

# Beltane Fire Society AGM Minutes

25th June 2017

<b>Date:</b>	Sunday 25th June 2017
<b>Time</b>	14:00
<b>Location:</b>	Main Hall, City of Edinburgh Methodist Church, 25 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh EH8 9BX
<b>Present:</b>	Erin Macdonald (Chair), Jackie Burrell (minuting), Danielle Christie, Shae Dunmore, Brad McArthur, Erin McElhinney, Irene Morelli, Tom Watton, John Wilson, 43 BFS members
<b>Apologies:</b>	Dani Jakwerth, Nathan Kelso, Diana Calthrop, Emma Hogg, Kate Kirkwood, Robert May, Louise Murray, Sara Thomas, Victoria Trimm

## 1. Welcome

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed the members to the AGM

## 2. Apologies

- 2.1. Apologies were received from Dani Jakwerth, Nathan Kelso, Diana Calthrop, Emma Hogg, Kate Kirkwood, Robert May, Louise Murray, Sara Thomas and Victoria Trimm.

## 3. Chair's Report

- 3.1. The Board carried out a lot of work throughout the year and went through some changes. Three Board members (Lila O'Leary, David Simpson and Tanya Simpson) retired from the Board; and three new Board members (Shae Dunmore, Nathan Kelso and Brad McArthur) were co-opted via the process set out in the BFS Articles of Association, to support with the workload.
- 3.2. The Board has identified a range of areas for improvement for BFS, to ensure its working model and decision making structures are sustainable across the future. After receiving professional advice, the board has begun to review processes and governance, so that BFS can continue to thrive.
- 3.3. Membership: Membership numbers are steady. Three blethers were held throughout the year to help deal with key issues. The Board organised skill-sharing workshops throughout the year, which were well received. The Board took steps to increase communication with members by adding a membership section to the website, distributing a more detailed leaflet about Beltane at the Open Meeting and sending out announcement emails to all members and festival volunteers - work on this will continue as it is recognised that there is significant room to improve.
  - 3.3.1. BFS recognised the loss of members Garry Stevenson and Jan (Johnny) Lawicki. A minute's silence was held in their memory.
- 3.4. Festivals:
  - 3.4.1. Samhuinn 2016: a success despite the rain, back at parliament Square and the Royal Mile. Estimated 4,500 attendees despite heavy rain. Beltane 2017: A fitting celebration of our 30th Beltane, with fantastic feedback. Challenges due to construction meant need to lower amount of attendees, but did not impact on feel of night itself.

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The festival was sold out in plenty of time with 8,624 ticket holders on the Hill.

- 3.4.2. Festival Processes: The Board changed the Cailleach and Kings selection so both appointed in the same way, in line with views shared at the blether held early in 2016; worked with Blues to clarify and set out various processes around selection and terms as Blues; The Board began work to increase the board's own transparency, communication and clarity; Also worked on the GO selection process: Blues were able to vote in the selection process, in the same way as board members; GO agreements were put in place to clarify what expectations are by both parties; Individual debriefs were received from the Board and there was written feedback to inform future selection of applications; GOs requested a feedback survey from volunteers, which was carried out with some success. All these processes will need tweaking and continued work in the coming year.
- 3.4.3. Audience survey conducted via e-mail worked well with 260 responses. Compared with last survey in 2011, some significant improvements.
- 3.4.4. The Chair thanked everyone who took part in the festivals and all community activity across this year for making them such a success, and those who responded to the volunteer survey also.
- 3.5. 30th anniversary celebrations:
  - 3.5.1. Preparations began with gathering the community to share ideas for the 30th Beltane. Decided to spread the celebrations over the course of the year to give more scope for activities. A wonderful logo was produced by member JP Abrahams. Events encompassed both the BFS community and the wider Edinburgh community with skill-sharing workshops for members and an Imbolc feast; Weaving Willow and Words event for the wider community at the Scottish Storytelling Centre and a community open day which included Family Beltane. Several hundred people took part in the community open day. Positive feedback was received for all activities.
  - 3.5.2. Nathan Kelso set up an archive project called Lore, which is ongoing. It is an open space for all members to access the history of BFS, and more will be developed with this in the year ahead.
  - 3.5.3. The 30th Beltane festival had specific components with Hillusphere group decorating the hill, and a new, huge fire arch. Margaret Bennett, who is one of the original founders, was in attendance. Leaflets were given to the audience to inform them of events happening on the hill and simplified versions were made as signs for around the site. All ticket holders were emailed prior to the night to inform them of the story, characters and images, as part of specific efforts to be better communicate our story.
  - 3.5.4. Beltane.org was restructured and revamped giving better access to public and a new members section. A Photo Archive was created, to store all our images, accessible by all at [photos.beltane.org](http://photos.beltane.org).
  - 3.5.5. Permission has been given by Edinburgh Council to plant a tree on Calton Hill. This will be happening in the coming year, at a spot which will be agreed with the relevant team. More talks and events looking

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back at the history of BFS are being looked at across the year, but this will depend on availability of time and resources.

- 3.5.6. The board pass on their huge thanks to everyone who made the thirtieth celebrations so special - so many volunteers worked very hard.

#### **4. The year ahead/upcoming issues**

- 4.1. The Board needs to continue its governance review looking at how BFS is structured, how it functions and how it can improve. There is still much to be done to refine policies and procedures, and to make sure everyone is clear what is expected of people and their roles within the society - to make sure BFS can thrive as an organisation and a community in the years ahead. The Board term is currently one year, and the current Board recommend the new Board look at how decisions are made, the recommendations and make changes. It will also be critical to examine the way BFS makes decisions, on operational and governance issues - to ensure the load is shared, and that our society can thrive in a way that protects what is special about our events and community, while still meeting the requirements placed on us.
- 4.2. A search for new premises is ongoing. A space is needed that combines office, meeting space and stores. A Quartermaster is needed so it is known what supplies we have and where they are located.
- 4.3. There is a possible need for a Production Manager. Communication with Tech members is ongoing regarding the society's needs.
- 4.4. The City of Edinburgh Council proposal around the nature of processions threatens the existence of Samhuinn from 2018 onwards. The Board wrote a formal response to the council and invited members to do likewise. Press coverage was also organised. Board members met with the council to discuss options. Communication is ongoing and BFS has been invited to address the committee directly. BFS Trustees will do everything they can but the bottom line is there will be fewer processions in Edinburgh city centre. The final decision will be in July/August 2017 so won't affect Samhuinn 2017 but will affect future Samhuinn festivals. The Board is looking at a potential format change for Samhuinn, possibly to increase focus on the procession elements.
- 4.5. New York-based Scottish composer Anna Clyne was commissioned by the BBC to write a Scottish-based work, which she chose to base on Beltane. The composer communicated closely with various members and attended the festival. The composition will be performed by the Scottish Symphony Orchestra at Glasgow City Halls on 9th December 2017. BFS will be clearly thanked within programme.
- 4.6. The Chair invited questions from the members. More details were requested regarding the Board's response and to the council's proposal and the impact smaller numbers had on Beltane night.

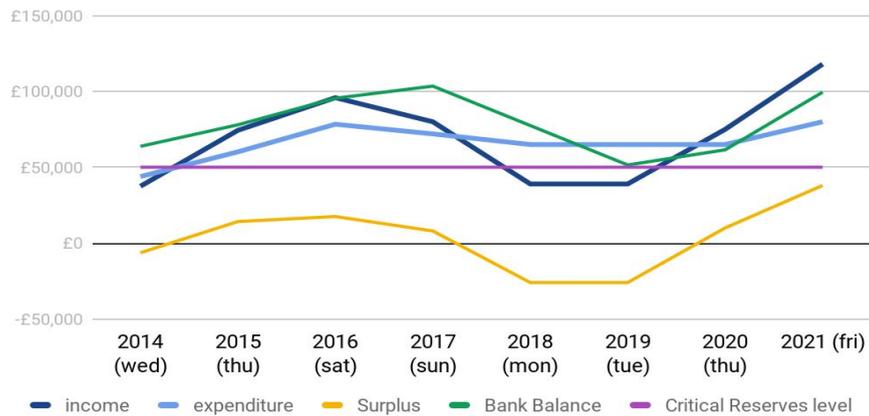
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5. Financial report

5.1. Summary of 2015/2016 accounts:

	2015	2016
Total income for year	£74,351	£95,888
Total expenditure for year	£60,194	£78,373
Net trading contribution/deficit	£14,157	£17,515

Surplus/balance 2014 - 2021



As seen over the last cycle of midweek night events (2012-2014) our financial position is fairly changeable. With the ability of the weather to have a detrimental effect on the society's bank balance, it is hard to generate an event surplus with midweek events; especially if there is bad weather.

2012 (25th year): loss of **£18,000**

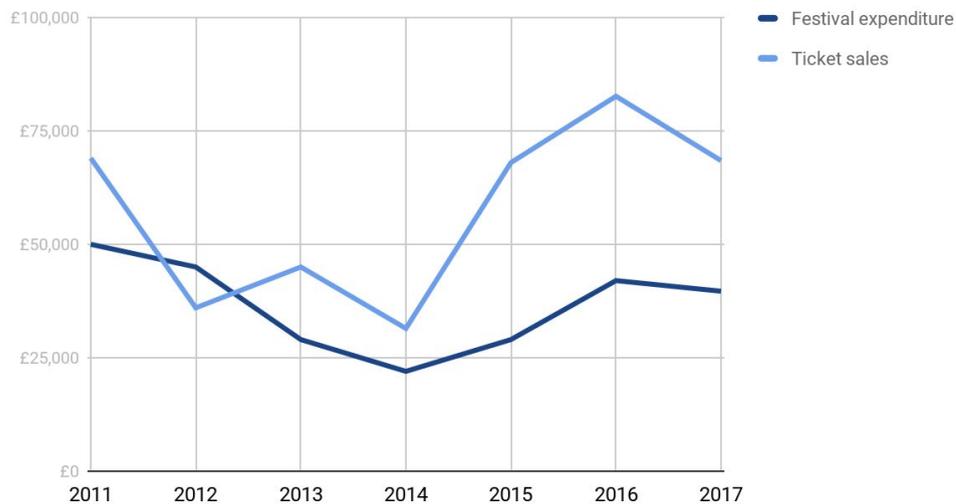
2013: surplus of £4,000

2014: loss of **£6,000**

Total losses for the last run of midweek events (Mon, Tue and Wed) was **£20,000**

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festival costs/ticket sales



5.2. Cost evaluation:

Analysis of the society's expenditure shows BFS is being affected by some key baseline cost increases:

- Cost of contractors (delivering professional services)
- Production storage
- Edinburgh Council (event charges and licensing costs)

5.2.1. Cost of contractors:

5.2.1.1. BFS has increased the amount available for freelance positions to ensure the contractors are paid a fair amount for the work they do. There are currently three freelance posts: Event Co-ordinator, Event Safety Officer and Communications Officer.

5.2.1.2. The Event Co-ordinator fee has been reviewed and the Board are committed to seeing that the post is paid reasonably. Once the EC is appointed, the Board reviews which other posts need to be filled.

5.2.1.3. In 2016 the Board decided to increase the fee amount for the EC postholder to bring it inline with living wage costs for a freelance worker. This meant there was a moderate increase in the amount paid, though would ideally be higher to be fair.

5.2.1.4. In 2017/2017 the Board will again increase the value of the contract with an aim to realise last year's intentions.

5.2.2. Production storage and venue hire:

5.2.2.1. BFS currently store all production equipment in Granton. This is not a long-term solution but is better than previous out of town storage sites.

5.2.2.2. As a society, there is a clear need to find cost-effective venues for meetings, large gatherings and rehearsals.

5.2.3. Paying the City of Edinburgh Council:

5.2.3.1. The increase to the costs of the Public Entertainment Licences required for both Beltane and Samhuinn are significant.

5.2.3.2. The total costs for all council services in 2017 could be as high as £8,000 for the year.

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What BFS pays for	Amount (£)
Rent of Calton Hill	2,300
Public Entertainment Licence (Beltane 2017)	4,500 (up from 1,000)
Public Entertainment Licence (Samhuinn 2017)	300
Structures licences (Beltane 2017)	265
Structures licences (Samhuinn 2017)	265
Parks Services fee	300
Roads TTRO Notice fee	400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,330</b>

5.2.4. Most Samhuinn-related costs are due to static performance, not procession. Due to those licensing costs and the fact most donations are received during the procession, the Board is considering changes to the performance format.

5.3. Beltane 2017 will be generating a surplus of £15,000, which will be used to support Samhuinn and other key costs. The Board may need to look at lowering the 10,000 capacity limit slightly in future, but since the festivals in the next few years fall on weekdays, capacity may not be met.

5.4. The Finance Officer invited questions from members. Details were requested on the possibility of buying premises; the demographic of ticket holders; accounts availability to members and suggestions on the Samhuinn format.

5.5. ACTION POINT: Future Board to explore more ways the Board can look at communicating financial data to members.

## 6. Outgoing Board

6.1. The Chair thanked the Board for their work over the past year, and gave a big thank you to Jackie Burrell, Irene Morelli and John Wilson who were not standing for re-election.

6.2. The 2016-17 trustees officially stood down ahead of the election.

## 7. Election of Board of Trustees

7.1. Personal statements were given by the following candidates: Brad McArthur, Dani Jakwerth (statement read by John Wilson), Danielle Christie, Erin Macdonald, Erin McElhinney, Nathan Kelso (statement read by Erin Macdonald), Shae Dunmore and Tom Watton.

7.2. Members were informed of the voting procedures.

## 8. Any other business

8.1. A question was raised regarding whether BFS needs to take action regarding child protection policy - such as to have a named Child Protection Officer. It

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was confirmed that the board are examining this as part of its review of procedures and broader governance review work.

**9. Vote for Board**

- 9.1. The voting forms were counted during the AOB. It was decided the members would be informed of the new Board by email, to allow time for full and accurate counting process to take place.

**10. Close**

- 10.1. The Chair summarised the action points to be taken going forward.
- 10.2. The Chair thanked the members for coming.