

FOLK CAMPS SOCIETY LTD
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at the Greig Hall, Alcester on Saturday 27th November 2004 at 2.30pm

Before the meeting commenced Pete Hendy (Chair) proposed moving item 6 (to consider a Consultative Question) to after item 8 (appointing auditors) giving item 9 (discussion) a natural follow on to the result of the Consultative Question. Carried. Pete Hendy also read out a letter of apology to Roger Conway from Paul Weir.

- 1. Apologies** were received from 32 Governing & Associate Members as noted on the appendix to the attendance list. There were 83 Governing and 7 Associate Members present as noted on the attendance list.
- 2. Minutes of the meeting of 29th November 2003**
Sue Malleson pointed out that item 8(1) should say just AGM.
Acceptance of the minutes was then proposed by Cecil French, sec by Alan Corkett. Carried.
- 3. Matters arising**
 - a) Jacqui Finn reported that Jay Parrack was never informed that she had been awarded a grant from the Development Fund. Pete Hendy apologised but said that an offer letter had been sent to her and that he would investigate the case.
 - b) Pat Kiernan pointed out that under Companies Act a period of notice for an AGM should not be less than 21 days and therefore the resolution passed in 2003 was not valid. As the notice for the AGM 2004 had been given to members in less than 21 days, this meeting was invalid. Mick Green agreed. RMC said that notice had been given in the summer edition of Extent, but Mick Green said that there was not enough information given to qualify. The meeting voted to accept the meeting as the AGM .
 - c) Andy Glass queried the item concerning a new PA. Pete Hendy said there had been mixed messages coming from camps and after considering items such as storage, damp marquees etc, Council had decided that for this year it would be too costly to replace 3 sets of PA. However, the Council would be considering this further. Shoi Finn suggested replacing 1 set of PA per year.
- 4. Appointment of tellers for a ballot**
Pat Kiernan, Cecil French & Dave Bennett were proposed by Julian Weaver, sec. Faith Kemp. Carried nem con.
- 5. To appoint 3 members to the Council of Management**
Pete Hendy reminded everyone present that the Council of Management is a board of directors with legal responsibilities. They order the business of the company. He welcomed Paul Weir, Mick Green and Brian Pollard as members of Council.
- 7. Adoption of the Report and Accounts for the year 2003/2004 (18 months)**
Pete Hendy reminded the meeting that the report and accounts covered a period of 18 months from 1st March 2003 to 31st August 2004 because of the change in the accounting year. Roger Conway (Administration Manager) presented the accounts. This financial year covered two camping seasons, which gave a disproportionate amount of income to the expenditure. Bob Kiernan queried what was causing the loss on camping activities. Roger Conway replied that there has always been a holistic attitude but this would be discussed later in the meeting. The layout on Page 2 of the Accounts had changed due to changes in accountancy procedure rules. The adoption of the accounts & report was proposed by Dennis Leavey, sec Jenny Walton. Carried nem. Con.

8. Appointment of L.J. Ashman as auditors

Proposed by Malcolm Bright, sec. Christine Corkett. Carried nem. Con.

At this point in the meeting Pete Hendy thanked Judy Pierce and Andy Malleson (retiring Council members) for their work on Council.

Judy Pierce then read a letter she had written to the meeting, stating her views on the financial decision that Council had made not to run a marquee camp in 2005, resulting in many comments and public opinions being expressed to Council members since that decision was made in September 2004. In the letter she reminded the meeting that Council does not make decisions lightly and will listen to people's opinions, but that without Council working hard, there would be no holidays. She asked for people to support Council so that they can continue the work that has kept folk alive and well for the past 30 years. (A copy of the letter will be kept for records).

Pete Hendy stated that the Articles of Association had been changed many times and that Council was hoping to re-write them this year. He said that a sub-committee would be set up and that Governing Members would be able to vote on them next year. The sub-committee would consist of 2 Council members and 2 non-Council members and he asked for people to think whether they would like to be part of this group, and he would ask again at the end of the meeting.

Lizzie French gave a report on the work of the Development Fund working group. They had given 3 main grants – CD by m4trix, Keith Gregson's teaching pack and Eurobash in Kent for an international dance. Each of these projects had an acknowledgement to Folk Camps written into the publicity materials. The Fund also supported camp staff apprenticeships. She reminded everyone that applications for funding are welcome. Pete Hendy thanked Lizzie for her report and said the Development Fund Working Group made decisions on applications for funding and needed 2 non-Council representatives on it. It was agreed that Lizzie French and Barry Pollard would continue. Proposed by Christine Corkett, sec. Linda Conway. Carried nem. Con.

Roger Conway showed the meeting the children's newsletter entitled Groundsheet that Carolyn Robson had produced and sent out to all under 11 years who attend Folk Camp holidays.

6. To consider a Consultative Question regarding the reconsideration of the Council decision not to run a Marquee site in 2005.

Results of the ballot:

247 papers were issued. 153 were returned. 1 was spoilt. In favour of the Question 72, against 80. there was a 60% poll.

7. To consider matters for discussion

The Chairman told the meeting that there had been much debate on the marquee question on the 2 web newsgroups and he asked that there should be no personal comments during the discussion. We all wanted Folk Camps to continue into the future. The vote on the consultative question was close but that it was Council's responsibility to conduct the business of the Society.

Some members felt that all the facts had not been confirmed and were concerned that only one side of the argument had been put across. A letter to Council from 53 Members and 4 others asked for substantiation of 3 points and provision of facts concerning discharge of sewage, planning permission, manufacture of marquees. The Chairman stated that the Council had made the decision at the September meeting, in the light of a £16,000 loss on the season. This was partially hidden by

£6,000 interest and book sales of £4,800 and reserves had been used to cover this amount. The main problem was falling number of campers and therefore income. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 controls sludge released into the ground (which includes our raw sewage and kitchen waste), therefore it will be more expensive to deal with this in future. A Planning consultative document 2002 issued by the Dept of Transport included provisions to control locations like Folk Camps, which means we would probably have to apply for planning permission in the future. Although the document has been subsequently withdrawn, information had been received from a Local Authority Planning Authority and a specialist lecturer in T&C Planning giving reasons to expect an early re-introduction of the document.

It was confirmed that a number of our current practices are well short of the required standards and will have to change.

In reply to questions the Chairman explained that Folk Camps have always held a holistic approach to finances. Weekend sites lose money, but other sites have helped with cross-subsidisation. It was confirmed that the marquee site this year lost money. Every summer week needs to return £3,500 - £4,000 to central funds in order to run the business. Ideally every camp must contribute to overheads. The core problem is a reduction in bookings. This debate would not have taken place if numbers had increased. Why were we not attracting more people? Council had discussed the outcome if there continued to be a 5% decrease in numbers per year and it was clear that Our Marketing needs to be looked at.

Members stated that marquees should provide a safe environment in attractive locations for families with small children. Halls are not perceived as being as safe although we need to provide choice.

The debate continued with comments regarding personal preferences about cross-subsidisation, and a member of the Council said that it was difficult to get both sites and staffing as people might want. The right staff in the right place is not always possible. It was agreed that names are sometimes published incorrectly but Extent had deadlines to hold to.

The Company Secretary stated that Council will take on board all views expressed. Council works as a unit. They work very hard and the 2 new members will have their chance to put their views forward. Council does work for members, not against them. The Chairman confirmed that marquees were not being totally cut out, just a one year gap to allow for an assessment of our future needs.

The Chairman then called an end to the discussion.

10. Any other business

a) It was agreed that Pat Kiernan, Sue Malleson and Claire Mycock should be members of the group looking at the Articles of Association.

b) Jacqui Finn proposed a vote of thanks to all Council members and the members of staff, Roger Conway and Barry Moule. Everyone greatly appreciated their hard work, love and effort.

c) Dennis Leavey thanked all those who have given up time in the past 12 months to staff camps, as they have worked very hard to make the Society what it is.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 4.15 pm.