

WIGTOWN FESTIVAL COMPANY

11 North Main Street

Wigtown

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WIGTOWN FESTIVAL COMPANY

Minutes of the **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** held online via Zoom on Thursday, 11 February 2021

IN ATTENDANCE

Trustees: Mike Smith (Chair), Anne Brown, Beth Cochrane, Philippa Cochrane, Roger Davis, Simon Leslie, Finn McCreath, Sandra McDowall, Sarah Nyland, Nick Walker and Nicola Wood.

Members: David Foreman, Carol and Martin Green, Paul Tarling, Carolyn Yates. **Staff:** Adrian Turpin, Anne Barclay, Claire Nash, Isla Rosser-Owen, Andy Stewart. **Other:** Jak Kane, Minute Secretary

APOLOGIES: Marjorie Lotfi Gill and Chris Nicol.

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Mike Smith welcomed everyone to the Festival Company's AGM and explained that he would be chairing the meeting as Marjorie Lotfi Gill was unable to attend through illness. Apologies had also been received from Chris Nicol.

2 MINUTES OF LAST AGM

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6 February 2020 had been circulated and it was agreed that they were a correct record of that meeting.

3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (APRIL 2019-MARCH 2020)

Mike Smith delivered a report that encompassed both the financial year covered by the AGM (April 2019 – March 2020) and a general update on what had happened since the start of the new year reflecting the effects of the COVID pandemic. (see Appendix 1)

4 TREASURER'S REPORT

Sarah Hyland reported that the 2019 Festival saw continued growth from the previous year with a 3.5% increase in box office receipts from the previous year which had benefited from the Festival enjoying its 20th Anniversary. Overall the company had an unrestricted surplus of £65,528 in the year which was a remarkable achievement and the directors continued to control costs and explore ways to reduce them in the future.

RESOLUTIONS

4 TO REVIEW THE DRAFT ACCOUNTS OF THE COMPANY FOR THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2019

The Company's draft Financial statements for the year to 31 March 2019 had been circulated prior to the meeting. They had been prepared by Montpelier Professional (Galloway), and would be formally approved by the Board once independently examined by Carson & Trotter, Chartered Accountants.

5 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The following directors had resigned since the last AGM: Edward Hocknell.

The following directors confirmed their resignation at this AGM: Michael McCreath and Catriona Wilson.

Mike Smith thanked the retiring directors for their long and distinguished service to the Company and was sure that the Company would be seeing them in the future.

Three of the serving directors were required to retire by rotation: Beth Cochrane, Philippa Cochrane and Marjorie Lotfi Gill. They had all confirmed that they were willing to stand for re-election and their reappointment was approved unanimously by those present.

5 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

The appointment of Carson & Trotter Chartered Accountants, Castle Douglas as the auditors of the Company was confirmed and the Board was authorised to agree their remuneration

7 DATE OF NEXT AGM

The next Annual General Meeting would be convened in February 2022.

Mike Smith thanked everyone for attending the AGM and closed the meeting.

APPENDIX 1: AGM Chair's report

Financial Year 2019/2020

The two headline things to report in terms of activity were the excellent annual festival in Wigtown and an expansion of The Festival Company's engagement work within community settings in D&G throughout the year.

It is worth remembering that WFC has to generate funds from a wide range of sources, and many of these funds, including the prestigious support from Creative Scotland, provide support for both the annual festival and the year-round range of activities we provide across the region.

2019 Book Festival.

- Very smoothly run Festival with an exciting programme.
- 4% increase in box office receipts.
- Increase in audience numbers (to 29,588).
- Highlights include the very popular Map House and its Gaelic link and the themes of the Festival: the Book inspired film programme, This Epic North, and This Farming Life.
- Young people's programme (Big Wig and Wigwam) integrated into the full festival with very positive outcomes including increased audience and much more cross generational activity.

Other activities

- Second year of our European funded NPA project supporting literary tourism businesses in which we have supported nine local businesses in the region.
- Big Bang cancelled due to COVID-19.
- Day of Curiosity in partnership with University of Glasgow and the Crichton Campus. There were 151 participants, an exceptionally high number for a new event. Linked to the Year of Conversation initiative.
- Hooked, delivered Feb 2020 (20 participants).
- Appointment of Young People's Assistant July 2019.
- Care-home work and Prison programme in partnership with Open Book.
- Growth in the writer development programme including: the delivery of literature forum meetings; an effective mentoring programme; pitching sessions at WBF; Writers' Gathering (with 37 participants, the highest ever) and literature ambassadors.
- Poetry prize developments (included a new sponsor for this prize) and a new pamphlet prize.
- Support for Brave New Words.
- Board (funded by Cashback for Creativity).

Across the board there was an increase in children's related activity, particularly the under 13s, focussing on increasing access. Examples include sensory story telling with Ailie Finlay and an increase in the number of translated events to widen participation.

General update on the current financial year 20/21

I'd like to start by thanking the staff for being flexible and working hard, and unconventionally, during this last, very difficult year. Everyone has worked hard to try and ensure that the long-term finances of the company are as strong as possible, whilst keeping the Wigtown Book Festival product/output both innovative and of the highest standard.

Headline things to report in terms of activity are firstly an effective and nimble response to the crisis, secondly an excellent on-line annual festival plus all year events, and thirdly an increased support for schools.

Specific things to highlight for this current year include:

- Agile pivot of WFC when lockdown hit, moving operations online very quickly and creating new output (Wigtown Wednesdays) for our existing, and new, audiences.
- Clever use of the furlough scheme to continue operations while saving funds to support business continuity plus offering support to staff.
- The new online festival format went smoothly, allowing us to involve a broader base of authors, reach new audiences, and in general allow for more engagement.

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- Financial return exceeded our expectations and we thank those who attended on-line and donated. We were unsure how to monetise the digital programme, but relying on attendees' generosity was a prudent approach.
- WBF 2020 commissioned films about local bookshops to support businesses as much as possible during the festival, and also films about the saltmarsh and foraging to encourage viewers to visit in the future
- Fundraising during this period exceeded expectations
- Online Big Dog and Big Bang are launched for delivery soon in March.

In summary, the WFC financial position is currently robust due to staff working hard to reduce costs wherever possible during the pandemic and effective Board engagement.

The shape of 2021 Book Festival is as yet unknown; we will continue to monitor the government guidelines, and consider their impact on the local community. As with last year we will keep options open and make the appropriate decisions later in the year

Prof MA Smith
February 2021