

Scots Music Group
Annual General Meeting
Sunday 3rd March 2019, 1.30 for 2pm
Christ Church, 6a Morningside Road, Edinburgh

MINUTES

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Alison Carlyle (AC), who welcomed SMG members to the meeting. Refreshments had been served. Ceilidh Caleerie were thanked for the lovely music provided from 1.30pm. The meeting began at 2pm.

24 members had signed in on arrival and the meeting was declared quorate. The Chair reminded the meeting that in order to vote on any motions or stand as a director, current membership of SMG was a requirement.

Present:

Sue Anderson	Tom Kane	Iain Murray
Madeleine Brand	Myles Lobjoie	Helen Quigley (Board)
Linda Campbell	Chris Mahony	Trish Santer
Alison Carlyle (Chair)	Mary McCann (Tutor)	Isobel Sheppard
Chris Craig	Paul McIntosh (Treasurer)	David Stephenson
Colin Graham (Board & Tutor)	Christine McIntosh	Jamie Taylor
Emma Graham	Eoin McIntyre (Board)	Edna Wilson (Board)
Fiona Harrison (Board)	Muriel McLardy	Stuart Wilson

In attendance: Steve Byrne, SMG Development Worker and Company Secretary

Apologies: Celia Coulson, Alison Woolerton, Sarah Northcott.

Minutes of the last AGM 29th April 2018

These were accepted as a true record with some minor corrections:

- 1) Laurie Morris should read Maureen Morris,
- 2) The discount on James Gillespie's is in fact 50% of the Council's published commercial rates.

Questions relating to matters in the previous minutes

Isobel Sheppard asked about the progress of the 'college' of traditional music teaching organisations on which Dave Francis presented at a previous meeting. AC confirmed that in 2018, SMG had adopted the Code of Practice (CoP) based on the outcome of a working group attended by AC and Development Worker Steve Byrne (SB). The working group comprised representatives from other traditional music teaching organisations across Scotland, organised by the Traditional Music Forum. SB confirmed that in Sept 2018, a 'Week Zero' had been implemented for tutors to meet the week before classes start to introduce them to the CoP, where Dave Francis presented on this. AC commented that, as one of the larger teaching organisations, SMG was already implementing many of the aspects of the CoP. Mary McCann remarked that she found its approach regarding the quality of experience to be very positive. AC confirmed that the CoP looks at an organisation's activity through several lenses: tutor / student / organisation, considering the perspective of each. AC wondered whether the CoP was available on the TMF website, and suggested SMG should host it on its website.

Miles Lobjoie asked what form the college would take, and AC confirmed that it is a virtual college or network rather than a physical entity.

The 2018 minutes were then proposed by Jamie Taylor, seconded Mary McCann.

Report from Alison Carlyle, Chair of Scots Music Group

The Chair presented her report which had also been distributed at the meeting. She highlighted:

- The growth in student numbers, with an expanding programme of classes, short courses and the upcoming Easter Music Days for fiddle and guitar.
- The successful move to James Gillespie's High School in Sep 2017 where, while not without issues, SMG has settled in well.
- Ongoing grant support of LBPS towards smallpipes courses.
- The Student Survey which received a good response, in particular the time and thought people had put into their responses. Results of the survey are in part borne out by recent short courses.
- The contribution of Tutors who are key to SMG's success, thanking those who were present and the work of Eilidh Steel and Mark Neal who left SMG at the end of last year to move to Helensburgh.
- Tutor pay had been increased in Jan 2018 and is kept under review on an ongoing basis.
- The office has reviewed its roles and as of autumn 2018 SB had reduced his hours and Helen Reid had increased hers, reflected in her new title of SMG Co-ordinator.
- The contribution of volunteers, in particular Liz Blair, SMG's volunteer bookkeeper who has helped over many years now.
- The success of the fundraising ceilidhs for which the volunteers are crucial, with the events offering a great line-up of bands and a genuine experience for visiting tourists and students.

- Events in the community including Café Ceilidh at the Storytelling Centre, and the advocacy work done by SMG students who go out to perform.
- The Gift Aid process which the Treasurer Paul McIntosh (PMc) and the office coordinate which contributes to SMG funds.
- The Inspire project: AC gave an update on the progress of Inspire following its 3 iterations over the past 8-10 years. Inspire will continue as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in future, with AC and PMc as Trustees for the moment, alongside Colin Duff who was the external evaluator on Inspire 3. Inspire was in the process of producing a Directory of supported music opportunities, which the Inspire Choir helped to design. It will be available at the SMG Student Concert on 22nd March.

In Memoriam: AC also reminded the meeting of SMG members and students who had sadly passed away over the past year: Liz Marshall, Betty Pentland, Anne Renshaw, Liliias MacDonald and Lesley Oddy.

Discussion / questions from the floor relating to Chair's Report:

Volunteers and people with ASN

Linda Campbell (LC) highlighted the donations available through employers; she had accessed the Cash for Communities scheme through her employer RBS which allowed her to volunteer for SMG, with the employer making a donation in the process. In relation to this, and the experience of her son who has additional support needs (ASN) and attends SMG classes, LC enquired as to SMG's strategy on social inclusion, namely opening up and accessing classes for people like her son and his peer group. She believes that her son's peers are not aware they could attend SMG classes. LC suggests SMG should be advocating for the whole of society and could there be a peer support or buddy scheme.

LC noted that her employer could give her time to help develop such a policy.

AC suggested that she thinks the SMG board would be broadly supportive but that the board would need to discuss this together in more detail.

SB noted that SMG already supports a variety of people to access SMG classes and events on an ad hoc basis, in part with the support of fellow students, e.g. particular students in the daytime classes at Gorgie. SB felt it would be useful to have a procedure or strategy in place to formalise some of these existing arrangements. In particular, how we establish whether people have ASN, as we currently do not ask this in the enrolment process.

LC highlighted the approach of Fèis Rois and suggested SMG could look at their policy. SB commented that, in contrast to SMG, Fèis Rois is a Creative Scotland RFO (Regularly Funded Organisation) with greater capacity in terms of staffing but agreed it was worth investigating. Mary McCann (MMc) recalled that in the past people with profound issues were supported by Gica Loening.

Retiring tutors

Fiona Harrison wished to record the retiral of tutors Mary McCann and Sylvia McGowan from the Thursday Sing Together class and the meeting warmly applauded. Chris Mahony remarked that ongoing success of Linten Adie would not be possible without Mary's tutoring skills.

Song Workshops

MMc commented on the song workshops organised during the current year including Margaret Bennett and Sheena Wellington; these were popular and MMc asked for more to be organised.

Café Ceilidh

Trish Santer commented on the success of Café Ceilidh at the Storytelling Centre, with the central location meaning recent events had welcome up to 10 nationalities with visitors from abroad also contributing floor spots. AC agreed that it was nice to be able to offer authentic traditional music in the heart of the Royal Mile vs the various kitsch tourist shops. MMc expressed thanks to Donald Smith and staff at the Storytelling Centre.

Tutor encouragement and student progression

Colin Graham spoke from the tutoring point of view on themes of encouragement, helping beginners, the value of the Christmas Stramash, overcoming nerves and fears, or 'stramash-itis'! Working together with the whistle class has been very positive and overall it is useful to take into account the different perspectives of students and tutors. AC agreed that Colin's comments were borne out by the student survey and that SMG offers a positive balance to humdrum of everyday life.

Chris Mahony spoke of her pleasure at seeing the progression of raw beginners through to advanced players at the Student Concert, really admiring and enjoying the process they go through.

Make Music Day

Madeleine Brand noted that 21st June is Make Music Day across Europe and that Nigel's Allstars were involved, but there appears not to have been much advertising of the event this year so far. There followed a discussion of the options to help publicise the event and how people had participated previously. It was felt that increasing visibility in places like the Scottish Storytelling Centre would help, and Café Ceilidh would be able to support this. CM also raised the idea of an Edinburgh day for different cultures, Scottish, Polish etc.

In concluding of this part of the discussion, AC noted it was good to reflect on the 2018 minutes and see what has already been taken forward.

FINANCE REPORT

PMc presented his report and reminded the meeting that the full accounts are available in the SMG office. The timescale of the accounting year (July-June) means that matters being discussed extend quite far back to July 2017. The results show the outcome of around 2 years' planning, from a situation where finances had been stable albeit with small losses / surpluses on a recurring basis. With the need to move to new premises and uncertainty as to the final costs, there were also increases to be taken into account for staff, tutors and rent at the Eric Liddell Centre. Financial modelling was done based on a stable class year from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

The last session was a pleasant surprise in terms of increased student enrolment, and some slight changes were made to ceilidh and class pricing. As a result 2017-18 made a bigger surplus than intended which has allowed reserves to be topped up, having nibbled into them a little in previous years due to some projects requiring investment, e.g. the website. With the increase in student numbers, it has been possible to put £13k into reserves to take the fund back to around 6 months' operating costs, which is recommended for non-profit organisations. AC commented that the surplus is not directly spent, but allows more risks to be taken with a financial cushion.

CG gave thanks to PMc for his work on the accounts, and PMc also acknowledged the work of the office and volunteer bookkeeper Liz Blair. AC observed that PMc has been instrumental in creating a culture allowing the office to access financial information to allow them to do what they need to do and track figures. In recent years, SMG has been more on top of finances, largely through PMc's stewardship.

MMc gave positive feedback on the newer website and booking system.

SB reminded the board of his request for submissions for a board page on the website.

A short discussion followed regarding the dates of membership renewals, with TS querying the status of SMG members being covered by insurance while playing out on the community, if their membership had expired on 31 July and they had not yet signed up to a new membership / class until sometime later in August. It was suggested that reminders could be sent out to those active in community performance, or that perhaps a direct debit / standing order could be offered for recurring memberships. LC touched on liability cover for members and SB confirmed it works in a way not unlike the Musicians' Union member insurance scheme.

There were no specific questions from the floor relating to the financial report.

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Robin McClintock resigned during the year due to time pressures restricting his ability to attend meetings.

Directors prepared to stand again were: Alison Carlyle, Colin Graham, Fiona Harrison, Paul McIntosh, Eoin McIntyre, Helen Quigley, Edna Wilson.

The reappointment of these directors was proposed by Iain Murray and seconded by Isobel Sheppard.

Jamie Taylor offered to stand for election and was duly appointed, proposed by Trish Santer and seconded by Colin Graham.

There were no further motions from the Board or from the membership.

Alison Carlyle intention to resign

AC stated her intention to step down as Chair and resign from the board during 2019, having been Chair since 2009 and involved with SMG for around 15 years. Alongside a new job and two young children, she feels it is in the interests of the organisation to have a fresh perspective. She will remain in post for the time being until a new Chair is identified and instigate a handover, as well as see through the immediate next phase of the Inspire project. AC paid tribute to SMG staff and the achievements in recent years meaning she can actively leave the organisation in a position of strength.

CG raised a query regarding a potential Vice Chair.

AC commented that this is not required by SMG's constitution but it may be prudent to have one in the interim.

A short discussion followed regarding directorial duties and numbers of directors. LC asked regarding Companies House, and AC confirmed board members are registered there as company directors. CM asked how many directors SMG could have, AC replied that 16 is the max number, although usually 8 or 9 at any one time.

There were no board motions, and no proposal to increase membership fees, which have to be set by the members. Class fees are decided by the board but the current feeling was to not increase fees next year, although this would be decided towards the summer.

Other questions / comments from members during the meeting

David Stevenson advised that the Edinburgh Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra would be taking part in a major event in 2020 along with the British Banjo Mandolin and Guitar Federation, who have a big jamboree every 2 years. It will be in Edinburgh around February time, which ought to be taken into

account re the SMG AGM timing. It takes place at Merchiston Castle School, a weekend of concerts, workshops, competitions and trade stands in various genres.

A discussion of the website and newsletter was held, considering how people accessed information, with compliments on the newsletter, and suggestions as to a Forum page or a more prominent Diary section, perhaps moving the news listings. SB explained that there were some limitations due to the modular nature of the website but that the office would take the suggestions on board for future revisions of the website.

ML asked where we thought SMG people were coming from, how they connected with SMG. SB commented that word of mouth was still a large factor, based on recent surveys, but AC noted that SMG has a good retention rate which also creates a ripple effect in terms of bringing new people to classes.

CG commented that trends change from year to year, particularly in the less traditional instruments, and it can be hard to gauge interest when planning the new term. He noted that for his own ukulele classes, specific flyering had been helpful via music shops and other events.

The formal business was concluded with SB reading a statement on Sarah Northcott's behalf, in tribute to AC:

"I'm very sorry not to be able to say this in person. On behalf of the Inspire Project staff, tutors, volunteers and the hundreds of people we have worked with so far, I'd like to thank Alison for all her hard work so far on our behalf. She has essentially been our manager throughout the different phases of the project and as such has been a great champion of the work we've done and helped us to develop into the new organisation we are creating today. Her flexibility, forward thinking and understanding of what we want to achieve have been a major factor in our evolution.

On a personal note, I'm very grateful for the support she has given me, always being open to new ideas (which I know has involved listening politely to some of the crazier suggestions I've come up with!) We're very fortunate that she'll be helping us to take the next steps in our journey.

Sarah Northcott March 2019."

The afternoon ended with a session led by Ceilidh Caleerie. Several members had brought their instruments and joined the very enjoyable selection of music and stepdance.

Steve Byrne 06.03.2019