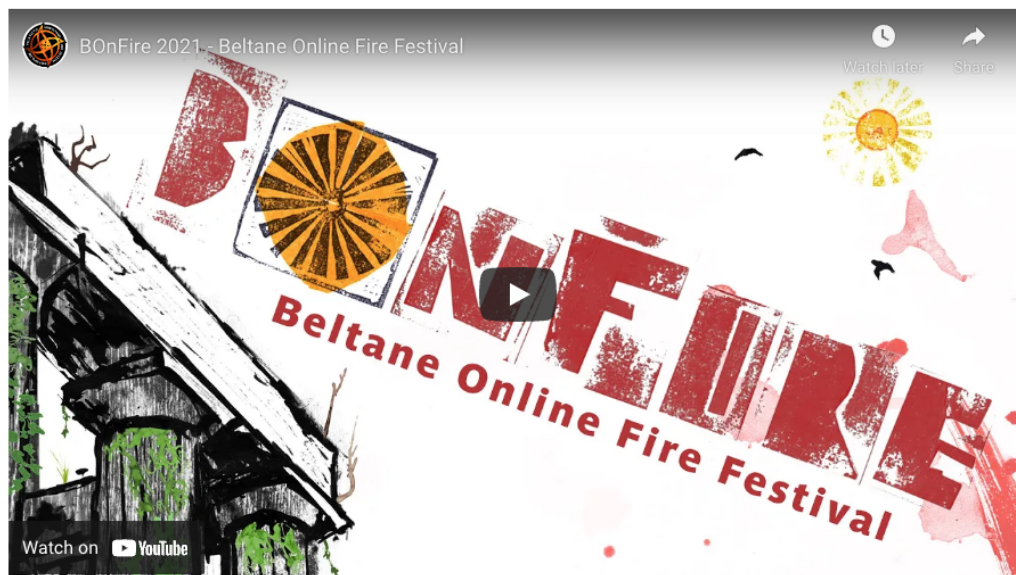
We expect that in the coming months the board will have to call a membership meeting in the coming months in order to process membership removal from those who will not withdraw their membership (resign) following an upheld complaints of a serious nature, a problem which would be best served with a removal process which would not require a formal members meeting.

Focusing on Operations

BELTANE 2021.

EDIT

BOnFire2021 – Beltane Online Fire Festival



With lessons learned from our previous online festival BONFIRE brought a whole global community together and created an online virtual festival which was as vibrant and varied as our 'normal' world activities. The 1hour 22 minutes BONFIRE video was watched 11,000 times and had a global reach in excess of 120,000. The community activities which brought people together in legal numbers and with legal reasons, created important social connections at a very challenging time.

Samhuinn Fire Parade 2021

On the 31st October 2022 the Beltane Fire Society returned to the streets of the Old Town of Edinburgh and pulled off a spectacular parade down the royal mile and brought about a Happy Samhuinn for thousands of witnesses.

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The festival's operations was beset with legal and event planning difficulties which make the use of that venue unlikely for future events, because of the cost that was required to stage the festival in that location.



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YULE 2021

Hurray we once again went into a totally predictable and OMICRON lockdown just in time to cancel our YULE event. Thanks to Sara Thomas among others for pulling together a digital potluck gathering.

Beltane Fire Festival 2022

BACK ON THE HILL

With the OMICRON screwing up events and gatherings right up to the end of february we were a little late making announcements for this years Beltane, but once it was clear that the lights were most likely going to be on green and staying green, we went pedal to the metal into our first full in person festival and run up since the pandemic had started. We had GO meetings and group rehearsals taking place indoors.

The show was watched by 7,250 people who braved the torrential rain which struck at early doors and reduced the walk-up sales.

Changes to the pricing structure meant that the festival still performed well financially and the society, is on track to rebuild its reserves, more on that from Neil later.

Focusing on Membership

Community Issues

Another key thing that the Board also deals with is complaints being submitted by our members. In a bid to help improve transparency with the community, and to address the feeling that sometimes complaints are ignored, we wanted to highlight some key info on our complaints over the last four years. Below is a breakdown of those key statistics:

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Received	10	6	10	7
Average time to Resolve	4.1 months	4.8 months	6 months	6 months
Average Mechanism Used	Disciplinary	Disciplinary / Emails	Disciplinary / Emails	Disciplinary / Emails

For the sake of confidentiality in regards to the complaints, we can't share things such as specifics on what was complained about, who raised or was subject to complaints, or other identifying information around these complaints.

Complaints take time to properly look into, both in reviewing if they are with the scope of BFS to investigate (i.e. relating directly to our activities), setting up meetings with both complainants and complainees, as well as finalising the report and submitting to the whole board for considering the outcomes.

Safeguarding Changes

In response to two of the complaints the board have sought professional external legal advice in relation to what are its powers and responsibilities and to determine what is in the scope of the society's interest. Having received this legal advice the society have amended the practice of

not investigating incidents which have happened outside BFS time, to a practice of, if by not investigating information, the reputation of the society might be damaged then the board must investigate and make a determination on the balance of the evidence and probability.

Other changes.

We have changed the selection criteria for GOs and other positions of responsibility. Group Organisers must now be exemplary members who have demonstrated upholding of the Society's Code of Conduct.

Criminal disclosure checks have been completed for our Beltane 2022 group organisers, and whilst this was itself not a particularly effective safeguarding measure in terms of the risk posed, it did help establish a tone and contributed to a better understanding of the role of GO and the responsibility that the post carries.