Minutes of NYFTE AGM 2023

Sunday 26th March 2023, 2pm.

**Present:** Lucy, Gavin, Alex & Emily Skinner; Chris Nikel; Rhodri Davies; Jess Arrowsmith; Aidan & Nina Hansell; Jane, Roger & George Twitchin; Matthew & Harry Short; Anne-Marie Coomber; Bethan Harper, Rob Harper, Sarah Callaghan; Sarah Miller & Edward Selwood; Gail & Chris Shepheard; Gareth & Suzanne Ford; Robert, Ben, Alison & John Lancaster; Anna Branagan; Stephen Pascoe, Charlotte Pascoe; Adam Hughes and Ruth Hawksley; Hannah and Elodie Greaves; Bethlyn Killey, Robert Killey; Aisling, Nigel, Aoife & Sibeal Holmes; Blair Lindsay.

1. **Guidance on the operation of the virtual meeting**

The meeting took place virtually using Zoom. All associated documentation was available on the NYFTE website in advance of the meeting and participants were informed that the meeting was being recorded. Rhodri Davies outlined the operation of the meeting and noted that voting numbers would be based on the internet connection rather than individual votes. The meeting was declared quorate with over 10% of the full membership being present.

1. **Apologies**

Stuart Coomber, Rebecca Gillow, Liz Williamson and family, Sarah Potts and family, Tilly Shepheard, Steph.

1. **Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were available on the website ([2023 AGM - NYFTE - The National Youth Folklore Troupe of England](https://www.nyfte.org.uk/members-only/2023-agm/)) in advance of this meeting. One spelling mistake was corrected. The minutes were accepted with a majority vote.

1. **Matters arising**
2. Should we move The Cause training weekend to a different weekend so that it is not in half term? There are both pros and cons to this, and it is never going to be possible to please everyone. Some people would like to use half term as a holiday, which the current arrangement prevents. Other team members appreciate it being in half term as it allows time for recovery before going back to school. This year we used the first weekend of half term, which worked well. We have provisionally booked The Cause for the first weekend of half term again (10th / 11th February 2024). If this causes problems please get in touch with Jess / Chris N.
3. Can Webcollect be made more mobile friendly? People are more used to using the system this year. It is more challenging on a phone, seems ok on iPad or similar. Chris N asked that anyone having issues to contact him please.
4. **Changes to status of the organisation (charity status) / Operations Annual Review – Rhodri Davies**

The full report is on the website **(**[2023 AGM - NYFTE - The National Youth Folklore Troupe of England](https://www.nyfte.org.uk/members-only/2023-agm/))

**Thank you** to the committee and team leaders for all the work put in behind the scenes. A lot of work has happened over the winter for the change in organisation / charity status – in particular lots of thanks to Aidan Hansell. The NYFTE committee mostly works using virtual technology, whilst Webcollect helps manage a lot of the data / financial side of things. We are in the process of moving to Microsoft Teams which will enable us to keep files, meetings etc in one place. We currently need committee members to have their own free or paid for Dropbox accounts to access files. Microsoft Teams will allow us to keep files in one place, and will be cheaper if we manage to get charity status.

NYFTE is currently managed by two different teams: the management committee which looks after the admin, the background running of the team and financial decisions etc. The team leaders manage the day to day running of individual events, the booking of festivals etc.

**Our application to become a charity** is progressing, thanks to Aidan. We have created a draft constitution using a model provided by the Charity Commission, which describes what we do really well. There are several models of a charity: one is more like a business, where trustees decide everything and appoint themselves. We have gone with a membership model, which is closest to how we are operating now. The new constitution shifts a lot of the details about how the organisation works into a new operating document which Chris is writing, and which will be the focus for the next year. Within the application, we need to name some initial trustees, who then stand down at the first AGM. They are then replaced with a group of trustees who will serve for a period of 3 years. The two groups of trustees have been asked and have agreed to serve. We have a diverse range of trustees ready to go – some with experience of charities, some ex members, different ages, financial experience etc. We should be able to continue using our existing bank account, so we won’t need to transfer our finances when the time comes.

The application is ready to go, with the exception that we needed a document to ensure that our name (in particular the ‘of England’ part) is not going to cause problems. We have a letter of support from the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), as well as evidence of our involvement across the country. If we get charity status, then the new and old organisations will run in parallel for a time. We will need another AGM to transfer assets from the existing organisation to the charity.

**Donations:** We have had a number of very generous donations this year, some of which sadly have been in memoriam of individuals who have taken NYFTE to heart. We would like to thank anyone involved, and we would like to put a thank you on the website if appropriate. We are working on putting a donation button on the website.

**Online payments:** We are thinking of creating a route where people can pay fees etc using a PayPal button, although a chunk will be taken as fees (1.2%+20p+ Webcollect fee). If money is paid as bank transfer then NYFTE gets the whole amount, which will always be an option. The fees charged can be passed on to the payee by Webcollect. There were no strong feelings either way, so will probably keep things as they are at the moment.

**Safeguarding:** Every adult and 18+ staying at Tockington now has had a DBS check. Thank you to those registered with the update service as it makes things much easier. Electronic bank statements / utility bills etc are making it harder for people to provide original documents for ID; although there are now other options that we can use.

**Van report** from Chris S: first time ever we have had a van report. Its working, taxed and MOT’d. For the full report, please see the document on the website ([2023 AGM - NYFTE - The National Youth Folklore Troupe of England](https://www.nyfte.org.uk/members-only/2023-agm/)). Thank you Chris.

1. **Artistic Annual Review – Jess Arrowsmith**

The full report is on the website ([2023 AGM - NYFTE - The National Youth Folklore Troupe of England](https://www.nyfte.org.uk/members-only/2023-agm/)).

It has been a joy to be doing NYFTE ‘proper’ after a couple of hard years due to COVID. Tockington was fab last year: the concert was amazing, and it was great to be back dancing at festivals proper. The Sheffield event in 2022 was a highlight, with a number of really lovely comments being made by individuals outside NYFTE. Its been good getting more recognition for the work everyone does. The family weekend in 2022 was amazing. We are unlikely to run it every year (it is not happening this year, for example), but may happen periodically.

**Peripheral NYFTE Events**. The 2022 DERT won the Open competition. Our callers trained by Rhod have had opportunities to perform. The winter rapper and clog workshops were very successful, with the 2023 DERT team coming third: we also managed to enter two DERTy teams, who were well received. The winter workshops were a huge commitment though, with some months having a NYFTE event every other weekend. We are thinking of different ways of doing things (see later), so that there is less of a commitment required from parents to ferry team members around the country.

**Team membership:** last year we had 36 members, said goodbye to 4 at the end of 2022 summer. We will have 3 people leaving at the end of 2023. Five young people came to the auditions in February 2023, four of whom accepted our offer which keeps our numbers at 36 for 2023. We have had a huge amount of interest in the last year, with the current waiting list stretching to 2026. People enquiring about joining NYFTE are starting to appreciate how the process of joining works. If you know of individuals interested in joining, please direct them to the website where they can find a lot of information and a contact form. The waiting list will be constantly reviewed. Numbers are such that younger individuals (such as those in year 5 or 6) may have to wait before a place comes up. Similarly, older individuals applying in year 10 or 11 may be too old by the time a place becomes available.

**Admin:** Website is improving, as is the processing of admin. Still learning how Webcollect can help manage the admin. Please let us know as soon as possible if a team member is unable to come to an event they have previously said they can attend: a lot of planning for each event happens ahead of time. All event details are on the members only part of the website: each event has its own page with the details as they are released, and will contain details from all the emails that go out.

**Role change:** Steph Andrews has been on the NYFTE committee as Festival Liaison. However, to try and streamline everything, Jess has taken on a lot of the festival liaison work, and Steph will continue to support NYFTE in other ways. Thank you Steph for all your work.

**Costume:** The NYFTE costume is evolving. This year, those wearing the trouser kit will have a waist band which adds colour to what otherwise can look a bit too like school uniform. Thank you to those who have sorted that, in particular Chris and Gail Shepheard.

**2023 events.** We have already had a number of winter workshops, our training weekend at The Cause and DERT. Tockington is very close: provisional timetables, menus will be emailed out soon but please be aware that they may change. Practice of music, clog and song words would make things easier at Tockington (all resources can be found on the website under members only / 2023 music etc). Planning for the 2023 performance events (Upton FF, Chippenham FF, St Albans FF, Buxton and Bakewell DoD, Bromyard FF ) is going well at this stage. For event dates, please see the website.

**NYFTE ceilidh tune book:** Jess has created a NYFTE ceilidh tune book which contains approximately 80 tunes. It is intended for use by both team members playing for NYFTE ceilidhs, and parents / carers who would like to join in with scratch ceilidhs. We have a number of smart paper copies that will be used for performance, printed by Nigel Holmes. Thank you Nigel.

**Dates for 2023 / 2024.** Winter workshops – we have decided that one event a month is sufficient because of the amount of travelling required. Consequently, we are thinking of offering an optional rapper day, clog day and / or Cotswold jig day in November, December and January. February will have The Cause (provisionally booked for 10th / 11th February). DERT Whitby is to be held on 14th April 2024, so we may be able to fit some more rapper practice in later after The Cause. There is an additional potential event in October: the Sword Dance Union (SDU) competition for long sword is being held in Sheffield. We’ve expressed interest, but no problem if we don’t have a team, although we have a number of team members who enjoy longsword. Provisional Tockington dates for next year are 30th March – 6th April. Jess can write a letter if necessary to schools to allow leave from school if this does not fall within your Easter holidays. For interest: IVFDF 2024 is in York on the 16th, 17th 18th February 2024.

Thank you to everyone to making this all happen.

1. **Financial Report – Suzanne Ford**

The full report and set of accounts are on the website ([2023 AGM - NYFTE - The National Youth Folklore Troupe of England](https://www.nyfte.org.uk/members-only/2023-agm/)).

**Main Point for Attention:** The main point of note is that we are making a slight operating loss each year at the moment. The reasons for this can be seen in the accounts. In particular, van operating costs have increased (storage and fuel costs have increased, and we have had to MOT the van for the first time), as have Tockington costs (we are having to pay 20% VAT, and we are paying their caterers for provision of meals where we have in the past sorted meals ourselves. In the future, if we are granted charity status, we will be able to claim the VAT back).

**Subs:** We are currently in a strong financial position. Consequently, it is suggested that subs remain at £55 per member, due on the 1st March but payable by June. If we should become a charity, we will be able to claim Gift Aid provided parents / donors are registered for income tax, which will increase income.

**The Family Support Fund** has been set up to support those in need of financial help. We ask that families apply using the form available on the website, and that they copy in two committee members when submitting the form to maintain transparency. Everything will be treated with the greatest confidentiality. We are determined that none of our members loose out because of finances. Our financial supporters are also keen to help.

1. **Setting of Membership Fees for the next year (level, payment date and term)**

It was suggested that membership fees for 2023 / 24 (to be paid before 1st June) should remain at £55 per member. Proposed: Jess Arrowsmith. Seconded Bethlyn Killey. Vote: Carried.

Authorisation limits for individual committee member expenditures were discussed and, it was suggested that the £100 basic limit for individuals should remain, along with the £150 for van expenses. Proposed by Jess Arrowsmith, Seconded by Bethlyn Killey. Vote: Carried.

1. **Election of Office Holders & Committee Members**

The following office holders have agreed to stand again, with some changes to roles:

Rhodri Davies Operations Director / Chairman / Safeguarding

Jess Arrowsmith Artistic Director

Chris Nickel Technical Director

Aidan Hansell Deputy Artistic Director / Safeguarding

Suzanne Ford Treasurer

Stephanie Andrews Member without portfolio

Charlotte Pascoe Chippenham Events Organiser

Lucy Skinner Secretary / Publicity

Adam Hughes / Anna Branagan Pastoral

Joanne Lander Costume

Chris Shepheard Van keeper

Need to start succession planning for the following roles:

1. Safeguarding. Will need to find someone to start in either 2024 or 2025.
2. Chippenham Events Organiser to take over in 2025.
3. Van keeper

Proposed by Jane Twitchin, Seconded by Steven Pascoe to vote en bloc for these candidates. Carried. These officers are deemed duly elected.

1. **AOB**

**Chippenham update** by Matthew Short. There was a proposal to demolish toilets that we use when we are camping in Monks park. Fortunately the proposal was refused.

**Good luck to the team:** Rhod wishes the team well for the Spring Concert at Shirehampton – he will not be able to come for the first time.

**NYFTE jumpers:** Ann-Marie Coomber has asked that we reconsider the use of the black NYFTE team member jumpers as they never really get worn. Would it be possible to consider an alternative such as zip hoodies? This is something that has been mentioned to Jess, as well as the possibility of a broader range of NYFTE team merchandise which can be available from a number of websites. Can the change of merchandise / costume happen at the same time as the change to charity status? Rhod suggests ‘NYFTE road crew’ merchandise for parents! Chris also suggests that the NYFTE jumpers are not used that much, and that changing to a hoodie might reduce the chances of people turning up in other team jumpers etc.

The black T shirts are not going to be used as team performance wear, but may be used for workshop etc. Costume may continue to evolve, depending on costs.

Meeting closed at 15.19pm.