

**Folk Camps Society Limited**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**  
**held at Toddington Village Hall, Toddington on 23 November 2019**

The AGM was declared open at 14:35 by Marcus de Frettes in the chair

**Present:** 73 Governing Members including 9 Council members and 4 Contractors.

- 1. Apologies** were received from 23 Governing Members.
- 2. Appointment of tellers for a ballot** - 3 people put themselves forward and were accepted by the meeting: Barbara Pollard, Sarah Richardson and Stuart Beatie. Sean Hayden was our returning officer.
- 3. Minutes of AGM 17 November 2018:**  
Jacqueline Finn proposed that the minutes be accepted. Seconded by Liz Cooper. Carried unanimously. Signed by Marcus de Frettes.
- 4. Matters arising:** There were none.

**5. Adoption of Report & Accounts**

This discussion was to clarify the accounts. A discussion of finance is later in the agenda.

- a. Marcus de Frettes presented the accounts.
- b. Mic Spenceley spoke to say that he had found some errors.
  - i. Page 8, Net Income Expenditure showed the same amounts as last year.
  - ii. Page 13, Expenditure shows the same amount as last year.
  - iii. This has implications for the totals, including those on Page 1.
  - iv. Mic Spenceley said that he didn't feel that the accounts can be accepted with these errors in them.
  - v. Mic also asked who looked at the accounts before they were published.
  - vi. Mic did notice these errors before the AGM, but did not bring this to Council's attention.
- c. Tony Mealings proposed that the accounts be resubmitted to the accountants for correction and that the amended accounts should come back to Council for inspection and then be circulated to the membership for approval in compliance with the rules of the organisation and the law. Paul Weir seconded it and it was passed unanimously.
- d. Paul Weir asked if our articles will allow for a postal/email vote in these circumstances.
- e. Patrick Self said he would check and find the most straightforward and legal way to get membership approval for the accounts.
- f. Mel Horton proposed that from next year, council ask for anyone having comments or corrections for the accounts to inform Council before the AGM, if possible.

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- g. Liz Cooper asked about the accountant – do we need to use the same accountant each year?
- h. Andy Malleson – said it is very healthy to change accountants every few years. He proposed that we reconsider our accountant (or find an alternative accountant). Liz Cooper seconded. Carried but not unanimous, 6 abstentions.
- i. Sue Malleson suggested that the agenda item to approve the accountants was delayed until the accounts had been examined.

**6. Council.** Presented by Marcus de Frettes.

- a. Patrick Self had been co-opted and his and work was appreciated.
- b. Jane Wheeler had been co-opted and has done a lot of work on the Party Band and her contribution was appreciated.
- c. Retiring council members: Emma Daniel, Val Coleman-Porritt, Barry Pollard, Lou Tribus, Jane Wheeler.
- d. Patrick Self – standing for election
- e. Current remaining members of Council: Marcus de Frettes, Judith Jenkins and Anthony Keen.

**7. Personal Statement.** Sheila Sather presented a personal report about an accident that she experienced at camp. She questions our culture of caring for each other because no one had contacted her to follow up after her accident. She believes that FCS' fear of litigation had prevented FCS from contacting her to follow up about her injury. She felt that she was ignored, Council thanked her for her statement to the meeting.

**8. Development fund.** Presented by Barry Pollard.

- a. Explanation of what the Development Fund is.
- b. Cat McGill spoke about the Development Fund and her project. She pointed out that having a small amount of funding (seed funding) makes it more likely to get larger funding from other sources. Her project is called "Adopting a Musical Approach" and is aimed at children who are adopted or fostered and who may have missed out on the sort of speech patterns used to speak to small children.
- c. Cat had written a book and released an album of songs as part of this project. The book gives the background and explains the ideas she is expressing in her songs.
- d. Mel Horton asked how many applications we have had to the fund this year – (two) – and pointed out that we need more people applying.

**9. Staffing.** Presented by Barry Pollard.

- a. Volunteers are always needed. There's an apprenticeship program.

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- 10. Finance.** The Chair Marcus de Frettes presented several graphs showing Folk Camps Finances over a 25-year period adjusted to 2019 prices. The following summarises the graphs and points raised.
- a. 25 years' Trading Surplus in 2019 prices. We've had losses most years. 2018 was the worst year in the last 25 years.
  - b. Reserves – showing 25 years' reserves, which have been growing year by year. The reserves come mainly from un-earned income.
  - c. Sales – 25 years of sales in 2019 prices.
  - d. Prices – 25 years of prices in 2019 prices. Most of that increase happened up to 2006. Since 2006, there has only been a 16% increase in price in real terms. The cost of meeting campers' expectations has risen substantially which has caused an increase in cost.
  - e. As a charity we should aim to be making zero trading profit on average.
  - f. Nancy Khan – asked if we are trying to keep our reserves at a 1994 level. The answer is: In effect, yes, but not by policy.
  - g. Paul Weir listed the infrastructure costs that have gone up since 1994. He said that these costs aren't part of a hall camp but we are charging the same amount for both types of camp. He expressed his view that Council's decision on next year's pricing was sensible.
  - h. Mel Horton asked if we knew how many campers we need for summer camps to be viable. Marcus said that we need approximately 600 campers in 2020 to break even. Patrick Self pointed out that there is a difference between a camp being socially viable and financially viable.
  - i. Patrick/Marcus/Judith answered Tony Mealing's question about what our bottom line is in terms of how much of the reserves we have to preserve in case of disaster. Our "disaster plan" provides for reserves to cover two completely disastrous years. The bottom line is about £170,000.
  - j. Cat mentioned that she told us last year about a music insurance company. Council had not followed up but agreed it was worth looking into.
  - k. Paul Weir / Sue Malleson / Jacqueline Beattie mentioned historical events from 1983 when FCS came very close to financial failure from running too many Folk Camps at below cost. Also, we had been warned that as a charity we couldn't have large reserves.
- 11. Outreach.** Presented by Jane Wheeler.
- a. Overview of what's happened since last year, and new ideas.
  - b. Sue Malleson – gave her support, thought it was a good idea

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- c. Jane – there are a number of ideas that are coming forward for outreach and it will be up to the new Council to take these ideas forward.
- d. Liz Cooper – if there's a working party to deal with outreach, it should be representative of Folk Camps – different ages and views.
- e. Sue Malleson – we need to be clear what is marketing and what is development. On the marketing side, there are some easy wins, such as sending leaflets to festivals, posting ads in folk magazines. She felt that marketing and outreach are separate items, and we shouldn't try to market through outreach.
- f. Regine de Frettes – said when she was on council, it was decided not to send leaflets to festivals because of the cost.
- g. Jacqueline Beattie – asked whether the outreach working group would include Council and non-Council members? Marcus said that would be preferable. It would be up to the new council to decide.
- h. Sarah Malleson – we need trackability. How do we know if our marketing is effective? She was happy to help Council with this.
- i. Tony Mealings – outreach is very important, gives us a chance to be represented in parallel organisations.
- j. Will Riding – there are so many more festivals now than 10 years ago. Is it worth trying again?
- k. Nancy Khan asked – who is available to help with this?
  - a. Volunteers to help: Cat McGill, Sarah Malleson
- l. General discussion of whether or not leaflets at festivals (or elsewhere) are effective.
- m. Cat McGill proposed that Council create an outreach program and Jacqueline Beattie seconded the proposal. Passed unanimously.

**12. Next year's camps (2020)**

- a. Two new sites, 5 marquee weeks in Kent and one hall week in Lincolnshire.
- b. Normal Bank Holiday camps except for early May because of the national change in BH dates this year only (to a Friday). So the early May camp will be at Chiddingly, one week later than usual.
- c. Liz Middleton – a request that we try not to hold camps when schools are still in session.
- d. Faith Kemp requested that FCS remember to send news about FCS by post to the people who aren't on-line.

**13. How can you help?**

- a. Spread the word
- b. Become an apprentice or nominate a friend to become an apprentice.
- c. Ben Thackery suggested that there could be a downloadable flyer that we could print out to distribute.

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- d. Paul Weir - FCS used to have volunteer leafleters.
- e. Emma Riding – suggested a “Thunderclap”- everyone posting FC information on social media at the same time. It could include a discount.
- f. Sue Malleson – could we have discount vouchers for activities other than the Party Band?
- g. Cat McGill – introduce new members by giving them a leaflet with the FC member’s name on, along with the discount code. If so, when a booking is made we would know who introduced the new camper.
- h. Nancy Khan – can we incentivise the young people who go to the Halsway Manor youth folk event to come to FC as well?

**14. Any Other Business**

- a. Cat McGill – her family was able to eat in the small marquee on camp this year. They appreciated this very much, it helped with their particular needs. The table didn’t always get cleaned, though. She asks if this can become part of normal procedure for camps, including cleaning the table.
- b. Cat asked for volunteers who would be willing to get together with her to create some accessibility guidelines.
- c. Jenny Newman suggested that there be WhatsApp staffing groups.
- d. Jenny Hopper – there was a staff WhatsApp group at one of the camps this summer which was very effective.
- e. Sue Malleson – about her Cold Bogmarsh Facebook page. Some people have asked Sue if there could be a different FC group to discuss FC issues and leave CB for the lighter topics. Some people feel that CB is fine as it is. Jenny Newman mentioned that there are people who have been turned off by the recent discussions on CB.
- f. Marigold Gorick – the location of the AGM makes it very difficult for some people to attend.
- g. Emma Riding raised several points:
  - i. asked that we thank Chris White for filling in for a week at short notice. This was agreed unanimously.
  - ii. Can we create a calling apprenticeship?
  - iii. Pricing bracket for children isn’t in line with the fact that children have to be in education until they are 19. So children in the 17-19 age bracket don’t necessarily have an income to pay for camp. Could we put the teenage price age bracket up to 19?
- h. Linsey Tree Sim asked if we have or could have a hardship fund for people who are struggling to pay for camp.
- i. Marigold Gorick– FCS needs to think more closely about how to keep FC as a low-cost holiday for families. The early booking

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- discount discriminates against people who don't have regular income.
- j. Felina Mason – comparison with German folk camps which gives discounts for students, unemployed, OAPs etc.
  - k. Sally Mounter – her experience is that people think our price is expensive. She thinks that a hardship fund is a good idea.
  - l. Cat McGill – could we do a “pay it forward” scheme? She knows of an organisation that has a “suggested price”, “pay a bit more price” and a “pay a bit less price”.
  - m. Emma Riding – retention is important – we want to keep people coming back as well as getting new people. A hardship fund would help with retention.
  - n. Sue Malleson – pricing was an area for the new Council to discuss.
  - o. Claire Mycock – Suggested that, in the light of all the good suggestions that have come forward today, we should we have a group to look at pricing and hardship funds etc.
  - p. Mel Horton – asked are we active in encouraging FCS member to remember us in their estate planning?
  - q. Brian Hazelden – Why was Sarah Richardson's contract terminated? Judith read a prepared statement from Council – copy available on request. Council cannot comment because of privacy. Cat McGill and Jacqueline Beattie supported this.
  - r. Will Riding proposed a vote of thanks to Sarah for her work as Administration Manager. Sue Malleson seconded. Accepted unanimously.

**15. Thanks.** Marcus de Frettes thanked Jenny Hopper and friends for the food, Sarah Malleson & Simon Hopper for the music workshop, Cat McGill for the singing workshop and Richard Jones for leading the ceilidh band.

**16. To appoint 6 members to the Council of Management:** After a long and careful count by the tellers the number of votes cast in the election was declared:

Rebecca Boram	117
Amanda Coleman	115
Anne Guthrie	134
Mel Horton	120
Sue Malleson	126
Tony Mealings	83
Lesley Piercey	110
Patrick Self	168
Mic Spenceley	112
Paul Weir	123

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Rebecca Boram, Anne Guthrie, Mel Horton, Sue Malleson, Patrick Self and Paul Weir were duly elected to Council.

The meeting closed at approximately 6pm after a 1 hour pause while the election results were completed.

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Chair November 2020