

Beltane Fire Society Annual General Meeting Minutes

Date:	Sunday 24th June 2018
Time	1.30 PM
Location:	Main Hall, City of Edinburgh Methodist Church, 25 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh EH8 9BX
Present:	Erin Macdonald (Chair), Tom Watton (minuting), Danielle Christie, Shae Dunsmore, Dex De Cruz, Alex Nuttgens, Neil Barton, Neil Rhind, Brad McArthur (Treasurer), Erin McElhinney, Karen Dickson, 36 BFS members
Apologies:	Nathan Kelso, Georgia Royes

1. Welcome

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed the members to the AGM, and thanked them for their attendance in consideration of the hot sunny weather.

2. Apologies

- 2.1. Apologies were received from Nathan Kelso, Georgia Royes.

3. Chair's Report

- 3.1. The Board carried out a lot of work throughout the year and board retention was improved. Processes were created to make the board role easier, new inductions and less meetings has improved the role for the trustees.
- 3.2. Despite this the workload is still very high. The board are discovering ways of encouraging working groups of volunteers and broadening the pool of those involved in non governance tasks (stores, environment).
- 3.3. In order to support the workload and to ensure continuity three new Board members were co-opted via the process set out in the BFS Articles of Association (Georgia Royes, Alex Nuttgens and Karen Dickson).
 - 3.3.1. The board has worked on balancing the workload of the trustees and delineating the roles of the board in terms of Governance, Operations and Community.

3.3.2. Operations: new systems and processes have been created and implemented for coordinating festivals, including a new GO selection process and improved handbooks for GOs and festival volunteers.

3.3.3. Community: the board have coordinated blethers and introduced a new complaints procedures (Resolutions, Grievance and Disciplinary procedures).

3.4. **Membership :**

3.4.1. We have over 700 members (people who have been involved over the last 3 years).

3.4.2. Transparency - With the new website there is a new membership section with minutes and agendas as well as information about the structures of the board. There is a need for discussion forum but so far no solution has been found.

3.4.3. An additional updates for members FB page has been created.

3.5. **Festivals and Events:**

3.5.1. Generally Spectacular - with challenges but none the less spectacular.

3.5.2. *Samhuinn Fire Festival* - Tuesday night but despite the lack of advertisements there were too many people in attendance. The festival itself was beautiful but because of the crowd numbers the event was shortened which had a major impact on the performers and stewarding volunteers. The last minute changes by a frontager meant that the event faced extra challenges.

3.5.3. *Beltane Fire Festival* - Beltane on a Monday night with beautiful weather - as a festival at the end of our 30th year of celebrations. A new May Queen was a new thing - following on from the blether a new transparent MQ selection process was adopted and we have a new May Queen!

3.5.4. Feedback from audiences and volunteers has been largely positive. The audience survey demonstrates that since 2011 the audience has been seeing more and understanding more as well as general improvements in terms of engagement. Long way to go but generally positive.

3.5.5. Volunteer post festival survey shows that 9/10 are very happy. Over 33% are participating in the survey, from this there are still some areas we need to focus on - Accessibility, storytelling and engagement.

3.5.6. The board are going to be working on safeguarding for performers to avoid repetition of an allegation of groping by a member of the public at Beltane 2018.

3.5.7. There were some flags around gender balance in terms of and making sure that both genders feel welcomed and safe. Some groups still need to work on inclusivity and connection with the community.

3.5.8. Queuing caused problems at the festival despite the monday night. All in all a lovely festival.

3.5.9. *Family events* - Samhuinnn and Beltane happened in partnership with the Scottish Storytelling Centre- these were very well received, however there are some problems with scheduling and maintaining connections with the festivals. The events were fantastic and going from strength to strength.

- 3.5.10. *Yule* - The pre-christmas feast was a nice end to 2017, and provided an opportunity for the Winter Drummers to showcase their performance which had been curtailed at Samhuinn.

3.6. ***Non-festival activities:***

- 3.6.1. As part of the 30th celebrations we planted Bridget on Calton Hill on Imbolc by the side of Charge Slope. This was done in partnership with CEC parks and forestry. Bridget is a rescued Scottish Pine.
- 3.6.2. In December we heard Anna Klien's orchestral composition commission by the Scottish Symphony Orchestra which was inspired by the Beltane Fire festival in 2017.
- 3.6.3. *New Premises* - We have moved! It has taken a long time to get stuff sorted, but eventually we have found a space 16 East Cromwell Street and we have named it Beltonia. We have a 10 year lease from the landlords. There is still a lot of work needing to do to it, but we have it.

3.7. ***Issues to be dealt with for the future:***

- 3.7.1. There are several board issues which the next board need to have some focus on. Premises, Safeguarding, Capacity (sharing the load - openly and transparently) and Income generation (safeguarding BFS for the future).
- 3.7.2. Samhuinn venue - because of the large numbers we have been told to think very differently about what we can do. The royal mile is no longer an option for the Autumn event. At the moment Calton Hill is the plan A option, there are other backup options. In 1400 the original Samhuinn was relocated from the Grassmarket to Calton Hill, so there is a tradition, albeit not yet a beltane. The grassmarket is an event space.
- 3.7.3. Parades consultation - the council had never received as many responses on a consultation of this kind.
- 3.7.4. Calton Hill management plan in place, but with new stakeholders (the gallery) there is work to be done to maintain our standing as a positive factor for the hill.

3.8. ***Questions for the Chair:***

- 3.8.1. No questions were asked. The audience thanked Erin for her services during the year as chair of the society.

4. Treasurer's Report

- 4.1. Presentation of 2016 completed and approved accounts where a surplus was created.
- 4.2. Overview of 2017 accounts (still in draft form) where new premises costs and the 30th celebrations meant that we ran at a deficit in 2017. There was also a reduction in capacity on the hill in place.

4.3.

	2016	2017
Income		
Ticket Sales	84,185	67,789
Donations & Misc.	11,355	10,410
	95,540	78,199
Expenditure		
Festival Costs	58,945	63,061
Core & Governance	17,741	19,262
	76,686	82,323
(Deficit)/ Surplus	18,854	(4,124)

- 4.4. Samhuinn 2017 donations were strong because of the adequate number of people there. An explanation of the expenditure criteria was given.
- 4.5. Presentation of the Beltane Fire Festival 2018 results were explained.
- 4.6. The partnership with the Scottish storytelling centre resulted in £109 from the Family Beltane 2018.
- 4.7. A demonstration of cyclical budgeting model.
- 4.8. Current Financial year presented with comparison of rental prices - means that the new premises model is more expensive however there are also savings on production and volunteer stress.
- 4.9. Fundraising development - BFS taking steps to get our eggs out of the one basket of Beltane tickets. So far we have raised £5.93 through the easy fundraising option and information about this is available on the support us page on the website.
- 4.10. **For the future:**
- 4.10.1. Review our VAT registration status, to reclaim some of our core costs associated VAT.
- 4.10.2. Develop a 5 year finance and fundraising strategy for the future.
- 4.10.3. Search for stability in the search of new treasurers for the avoidance of handover problems.
- 4.11. Brad was thanked for his policy creation and stabilisation of the situation.

5. Remarks from outgoing board and retirement of 2017-18 trustees

- 5.1. Erin thanked everyone involved in the last 12 months of beltane history!
- 5.2. Kate Kirkwood thanked the board members as both a society member and a blue. This was supported by a rapturous round of applause.
- 5.3. Nate, Georgia, Erin and Danielle were specifically thanked.
- 5.4. The board have officially stood down.
- 5.5. The outgoing chair temporarily resumed the role in order to facilitate the rest of the agenda.

6. Election of BFS board of directors/trustees

- 6.1. The process was explained to the AGM attendees
- 6.2. Personal statements presented from all standing, having been emailed to all membership in advance.
- 6.3. Voting of YES, NO or ABSTAIN by members via voting form; forms collected and counted at end of AGM.
- 6.4. Results to be emailed to membership within 24 hours

7. Any other business arising

- 7.1. Adam Dahmer spoke about his ongoing conversation that had migrated from the beltane Chat group.
 - 7.1.1. How does a registered charity act as an activist body?
 - 7.1.2. How does an organisation which appropriates gaelic culture do it in the way that isn't inappropriate?
 - 7.1.3. How does an almost professional production company put on ritual?
 - 7.1.4. Should there be a board?
 - 7.1.5. Should it be a charity?
 - 7.1.6. Should we use Calton hill?
- 7.2. **Informal Conversation around these questions:**
 - 7.2.1. **Kate K** - lots of people do lots of work to make the festival beautiful, the internal traditions that date back to the early 90s are a common thread for our society.
 - 7.2.2. If you want something doing you have to do it.

- 7.2.3. **Daniel C** - remembers the 2003 off Calton Hill festival, the audience make it more of a celebration and legitimises. A community only event has its advantages, but audience works
 - 7.2.4. **Danielle C** - Should we do more outreach? We could do more reminding people about these things.
 - 7.2.5. Can we create a shared understanding?
 - 7.2.6. **Stu** - Ritual vs Performance is a false Dichotomy, looking at other religions and how they balance ritual and performance.
 - 7.2.7. **Jay W**, 2 observations:
 - 7.2.7.1. As a storyteller - this would not have happened without the development and encouragement of the society. The beltane is the sum of all parts - 700 members strong with each bringing things forward, it is a living breathing entity. We must all evaluate whether we are aligned to this society.
 - 7.2.7.2. The society is still growing up - we still need to communicate more, in order to avoid rumors etc.
 - 7.2.8. **Dex** - By asking the questions are we undermining the individual rituals experiences etc.
 - 7.2.9. We do a disservice to the community
 - 7.2.10. **Lorraine** - Without structures organisations still create hierarchy. This discussion demonstrates the ability to have discussion about non hierarchical organisations. BFS is one of the most flexible and open organisations. The consideration of the points is essential.
 - 7.2.11. On ritual and performance - the difference of closed and open ritual from the festivals is important.
 - 7.2.12. **Kate** - we tend to project frustrations about how things are going onto bigger organisations.
 - 7.2.13. Relationships with the council are strong.
 - 7.2.14. Blues have an important role to improve communication of group ritual/performance (not entertainment).
 - 7.2.15. Adam rounded up the conversation.
- 7.3. A conversation was held by members on the discussion points

8. Results from the Election of New Members

- 8.1. Everyone who stood was elected.

9. Closing remarks from Erin