

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

Minutes of the meeting of trustees held 3.6.2016

Present: Robin Davis (Clerk), Derek McLean, Jacqueline Noltingk
Prevented: Michael Hutchinson, John Phillips

16/10 Scottish advocacy review (paper A)

The clerk introduced his paper, adding that he had asked Jane Dawson, who leads the Advocacy and Public Relations (A&PR) team at Friends House, and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, for their thoughts on how this review should be conducted. Paul's immediate thoughts are given in his email of 19.5.2016 - copy at the end of these minutes, together with Jane Dawson's acknowledgement on behalf of A&PR. Michael Hutchinson, prevented from being present, also contributed some ideas; his email is also attached. We are conscious that to review this project at this point is in some ways too early for a full evaluation of its worth, and indeed that seeing it as a pilot project of three years implies we feel it may take longer to produce lasting value. However we wish to have as objective an appraisal as possible to help us make the best of the opportunities the project gives us to advance advocacy in Scotland. To this end, we are in unity with the proposal to ask an external person to evaluate the project at the two year point. Such a person would have the skills to undertake this, together with a knowledge and experience of Scottish Friends and the current political situation in Scotland.

As far as we are aware, the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group (PLFG) has not yet had the team building exercise (see minute 16/4.1) and we urge that the evaluator be appointed as soon as possible with the aim of facilitating this by early autumn. Such an exercise should involve the members of the PLFG, The Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer, the A&PR Team Lead and the Clerk to GM Trustees.

The review process itself would then start in late autumn and involve Scottish Local and Area Meetings as well as those Friends suggested by A&PR. The review needs to be completed by January 2017.

In evaluating projects we feel that the staff employed in the Society's centrally managed work must have established systems for this kind of project evaluation, and we would hope to be able to draw on this experience.

We will continue to look at the questions we wish the review to address, and will forward these to the A&PR Team Lead in the first instance, by the end of September. In particular, we will seek the advice of our Treasurer, John Phillips, who has been unable to be with us today. We place great importance in the team building day mentioned above as this should also produce questions the review needs to answer.

We hope that the review will enable GM and YM to decide whether the pilot project should be continued after the end of 2017.

16/11 PLFG review (paper B)

We have received some notes on this review from our Clerk. We have reviewed the questions raised at our last meeting (see minute 16/2) and understand the wording of the Memorandum of Understanding on specific advocacy objectives needs no revision; we note that information about the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer's (SPEO's) work schedules and the proportions of time devoted to different areas of her job have been made available as requested.

We bring to GM's attention again that for the this Group to function effectively we need to be able to strengthen its membership (see our minute 16/4.1), and are concerned that it is proving difficult to find names of Friends to serve. We note that Mairi Campbell-Jack (our

SPEO) is trying new ways of communicating with Scottish Friends but we wish to stress that the PLFG members themselves need to be advocates of the work in their Area Meetings. We are pleased to hear of the increased time being allowed for the PLFG meetings and that written reports are distributed in advance to GM. As in minute 16/10 above, we urge that team building is undertaken as soon as possible with the existing membership.

16/12 Annual report of trustees to GM (paper C)

We accept the draft prepared by the Clerk with some minor textual amendments and the addition of a clause about ensuring GM's compliance with charity law. We ask the Clerk to forward the report to GM for its meeting on 11.6.2016. We thank the Clerk for his work.

16/13 Guidelines on donations

We thank John Phillips for his thoughts on this in his email of 11.3.2016, following minute 16 of GM held 5.3.2016, and agree to return to the subject at our next meeting when John is present.

16/14 Administrator's salary

We note that our administrator's salary was increased as from 1.5.2016; see our minute 16/8 of 11.2.2016.

16/15 Safeguarding

At our meeting held 1.6.2015, we agreed (minute 15/11) "to urge Area meeting trustees to seek a report annually from their safeguarding coordinators, as required by the General Meeting policy."

We ask the clerk to remind AM trustees about this. We ask AMs to report to GM trustees any cases that arise, without waiting for this annual review.

16/17 General Meeting questionnaire

We note that the survey agreed at the GM held 5.3.2016 (minute 14) has now been distributed, with a deadline for replies of 30.7.2016.

Robin Davis, Clerk

Messages by email relating to minute 16/10 -

From Jane Dawson, 18.5.2016:

I'm glad to hear the Joint Review Process is on the agenda for the next GMfS. It would help us if GMfS could agree the questions/issues you would like the Review to cover.

Once we are clear about the scope, Paul and I will look at who might need to be involved and during the summer bring back a possible process for you to consider.

I hope this helps take the matter forward.

From Paul Parker, 19.5.2016:

I think the key thing at this stage is to be clear what questions we need the review to address, so we can design the process appropriately. We might also consider whether we want this to be an entirely internal review (i.e. conducted by GMS Trustees and BYM staff / Trustees), or whether we think it would be helpful to involve an external reviewer who's had no prior involvement with the pilot. This would affect the timescale (and cost), as we'd need to find an appropriate person or two. GMST might like to think about this.

Questions might include:

- has the project contributed measurably to raising the profile of Quaker concerns among opinion-formers and decision-makers in Scotland / wider UK? If so, what evidence do we have of this?
- has the project delivered value for money for BYM / GMS?
- how have processes for discerning and agreeing priorities for the project worked, and how could they be improved?
- how have the processes for delivering the desired outcomes worked, and how could them be improved?
- what has BYM learnt from the pilot?
- what has GMS learnt from the pilot?
- what has been the impact on the relationship between GMS and BYM?
- how successful has GMS been at raising finance for this from Friends in Scotland? Has it affected giving levels to BYM from Scottish meetings?
- if the project continues, what should be done about the BYM grant to GMS? (If you remember, we agreed to review this at the same time as the pilot)

Those are just a few off the top of my head, and we'll need to work up, and agree, a clear set of questions for the review to cover. I hope it's a helpful start.

From Michael Hutchinson, 31.5.2016:

Advocacy project review

We need to check on responses to the points listed 1-4 in the February minute.

Review: commissioning an external review would be useful, but we would need to work with the reviewer over the remit. Questions might include:

Advocacy

The first year or two of the project will inevitably include set up time and experimentation, and so judgment on success will come later when strategy, goals and achievements can be logged and measured. The MOU sets out goals, etc, and this must be the start in assessing the project.

The PLFG annual report provides the best summary of the work so far, but how is the work plan related to the strategy and aims from the MOU? Is there a timeline?

How is the communication strategy being fulfilled and is there evidence of engagement / understanding of the project? How does it influence the work and witness of AMs and LMs and individual Friends?

Is the project and its communication being held back by any other factors outside its control - eg the state of and uptake of GMS, AM and LM websites in Scotland?

Finance

What are the projections for fundraising to cover the project costs and what are the strategies for meeting these?

How has increased giving affected other income for AMs and GMS?

Management

How is the relationship between PLFG, the line manager working now?

Is PLFG now receiving the work plans, etc for the post holder?

How is the balance of work evolving? Is there enough time to undertake projects and tasks as well as to communicate about them and by keeping in touch with Friends. What is the balance of role between the liaison group and the postholder in this regard?