

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND TRUSTEES

Minutes of the meeting held 22nd February 2022 by Zoom

Present: Martin Burnell (Clerk), Nigel Dower, Michael Hutchinson, Margaret Mortimer, Robin Waterston (by invitation).

1. Welcome

We began our online meeting with a brief period of worship. The Clerk welcomed back Michael Hutchinson, who has been re-appointed for a further year, and Robin Waterston by invitation.

2. Correction to minute 15 of meeting held on 11th October 2022

It was noted that the name of Catherine Brown needed to be added to the list of retiring Trustees.

3. Annual Report of Trustees for 2021

We have considered the wording of our Annual Report to General Meeting as drafted by our Clerk and incorporated some minor amendments. We adopt this as our Annual Report and in the absence of our Clerk ask Michael Hutchinson to speak to it at GM in March.

4. Revised Model Safeguarding Policy

A revised model safeguarding policy and guidance was issued by BYM in November. This has been written with reference to the law in England and Wales and would require modification for use in Scotland. Our clerk is convening a meeting by Zoom of safeguarding co-ordinators and clerks to AM trustees, plus any other trustee with special knowledge or interest in this area, to consider the best way to proceed with the revision of the existing Scottish model policy and guidelines.

We have discussed some of the complex issues raised by the new guidance and support the way forward that has been proposed. Michael Hutchinson will attend the proposed meeting in addition to our Clerk.

5 Report on meetings of clerks to GM and AM trustees

Two Zoom meetings of clerks to Trustees in Scotland have been held since GM trustees last met. Information of issues with which each trustee body was currently concerned was shared. It was agreed to circulate job descriptions for Quaker roles currently in use. The proposed meeting with safeguarding co-ordinators was agreed by this group. We note that clerks and treasurers are having similar meetings

6. Options for Scotland Working Group Report

We have discussed the report of the Working Group and note it will be considered by General Meeting in March. We feel it sets out a balanced account of the possible benefits and potential disadvantages of the different options considered and agree with its emphasis on building Quaker community within Scotland.

7. Progress report on the Scottish Christian Forum

It appears that no progress has been made with the appointment of trustees to the new body which is therefore not in a position to begin work or to accept a transfer of assets from ACTS. Adwoa Bittle has been asked if she would agree to be a trustee but has not yet been given any information about what this would entail. She is not on the implementation group.

In the meantime ACTS has not been meeting as required by its governing document nor has it been fulfilling its purpose as a charity. The voting members from Church of Scotland and the Society of Friends are proposing to call a special meeting of ACTS as provided for in its governing document to enable member churches to understand the lack of progress and to consider what action should be taken in relation to ACTS and its assets.

8. Camfield Trust Grant application for 2022

Our Treasurer has submitted the normal annual report to the Camfield Trust regarding the use made of the grant. No applications were received for help towards the purchase of equipment to establish blended meetings, but support was given to the Northern Friends Peace Trust. We have made another application for 2022.

9. Signature arrangements on GM current account

We note that Margaret Mortimer has not yet been added as a signatory on the current account but that this is in hand.

10. Local Development Worker liaison

We note that there is no comparable arrangement to the PEWG to enable consultation with Friends House on the priorities for the work of the Local Development Worker or on its perceived effectiveness. Adwoa Bittle is in regular contact with the LDW but more as a personal support and source of information than in any other capacity. The LDW attends the meeting of Clerks organised by the GM Clerk, but this does not fulfill a comparable function to the PEWG which is normally attended by a member of BYM staff from London.

We feel it would be useful if General Meeting appointed one of our trustees and one other Friend to meet occasionally with the Local Development Worker and her line manager to consider priorities and any other relevant issues. We ask the Clerk to discuss this possibility with the GM Clerk and the Local Development Worker.

11. Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

We have noted the minutes of the PEWG of 23rd November 2021 and 25th January 2022.

12. Book of Members 2023

In summer of this year, our administrator will begin the process of gathering corrections to the existing Book of Members with a view to a new edition being published in January 2023. She has received suggestions that online access might be provided as an alternative or in addition to the printed book.

This has substantial implications. It would involve the transfer of the existing Access database to an online database with appropriate security measures to safeguard the data. There would need to be a system to give Friends and authorised Attenders personal logins with associated passwords and verification, and this would require some input of staff time to manage. We might need to employ someone to design an appropriate system as it is probably too major an exercise to undertake with volunteer effort. Unless the printed book were completely discontinued, cost savings on the printed book would be limited since the main cost is the initial setup with 50 copies costing almost as much as 500.

We consider that in the long term this may be desirable, but that it would be too short a timescale to attempt this for 2023. General Meeting would first need to allocate an appropriate budget and agree this was something worth doing. In the meantime our Clerk will enquire if any other Area Meeting has considered this.

13. Dates of future meetings

Monday 9th May by Zoom and a date to be agreed in October in Edinburgh.

Martin Burnell
Clerk