



Beltane Fire Society

Chair's Report for January 2022- June 2023



*Beltane Fire Society is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number: SC040137 Company Number SC341753 The registered address is 16 Eastcromwell Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6HD
To learn more about Beltane Fire Society please visit www.beltane.org*

Chair's report 2023

As reported to the BFS Membership at the 2023 AGM

The Board of Trustees for January 2022 - June 2023

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/Evans (Chair)
- Sarah Barr (Company Secretary)
- Neil Barton (Treasurer)
- C'tri Peter Goudie (trustee)
- Lindsey Bell (trustee)
- Alex Nuggens (trustee)
- Stew Wilson (trustee)
- Bob Ball (trustee)

During the tenure of this term, we attempted to co-opt additional board members, but various members did not feel they could take up the roles.

Sadly, during the tenure of the term, we also had five trustees resign from the board:

- Lindsey Bell, Katie O'Neil, Sarah Barr, Bob Ball and Alex Nutgens

There remain four board members. I should acknowledge that being a trustee can be demanding and that this contributed to some of the resignations.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the dedicated trustees who actively participated in this board term. Your invaluable guidance and contributions have played a crucial role in guiding BFS through the transition back to in-person events and continuously improving our operations. We are truly grateful for each trustee who stepped forward, as their involvement has significantly contributed to the safeguarding of BFS's future. Without their support, the challenges we faced would have been considerably more daunting.

In terms of the AGM timeline, it was decided that holding the Annual General Meeting in July 2023 would best facilitate a smooth preparation for the Beltane Fire Festival. This means there will be a gap of 13 months between Annual Membership Meetings. The directors believed this approach was appropriate, given the reduced size of the board and their availability to effectively carry out administrative tasks/prepare for the meeting.

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

Photo showing community rehearsals (credit on the photo)



Focusing on Governance

The Board continued with pausing the ongoing Governance Review

In a theme that continued from last year, the board this term found there was more work to do than hours available, and attention was focused on aspects of our governance that impacted critical factors such as safeguarding only.

Having said that, two new policies/approaches were generated by this board. The first was on Data Retention/ Google account management by Stew Wilson, reducing the amount of festival-specific data we hold onto "just in case". The second was an approach to transparency, spearheaded by C'tri Goudie, whereby we tried to be more open and transparent with the membership and consider the principles of transparency when making decisions.

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

Echoing the views of the last Chair, 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, and an amendment to those articles is being brought for approval at this AGM.

The reason for the change is to avoid calling a membership meeting 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. Due to privacy issues, holding a public meeting is not an appropriate way to process these kinds of cases.



Focusing on Operations

Throughout the year, the Beltane Fire Society festivals captivated the hearts and minds of our global and local community. Despite varying weather conditions, each event brought together a diverse range of attendees, fostering an atmosphere of unity, creativity, and celebration. We are immensely proud of the dedication and passion shown by our performers, volunteers, and supporters, and we eagerly look forward to another year of unforgettable festivals.



BELTANE 2023

Our flagship event, the Beltane Festival, took place on 30th of April. Thousands of people gathered to witness the ancient traditions of fertility, rebirth, and the eternal battle between the forces of summer and winter. The fire-drenched performances, captivating processions, and primal drumming stirred the souls of all who attended. The festival's atmosphere was electric, evoking a sense of unity, passion, and wild abandon. It reflected months of hard work and planning by all our participants, group organisers as well as the production and support teams .



Samhuinn Fire Parade 2022

The Samhuinn Festival held at Holyrood Park on October 31st was a remarkable event that embodied the spirit of ancient Celtic traditions. The festival unfolded amidst the enchanting ruins and breathtaking surroundings, invoking a sense of connection with the spirit realm.

Despite challenging weather conditions, our resilient community embraced the darkening season with a tapestry of captivating performances, mesmerizing costumes, and haunting music. The event showcased the unwavering dedication and talent of our performers, volunteers, and supporters who worked tirelessly to create a transformative experience for all. The Samhuinn Festival at Holyrood Park stands as a testament to our commitment to honoring tradition while fostering an atmosphere of unity and wonder.

YULE 2023

Yule, organized by Sarah Thomas was again a delightful potluck gathering, brought warmth and merriment to all who attended. Held on December 21st, this festival celebrated the winter solstice and the return of light. The venue was adorned with twinkling lights, festive decorations,, creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere. Around 40-50 attendees embraced the spirit of sharing and community, bringing an array of delectable dishes to be enjoyed by all. Laughter, joyful conversations, and a sense of gratitude filled the air, making Yule a heartwarming and memorable event for everyone involved.



Photo (c) Richard Wippeny for the Beltane Fire Society

Focusing on Membership

Community Issues

This year, we have had far fewer serious complaints than other years (just 1 serious complaint). This is in part due to;

1. A backlog of serious cases where multiple complaints were being generated by a small number of individuals.
2. A change in our rules so that consideration of behaviour 'in the round' is now allowed, this has included criminal disclosure checks.

In 2024 we are recruiting for a professional team member to run the complaints cases process. We feel that someone removed from the Society will be more impartial and this will lead to better outcomes for all concerned.