

# **BELTANE FIRE SOCIETY**

## **COURT SELECTION PROCEDURE**

Version Number 2.1  
Approved August-2020

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# 1. Introduction

Court Selection is a core process of Beltane Fire Society (BFS) and by ensuring that there is clear, effective, up-to-date and easy-to-follow guidance and controls, risks to volunteers, contractors and the organisation itself is minimised.

# 2. Purpose of the document

The main purpose of this document is to:

- 1) Set out the guidelines for Court Selection.

# 3. Definitions

The following concepts are used throughout this document and their associated meaning:

- Selection Group - This is a temporary working group set up with Blues and a Board member. More details on the make up and responsibilities of this group are in the body of this document.

# 4. Roles and responsibilities

- The Board of Trustees are responsible for making sure that the process is being followed, and to the persons being selected are of good standing within the society. In particular the Board representative who attends the selection meeting is responsible for acting as a check that the process is being properly followed.
- The Blues are responsible for ensuring that the person selected will be able to embody the role, creatively and spiritually, and that their vision for the role is compelling & in keeping with our traditions and the ritual.
- The Selection Group is collectively responsible regarding the safeguarding aspects that result when individuals are selected for these roles. Court roles allow access to all our members and there is an element of assumed trust within the community for those selected. This is why it is very important that the person is of good standing within BFS. If at any time, the Court member behaves in a way that is unacceptable with regard to Safeguarding, they are subject to exactly the same process and rules as everyone else.
- The Selection Group is responsible to ensure that those selected for the role do so for positive reasons, and that this role (as far as the selection group can tell) will not negatively impact the candidate.

## 5. Related documents

The process described within this document is also referred to, or supplemented with further information, in the following documents:

- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Volunteering Policy

## 6. Court Selection

The main principles behind Court Selection are as follows;

1. **Be Kind** - Every step in the process needs to be done as kindly, gently and considerately as possible.
2. **Have Boundaries** - Kindness begins at home! Decide how much time you can give, and how many interviews you can do and don't over work yourself
3. **Respect for everyone in the room** - All candidates and everyone in the Selection Group deserves respect.
4. **No one is above our Safeguarding Guidelines** - Even if candidates must be excluded at a very late hour due to their behaviour, there is lots of experience within our community that can be called upon. Do not tolerate poor behaviour out of fear that Court members are indispensable.
5. **Nip post-selection sour grapes in the bud** - Often after selection, we see community members complain that the candidate was undeserving and only got the role because of an unfair reason. This causes significant mental distress to newly appointed court members. Be aware it happens, and ensure people know it is not acceptable.
6. **Work Hard, but have fun** - The candidates and members of the selection group are all volunteers and the process should be enjoyable rather than a gruelling ordeal.

### 6.1. Request for Volunteers

The call for nominations/nudges to apply and applications will set out details on how to nominate and apply and will be posted on beltane.org, be circulated via the BFS announcements mailing list, and posted on BFS social media.

The names of those who nominate others will be kept confidential. The names and relevant details of those who apply will be shared among the selection group, but kept confidential by the members of the board and Blues.

Both self-nominations and those that were first suggested by community nominations that then choose to proceed with an application will be considered equally. Applications are welcome from both methods and will be considered equally from all.

### 6.1.1. Self-Nominations

Notes of interest for the role that has been advertised should be sent to [blues@beltane.org](mailto:blues@beltane.org) by the deadline. There is no formal application form, but we do need some information in your email:

- your name
- contact details
- the role you wish to be considered for
- your availability across the festival or event run-up
- plus up an optional up to 500 words in support of your application, should you wish to.

People may self-nominate whether or not they have been nominated by someone else beforehand. If you would like more information on the whole process, contact the Blues on [blues@beltane.org](mailto:blues@beltane.org), or the Volunteer Secretary on [volunteer@beltane.org](mailto:volunteer@beltane.org).

### 6.1.2. Community Nominations

BFS members will be invited to nominate those they feel should be encouraged to apply for the role. Nominations must be submitted by email to [blues@beltane.org](mailto:blues@beltane.org) by the deadline. There is no form to complete and no need to tell us why you are nominating - simply email the name of the member(s) you are nominating.

The selection group will contact all those who have been nominated for a nudge to apply (before the application deadline) and inform them that they have been nominated, and invite them to put themselves forward if they wish to. Nominations confidential will be kept confidential to the board and blues.

The purpose of this stage is to allow greater scope for BFS members to be involved in the process of selecting performers to be considered for court roles, and to ensure that even those who might not ordinarily consider applying are encouraged to do so.

## 6.2. Who can be a Court Member

Court members can be volunteers of any kind. Core criteria selection group members consider include, but are not limited to:

- Active and recent participation with Beltane Fire Society and our festivals: contributing effectively to our community and performances.
- Strong interpersonal skills: empathetic, a good listener, ability to work well with creative groups and bring people together.
- Charismatic, engaging and inspiring: ability to express and represent emotions and sentiments; to bring out creativity and performance in others.
- Commitment and availability to engage with the BFS community in some capacity in the run up to the festival, to share story (which is an essential part of the role)

- Respects and embodies the principles and qualities of our community, including: equality, respect for humanity and the environment, connection with BFS history, culture and creativity.
- Performance skills and presence.
- Ability and willingness to engage collaboratively with volunteers (GOs, Blues, Trustees) and contractors (Event Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, Operations Support) as part of a creative process.
- Clear interest and commitment to the role, the festival and Beltane Fire Society.
- Ability to attend and fully engage with key dates including: GO training day/weekend, GO meetings, rehearsals, walkthroughs, the festival itself.

Current board members and Blues for the upcoming festival may not be court members as detailed in the guidance on what roles people can hold at the same time. More information is available in Appendix A.

Gender is not a criteria used to select for any BFS role.

No person who has been excluded from membership of BFS or participation in BFS festivals may be a court member. If there is a complaint investigation or disciplinary process underway at the time of selection which calls into question a volunteer's ability to be an effective member of the court, the selection group may decide not to consider them for the role.

### 6.3. Who processes applications

All decisions about who is selected as a member of Court - including the shortlisting of individuals - will be made by the Court selection group. The group is made up of Blues for the upcoming festival and at least one BFS Board member (to act in an observational manner), and may include the volunteer taking on any other relevant Court character roles (i.e. May Queen for Green Man, Cailleach for Summer and/or Winter King). If Blues for the upcoming festival are unavailable, Blues from the last festival may be included in the selection group.

Each group member plays an equal part in selection, with not more or less than one vote per group member bar the Board member who shall not vote. Decisions will be made jointly and collaboratively via open discussion with all group members, but final decisions will be made by majority vote of those available to cast a vote at the time. The group will be chaired by a member of the selection group which the group will agree on themselves, and should a vote be tied, the group chair carries the deciding vote.

The Court selection group has the authority to decide to respond to exceptional circumstances relating to this process if they wish - decisions to do so should be decided by a majority vote. If the group cannot agree or require additional input or support, they should contact the BFS board chair.

#### 6.3.1. Managing Conflicts of Interest

When details of self-nominees / applications are circulated, the group Chair will invite all members of the selection group to declare any potential conflicts of interest in relation to any of the potential volunteers being considered. Conflicts of interest will include connections which may (or may be perceived to)

unduly influence the decision, such as: being partner/spouse of an applicant, or otherwise being in a position to directly benefit from the outcome of an application.

Members of the selection group should self-declare any potential interests, and if any member of the selection group feels there is a potential interest that has not been declared, this should be brought to the attention of the group Chair. If there is doubt regarding any matter on this process, including whether a declared interest represents a conflict, decisions will be made by and at the discretion of the group Chair (or a nominated BFS board member where any potential interests relate to the group Chair).

Any selection group member who has an agreed conflict of interest will not be involved in the selection process. The total number of the selection group does not need to be kept at all times, however there must always be at least one board member acting as an observer and at least two Blues to ensure decisions are not left to one individual.

#### 6.4. Processing Nominations

The selection group will respond to all nominations and self nominations to confirm they have been received. Anyone who has been nominated by someone else, if they make the shortlist, will be contacted to let them know they have been suggested, and to invite them to put themselves forward. Only those who apply will be considered at the shortlisting stage - having been nominated by someone else is not sufficient in itself.

The members of the selection group who receive nomination emails from anyone who applies/nominates themselves for the role will send these on to the full Court selection group, not less than 24 hours before the shortlisting meeting. These emails will be stored securely by members of that group, for their viewing only.

Before the final decision meeting, the board member involved in the selection group will check for any relevant disciplinary or complaint findings relating to shortlisted applicants, as well as relevant debrief notes from recent festivals they were involved in and the membership database. If any outcomes or information from these sources are of relevance, this should be shared with the selection group in a manner which does not breach any relevant confidentiality requirements. This should be done prior to inviting any candidates for an interview to avoid causing any distress that could be caused by notifying some they were shortlisted or inviting them to interview only to later tell them that they've been rejected on the basis of background information.

All applications and nominations will be treated as confidential.

Shortlisting and final decisions will be made at a meeting of the selection group in an appropriate, private space. In order to ensure sufficient time to consider applications fully, a contingency plan should be made in case not all decisions can be made during the first meeting - such as an allocated time the following day to meet to discuss and decide on any remaining applications.

The process meetings will be chaired by a member of the selection group. Meetings will be meetings of the festival Green Man (or other deity) selection group, not a board meeting or meeting of the Blues. A nominated member of the group should take basic minutes, (which should include recording declared conflicts of interest, conditions and requirements set for any approved applications, any key points which

are to be discussed at interview, vote counts, and other pertinent information). These minutes will only be shared beyond the selection group in the event of a problem. Candidates should note that while all efforts will be made to ensure all decision-makers meet all shortlisted candidates, this may not always be possible.

The chair of the Court selection group will arrange set times and venues for shortlisting, interviews and final selection decision meeting, and inform all selection group members as soon as possible in advance.

At least two members of the selection group must be present in person when candidates are interviewed. At the beginning of the meeting, the group chair will outline the decision making and voting process and the role of all those present, and this document will have been circulated to selection group members in advance, so any questions about it can be raised. Questions asked of the candidates should be similar, so the same opportunities are given to all those being interviewed.

Decisions will be made by majority vote. In the event of exceptional circumstances, the Board invests the selection group with the authority to make the appropriate decisions, and in the event that they cannot agree, they will refer back to the BFS Board chair.

#### 6.4.1. Shortlisting

The Court selection group will meet to consider all those who have applied. Each applicant will be discussed, with particular focus on how well they meet key criteria for the role, and whether or not to shortlist. Discussion should happen in an open and collaborative manner, sharing reasoning with all group members. Where a vote is required, the decision will be made by majority vote.

At the shortlisting meeting, the selection group should also agree a list of topics to discuss with all those shortlisted when they meet. These should focus on bringing out the best in the candidate, thus enabling those being considered to show how they meet core criteria for court members.

Following shortlisting, the group will contact all those who applied, to let them know that they have been invited to a meeting to discuss their application, or to inform them that their application has not been successful.

#### 6.4.2. Selection Meetings

No one may be appointed as a Court character without having met the selection group for a discussion, even if the person finally selected is the only applicant. Where more than one person applies, it is advised that interviews be held with between two and four people. The meeting can happen online or in person.

The meeting should be as informal as possible, and cover the topics agreed at the shortlist meeting, so all candidates are given the same opportunities to show their suitability. The candidate must be available for an interview on one of the assigned days, preferably in person - though phone is acceptable if necessary, at the discretion of the selection group. Not all selection group members must attend all meetings, though this is preferable.



### 6.4.3. Final Selection

Following the meetings with candidates, the selection group will meet to discuss which candidate for the role fits core criteria to the greatest degree. The final decision will be made by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the group chair carries the deciding vote.

## 6.5. Notifying Applicants

When the selection process is complete, all shortlisted candidates will be contacted to inform them if they have or have not been selected. This should be done in order to ensure those selected for the role can be announced.

When notifying people that they have not been selected, this should be done only after there has been an acceptance of the role by the preferred candidate, and by phone if possible, and an offer of feedback at a later date given - rather than providing instant feedback. Telling candidates that the decision was close should be avoided, and sensitivity used. Candidates not selected may be informed of who has been selected, but should be asked to keep this news private until it is announced.

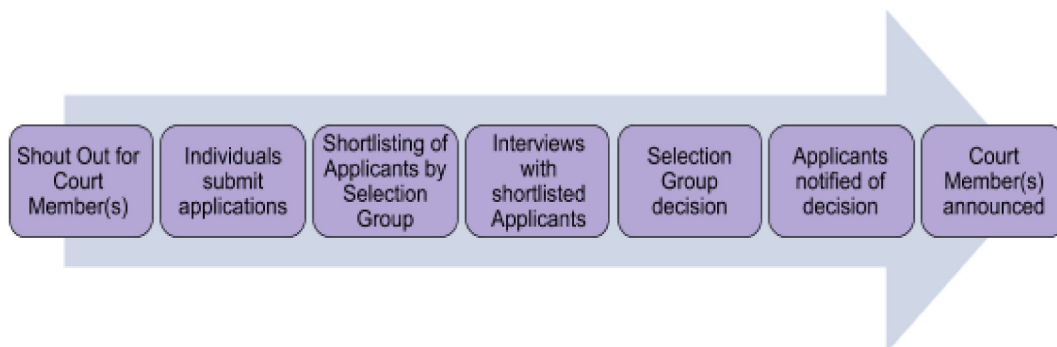
If the preferred candidate did not accept the role when offered, the next best candidate can then be chosen. Since it is often quite difficult to select candidates there are often two candidates who would make ideal deities.

## 6.6. Notifying the Board and Wider Community

When a decision is made by the selection group, the Board member on the panel shall share a paragraph to the rest of the Board setting out the reasons for that decision. This is provided for information, not for decision, and may happen after the applicants have been informed.

# 7. Flowchart

Below, the process has been summarised in a process flowchart to help explain the corresponding steps in the procedure.



## 8. Risks and controls

In this section, the inherent risks of the procedure have been listed, along with the existing controls to mitigate them.

Process phase	Risks	Controls
Request for Volunteers	Nobody comes forward for the role(s).	Use of community nominations and self-nominations allows for a greater number of potential names to be submitted to the selection group.
Who can be a Court Member	Individuals with safeguarding concerns may be selected for a key festival role.	The Board checks complaint records to confirm there are no issues with the potential individuals before they have been invited for an interview.
Who Processes Applications	Individuals in the selection group have a conflict of interest with an applicant	All involved in the selection group adhere to the Conflicts of Interest Policy and will notify the group if they need to be excused from the conversation.
Notifying Applicants	The selected individual does not wish to have the role.	First choice is to be contacted first and if they reject the role, moving to the next most suitable person. This is done before notifying unsuccessful applicants.

## 9. Version control

### Version control chart

<b>Effective Date:</b>	01 September 2020
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	31 August 2023
<b>Version:</b>	1.0
<b>Document number:</b>	PR-SEL-03
<b>Issued by:</b>	Chair
<b>Approved by:</b>	The Board of Trustees
<b>Summary of changes:</b>	The procedure was moved into the BFS Procedure template and minor changes on the wording made. The flowchart and risk chart were also added.