

Slow Food Berwick-upon-Tweed Chair Report, March 2023.

With the recovery from the pandemic impacting both confidence and workplace, the Berwick Convivium has evolved from the recent pandemic reporting a successful social programme, festival, and finances for the reporting years 2022-2023. A warm thank you to our committee members and officers, our festival sponsors, traders, and producers, our twenty-six active members, and the many volunteers and supporters for their continued engagement with us as we strengthen the offering to Berwick and the surrounding areas.

Committee has convened several times over the year with free space hospitality extended from the Castle Hotel and more recently Wallace Green to allow us to meet. Committee continue to benefit from the one source access to our resources that are all contained within the dedicated Convivium Google Drive. Throughout the year our Officers were Ken Hardy as Treasurer, Laura McGinlay as Secretary and Millie & Ray McRobbie as members of committee and joint Festival Directors. For part of the year Phil Elliott was Vice-Chair and Poppy Milne was a committee member. We established Telegram and more recently WhatsApp groups to allow rapid communication and decision making between committee members.

Our finances remain strong across both of our bank accounts, and our Treasurer will convey this detail in his financial report.

The past year has seen several well attended social events including community cider making with Monkey House Cider, a collaborative Film and Foodie evening film and food event at Maltings Berwick and a tasting menu evening by JW Catering at Pier Red. A second follow-on event at MHC was postponed due to limited registrations for the August event where the cider was packaged in readiness for sale at the September Festival.

Following an invitation, committee members attended *What a Wonderful World* in Alnwick last June to display some of our fantastic local traders. We have been invited to participate again this June where the topic will be fish and seafood to go with the *Deep Dive into Water* theme.

The major event for the year was our successful 15th Berwick Food and Beer Festival in September bringing The Barracks and the adjacent Green to life with amazing food, drink and fun. There is a huge deal of preparation involved with the festival by the Directors and Committee and this is supplemented by the time and resources of our festival volunteers with the setting up and closing down of the site as well as during the many various events over the three day weekend. Most of this time is unpaid and we established a thank-you event earlier this evening to thank our volunteers specifically for their input that we hope will be ongoing. Last year, Millie also established a Friends of the BSF Festival to allow further comments to be received in a less formal setting although this is currently suspended.

Our planning for the BFBF this summer is now well underway and following the success last year, committee has fully endorsed the renewal by contract of Millie & Ray as Festival Directors for a second year. We are changing the dates for the festival as well as exploring potential sites for the event in case the Barracks is unavailable due to redevelopment. We have also expressed our interest in collaborating in joint projects with Berwick Chamber of Trade over the next year. Our Festival Directors will elaborate in their report.

Over the last year I have attended the Specialty Food Festival in Glasgow and the Fine Food Show in Harrogate to try to engage some new producers and traders to our show and we hope that alongside existing and repeating traders that this will enhance part of our offering at the festival. These visits have also allowed us to identify some potential opportunities for social events to arrange for members although many options do require a minimum number of registrations to be viable. On a related issue I have met and explored with Walter Mowat of

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Slow Food Scotland and Eleonora Vanello of Slow Food Edinburgh options to co-promote events of potential joint interest to our members and we should progress this further.

Linked to this has been an attempt to formalise a protocol for implementing social events that takes account of the amount of time involved in planning and financing these events. Once this has been trialled, we shall make this freely available to the membership. We do encourage you to attend our events but also to propose and even lead organise with our support a social event that is of particular interest to you.

Whilst we have suspended our bursary and trader support funding whilst concentrating on core committee work, we hope to reinstate committees to review new applications this year.

During the year, we have selected Prior Park First School as a pilot school for the school food gardening project and an allocation of £2000 was agreed by committee last year with Laura consulting with the school for progression of this funding.

I want to thank Shane Holland at the national office of SFUK for his continued support and advice when consulted. SFUK has established regular meetings to support and deliver on various advocacy engagement. Laura and I attended the Zoom meeting about the work each UK group is being asked to carry out and after the meeting Laura has agreed to lead on this matter and will share details within her report on advocacy and community outreach.

The changes nationally at SFUK means that there will be changes to both the VAT reclaimed at the festival as well as insurance cover of any of our events over more than a day and this will inevitably have some impact on our festival budget that is currently under review. Likewise, the redevelopment at the Barracks does mean that our storage space is terminated, and committee has been exploring how to best address this matter in both the short and medium term. We obtained quotes for storage of the various items we have in storage over the winter but these were prohibitive and so we have been identifying what we need to retain and to then locate the best place to store these over the forthcoming months.

We are aware that some of you have been frustrated over the lack of information provided over the year. Committee membership was low due to ongoing real-life demands and we have been thinly spread to undertake the basic work required to keep the Convivium active. Social media and both our general and our festival specific website updates have been updated on an ongoing basis. I extend our gratitude for the ongoing support and generosity from Andrew Smith and Roger Peale at Kreative Technology who generously host our websites and maintain our email accounts and offer ongoing advice whenever required. We intend to increase the details provided by newsletter to members through our mail chimp service over the next year and to increase our social offerings into the spring and summer starting with our next social evening at NSK this Saturday. We are grateful for your patience and support and encourage all of you to remain or become more actively involved within the Convivium. I am delighted that we have some new members willing to stand for election and to offer their time and experience over the year ahead. Thank You again for being a member.

Kevan Wylie.
Chair.



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Berwick-upon-Tweed