

Folk Camps Society Limited
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held at Toddington Village Hall, Toddington on 17 November 2018

The AGM was declared open at 14:32 by Marcus de Frettes in the chair

Present: 51 Governing members including 9 Council members and 4 Contractors.

1. **Apologies** were received from 27 Governing members.

2. **Minutes of AGM 18 November 2017:**

Corrections: incorrect date, 2016 is to be corrected to 2017, Carried unanimously.

Item number 10. Stuart Beattie commented that there was no mention under "Folk Camps Party Band" that a specific amount of £40,000 was discussed. He proposed this was added to the minutes. Wording to be put "a figure of £40,000 was discussed as a budget for the two-year project, there were no further questions". Seconded by Patrick Self. Amendment carried with 9 abstentions.

Patrick Self proposed that the amended minutes be accepted.

Seconded by Sue Malleson. Carried unanimously.

3. **Matters arising:** There were none.

4. **Adoption of Report & Accounts**

The chair summarised the report.

Questions from the floor: Mic Spenceley asked if there should have been a detailed breakdown of Party Band expenditure? He queried whether other aspects of its costs had been included within the accounts. He felt that members should know how this is broken down. Patrick Self asked how it would benefit the members to see how the project expenditure had been broken down?

Clare Mycock felt that the Party Band should be considered to be a separate project and so we should not need a break down in the accounts.

Barbara Pollard stated she found accounting of the project confusing.

Jacqueline Beattie put forward an interpretation that the Party Band had not cost the Society £20,000.

Mic Spenceley stated that there is a lot of confusion and anyone who was not at the AGM in 2017 had not had the opportunity to discuss the project.

The chair, Marcus de Frettes, stopped discussion and asked what was inaccurate in the accounts? He explained that all the costs of the Party Band contract are in one place.

Mic Spenceley stated that it should be broken down into the different categories.

Marcus de Frettes stated that The Society is looking at this as an investment and so it is separated from the trading loss.

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Lou Tribus suggested that it should be reported a little more fully.
Sue Malleson thought perhaps members would be more comfortable if the project costs were paid out of the Development Fund.

Marcus de Frettes suggested Council would discuss this.

Patrick Self suggested that Council consider what to do for next year's accounts.

Adoption of the report and accounts was proposed by Patrick Self and seconded by Stuart Beattie. Carried with 1 against and 7 abstentions.

5. Appointment of James de Frias as accountants

Proposed Marcus de Frettes, seconded Mic Spenceley.

Carried unanimously.

6. Appointment of tellers for a ballot - Stuart Beattie proposed by

Patrick Self, seconded by Regine de Frettes,

Andy Malleson proposed by Nancy Khan, seconded Clare Mycock,

Jane Wheeler proposed by Jenny Newman, seconded by Nancy Kahn.

The tellers were duly appointed and retired with the sealed ballots for the Council election.

Retiring Member of Council. Marcus de Frettes proposed a vote of thanks to Liz Cooper after completing her 6 year term on Council, she had made a huge contribution, particularly doing a massive amount of work in Health and Safety, she had also worked on staffing.

Jacqueline Beattie seconded the motion which was carried unanimously with a round of applause for Liz.

7. To appoint 2 members to the Council of Management: The number of votes cast in the election was declared.

Mic Spenceley 89 votes; Marcus de Frettes 82 votes; Lesley Pearcey 62 votes; there were 2 spoiled ballots.

Mic Spenceley and Marcus de Frettes were both elected to Council

8. Resolutions proposed in advance by Governing Members:

There were none

9. Any Other Business

Council reports to members:

a) Raising the profile of Dance (Val Coleman Porritt) Council has recognised the need to raise the profile of dance in Folk Camps. It is part of the long term mission and we are looking for initiatives.

Particular emphasis is needed at the week camps and bank holiday weekends. The Dancers workshop weekend will continue but it is important to raise its profile and numbers.

Generally we are looking for a greater range of dances including more

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complicated dances, more varied dance styles, promotion of regional dance, and children's dances. All need to be considered. Suggestions include make more use of the early session and prioritise this to develop dance. It has been suggested that each camp has at least one caller and basic dance workshop with daily dance workshops to raise the profile as has been done with music workshops. It has been suggested to include gender-free dancing with the possible use of arm bands to identify dance roles. The introduction of a dance facilitator and increased marketing including festival programme adverts are also suggested.

Questions - Jane Rawlins remembered a discussion about a callers' weekend and felt there was a need for training for callers. Val Coleman Porritt suggested this could be part of the Dancers Workshop weekend. Sue Malleson pointed out that this is already in the staff manual. Leaders should follow the information about how to run the camp. She felt that the advice had not been followed and which meant that we are not getting it right. She stated that leaders need to read manual to ensure that a balanced offering is facilitated. We should be advertising for more dancers and also encouraging people to do more Morris, Sword etc.

Sarah Parry pointed out that she didn't feel encouraged to go to specialist camps as she felt she wasn't specialist enough.

Mic Spenceley commented that there is a north/south divide with the northern camps offering a much more traditional style with a lot of dance content. Leaders are coming from the northern camps which should help. He also reminded members that the Development Fund had financed the printing of his book "The Callers Manual" specifically to help new callers in Folk Camps and that copies are made available to staff. He would be keen to be involved in a project to encourage callers.

Jacqueline Beattie stated that this was an interesting new focus and thanked Council for promoting it. When leading she has been supporting new callers to develop calling skills and suggested that anyone interested could discuss how to do this with her as it is different for each person.

Jacqueline Beattie also stated that she does not want the introduction of arm bands but preferably more understanding of gender free calling.

Nancy Khan said she would be interested to attend a callers' weekend and feels it is quite daunting for a beginner to call at an evening dance session.

Cat McGill - wonders if there should be a difference between social and performance dancing. There needs to be an emphasis on social dancing. She wondered if there should be a focus group on this.

Jenny Newman pointed out that the early evening should not be just beginner callers with beginner musicians and beginner dancers. It needs to be the best musicians and best callers to encourage all and make it happen.

Rob Humphries suggested we look at marketing to dancers such as

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university dancers. He suggested that contact be made with the Inter-Varsity Folk Dance Festival to promote the dance aspect of Folk Camps.

Sally Mounter suggested some ways to coach callers.

Caroline Tracey stated that we need to encourage younger dancers and make sure they learn the basics of dance such as how to swing properly. Then they will dance more safely.

Marcus de Frettes commented that he had come to dancing as an adult and had not been taught technique and didn't want to take part in the children's sessions.

Dave Rawlins suggested that leaders get in touch with Morris sides local to camps so that they can join in and visit.

Val Coleman Porritt thanked everyone for their comments and pointed out that there are many different opinions about what should be done.

b) Development Fund Projects

Cat McGill: Adopting a musical approach This is a project looking at musical features in the way we talk to children and babies, aimed particularly at helping children who have had a difficult start in life, in fostering and adoption. It is hoped that taking those features and putting them into new songs, music and recordings, particularly for slightly older children will help them with bonding. She thanked Council for the grant which also helped to achieve more matched funding. The grant was the maximum of £1000.

Sue Malleson: Easy recorder arrangements Geoff Ginn Recorder Music project. Sue had a wealth of paper copies of arrangements of folk tunes by her dad. The grant funded these being put into music software using Sibelius (done by Chris Jewell). These have already been accessed by the Recorder Society and will be published on our website by Patrick Self. The grant was £300.

John New and Keith Gregson are working on a project in association with Newcastle University Folk Degree to transcribe and publish some dance and musical arrangements written over time between John and Keith. A formal application has not yet been received.

8 apprentice places were funded this year. Council look forward to funding more in future.

Patrick Self asked for all projects to be added to the website. This could be as case study examples to showcase our grant activities.

c) Future Marquee sites (Steve Porritt) Some previous sites are no longer available to us so we really need to seek out more. He detailed the type of field suitable for a camp and gave a reminder about the incentive

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of credit on Folk Campers' accounts for sites which are identified and used. Suggestions should be forwarded to the office to be passed on to the sites manager. There is a set of requirements on the website.

Fees for use of a site are negotiated by the sites manager.

Sue Malleson had sent out editorial piece about the use of the site at Gower to relevant journals.

d) Staffing (Barry Pollard) Thanks were offered to all who had staffed during 2018 and anyone who is going to staff next year. He explained there is always a need for new staff and anyone interested should volunteer.

e) Finances (Marcus de Frettes) Council has been spending time remodelling finance relating to camps. This helps to predict costs and profit. The model could show what may happen with different numbers at each camp and provides a prediction which can be used for pricing. The key question is whether the reserves are adequate. Marcus had done a comparison from Companies House data, and commented that reserves are 35% higher now than in 1994. It can now be modelled as to what would happen if something catastrophic occurred which meant all summer camps were cancelled and what the impact would be. An illustration for this was shown on the screen.

Based on this modelling Council believed that there is enough reserves to cover expenses in the event of two years of catastrophe.

Jane Wheeler asked if a 5-7 year trajectory had been looked at as this was the second year the Society had made a trading loss.

She stated that there is not enough information to come to a conclusion about reserves levels.

Simon Hopper wanted to know how much it costs to set up camps.

Mic Spenceley stated that as past Administration Manager he did not recognise the figures given.

Marcus de Frettes indicated that in 1994 the reserves were £95,000.

Mic Spenceley listed the finances for the past few years and pointed out that an existing method of modelling was already in use for many years with accurate results.

Claire Mycock agreed with Jane Wheeler that there was not enough information to make a judgement and will be interested to see where we are after two more years of deficit. It is helpful to get clarity but she is not sure if we have that yet.

Steve Porritt agreed that modelling had been used previously, but explained that the new modelling was more accurate in the area of reflecting how contractor time is spent.

Marcus De Frettes agreed that modelling had been in place before him but suggested both models could be used in parallel as a check. He also

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advised that holiday business had not been separated out from investments. It can be seen that previous pricing had not been accurate and with the new model this can be improved.

Sue Malleson pointed out that the suggested disaster had already happened in the past during the year of "foot and mouth" disease, and that Folk Camps had found a way around it.

Cat McGill asked about disaster insurance. She was informed that it is too expensive. She suggested an organisation called "Making Music" may be useful for insurance. She will email details to the office.

f) Pricing (Marcus de Frettes) Costs have been increasing faster than inflation. We have provided better resources and facilities, better quality food and equipment. The Society has accumulated a problem which has been covered up by financial investment. This shows that we are no longer covering the costs accurately.

We need to correct this and so camps for next year will be going up; summer camps by 10%.

Jane Wheeler asked it had been modelled whether the increase of cost may put people off. Marcus de Frettes answered that it is not yet known how the Party Band project will affect interest in next season's camps. He advised that in 2018 the unfilled hall camps had caused a loss. Claire Mycock pointed out that the camp numbers had not yet been explained.

Marcus said that costs were based on what an estimated number of bookings would be.

Sue Malleson worried about how much a 10% increase will be for families and pointed out that that this starts to not be an affordable holiday.

Marcus de Frettes commented that affordability was actually better than it was when Folk Camps started.

Sue Malleson asked why the early bird camp discount on the summer camps had been taken away. It was explained that rather than a discount it had added an increase for paying late. The change between early and late prices for summer camps had been dropped when the due date for balances had been changed to 2 months before the camp. This was to help with cash flow and waiting lists.

Jane Wheeler suggested that future consideration should be given to how evenly camp costs are applied. Marcus de Frettes thought this an interesting point that Council should note.

Jacqueline Beattie wished to thank Jane Wheeler and Nancy Khan for their remarkable level of recruitment of new people to Folk Camps over time.

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g) Party Band (Marcus de Frettes) Marcus introduced positive review quotes noted in Extent. Council's long term view is that it is necessary to keep looking 2 years ahead. Festivals have a two year planning window, so Council is looking to extend the Party Band project each year in advance, to enable them to accept future bookings.

Council needs to look at the impact the band is having, what the costs will be and the state of finances in the Society. It was hoped that the meeting can agree an advisory motion for Council.

Mic Spenceley commented he had attended and performed at folk festivals for 30 years and suggested that free acts will always attract enthusiasm from the festival bookers. He felt the funding of the venture is mind bogglingly expensive. For the same money the Society could get professional musicians at Folk Camps.

Jenny Newman commented that performances were not completely free to festival organisers as festival tickets were given to performers.

Regine de Frettes stated she felt that paying musicians at Folk Camps would not be a good idea.

Sue Malleson queried the signing up to the Folk Camps mailing list. How many more email subscribers had been added since the Party Band gig in Chippenham? This information was not to hand as currently the system was not capturing the reason why people subscribed. Sue Malleson suggested that the issue of measurement of the source of enquiry should be tackled in order to evaluate the impact of the Party Band.

Andy Glass wanted to challenge Mic Spenceley's assertion that if you offer a band for free it will be booked.

Jacqueline Beattie agreed with the example from Chippenham Folk Festival.

Cat McGill added that it's more important to look at the potential of getting new campers from the gig, we must coldly look at how will Folk Camps address their needs. If it is to dance to a band then the festival will meet that need. If it is for a family to have a musical experience then the band can bring people to that. Cat would like to see the Party Band do more in the community, getting to people who don't usually do this kind of thing. If we want a return on the investment, we should take it to places where we can show people that FAMILIES can play together.

Helen Self added to Cat's point, and questioned the cost for families to attend camps compared to the benefits of Folk Camps as a family experience of music at a catered camp.

Rafi Colman suggested much of the purpose of the Party Band is to encourage and inspire young musicians from Folk Camps to grow their skills.

Sue Malleson pointed out that a downside of the Party Band over bank holidays and festival weekends is that we really do miss them at camp. We need to review the impact of the Party Band on our camps over the years. She asked that the costs for the Party Band for the next few years be

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presented so campers can see how they will pan out.

Marcus de Frettes responded that the band is currently in start-up phase, and costs can't yet be panned out as yet as they are not yet proposed. Each gig costs the Society about £1500.

Jacqueline Beattie sees the value as getting the message to as many people as possible and applauds Jenny Newman's ambition and effort to actually get up and do something. She stated it was clear that the sound of the Party Band had magnetic power. The staff of the festival event were inspired by it. There was a buzz. Articles had appeared in English Dance & Song magazine because of the Party Band. It's cross generational nature is unique. It is so important to find a way to raise the profile of the Society or it dies. She was passionate about it because she saw it happening.

Jane Wheeler reflected that the band will only attract a strand of the population. To manage the reserves of the organisation she would want to look at evidence and options for recruitment etc. She had made her own efforts to bring in people and felt it will be successful. She didn't feel she had enough information to weigh up the options.

Gary Mycock was excited by the Party Band. The benefit of the project to the Society makes it worth going forward.

Jenny Newman commented on Cat McGill's point about the needs of people at folk festivals. Perhaps the Party Band will show festival goers that there is an alternative option to festivals. Regarding Jane Wheeler's point about teenagers in the band, there are just 4. Local events near Towcester have resulted in people saying they want to book the Party Band for weekends. The Party Band is showing at festivals that we are a quality organisation. Running music workshops at Towersey Festival is inclusive, multi-ability and multi-generational. Also she had news that Joe Broughton of Folk Conservatoire is showing interest. There are more measures of success to the Party Band than just financial.

Cat McGill offered help to assist with the Party Band project to help secure funding.

Jane Wheeler asked if bookings of the party band bring an income to Folk Camps. Jenny Newman replied that this was the case where fees are payable but initial bookings often don't attract fees.

Marcus deFrettes summarised. He agreed with Jane Wheeler's point that the Society usually grows organically, but it has gradually been having a reduction in numbers. More musicians are needed to encourage more skills. The Party Band is worth the money, but can the Society afford it? Is it having a financial benefit? Creating money needs to be tempered with the impact on the Society. What Council needs is a feeling from the meeting of what the Society should do going forward. Marcus proposed the following: "The meeting supports Council offering an extension to the Party Band on an annual basis".

Jane Wheeler asked if wording could be added to estimate the impact of its

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activities.

Marcus de Frettes advised that Council can decide without a motion from the members but it is seeking guidance in line with their opinion.

The value of the motion was questioned from the floor as, it was noted, the people in the room are not representative of all members. It could be said that Council is the organ of governance in whom they place trust and confidence.

Discussion followed highlighting how success should be measured. Is it just by the number of new campers booked? Before an agreement is made the objectives have to be made clear.

There was a show of hands on whether the meeting felt a need for a vote on this which showed overwhelmingly that there should be no formal vote. Jane Wheeler suggested that Council should manage the progress of the Party Band and should bear in mind the comments from the floor in its deliberations.

Cat McGill wanted assurance that the measures and desired outcomes of the project are clearly defined, then success can be evaluated at a later date.

Sue Malleson recommended that Council take on board points like the experience band members get from the Party Band.

The chair agreed to keep matters under review and feedback regularly.

h) Any Other Business from the floor

Sue Malleson asked if a water tower could be devised to solve the water pressure issue at the Gower?

She also pointed out that Council minutes used to appear on the website but not now.

Marcus de Frettes responded that this is no longer the case in order to allow Council members to speak openly at meetings. A blog will be produced instead.

Cat McGill proposed a vote of thanks to equipment manager Graham Clements for his work to support special needs requirements at camps enabling her family to attend.

Jacqueline Beattie proposed a vote of thanks to Council and managers for all the work they do over the year.

Dave Rawlins requested a return of the visitors day at camps. He suggested that there should be a return of dancing out (a flash mob?) as the trip to the pub is not the equivalent.

Sue Malleson advised leaders to read the manual!!!!

The chair, Marcus de Frettes, ended by reminding the meeting that in 2019 a new hall site would be used at Staple. Details are on the website.

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He concluded by thanking the caterers for the food during the day and the members for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 17.43

Chair November 2020