

Minutes of the Berwick Slow Food Annual General Meeting - APPROVED

Thursday 14th March 2024

Meeting Room, Berwick YHA, Dewar's Lane

Committee Members Present: Kevan Wylie (KW) - Chair, Laura McGinlay (LMcG) - Vice Chair, Ken Hardy (KH) - Treasurer, Jo Thomas (JT), Ray McRobbie (RMcR), Alison Edwards (AE) - acting Secretary

Committee Member Apologies: Millie McRobbie - Secretary

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair, KW, welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that apologies had been received from MMcR and that AE would be acting as Secretary for the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 2023 AGM

KW confirmed that the minutes of the 2023 AGM had been available on the Berwick Slow Food website for some time and that they had been circulated in advance of the AGM. There were no questions or comments on the 2023 minutes and they were formally approved.

3. Message from Shane Holland, Chair, Slow Food UK

KH read out a message received from Shane Holland, Chair of Slow Food UK. SH expressed his regret that he wasn't able to attend the Berwick AGM as he was currently at an AGM in Northern Ireland. His message went on to say:

"When I am asked about what a good Slow Food group looks like, I am always minded to describe a group like Berwick: a group which is active, supports the community, and retains its sense of place. You all collectively do tremendous things - the festival has grown from strength to strength, and which is now so very professionally-run; your grants and expanded education work are also reflected in the fact that you have the highest membership numbers in some time. I wanted to thank you, all of you, for the part you play in the continuing success of Slow Food Berwick, for your vision, and your determination for good, clean and fair food for all. Please keep on doing what you are doing. It matters."

4. Chair's Report

KW confirmed that the Chair's Report for 2023 had been circulated and was also available on the website.

He took a moment to talk about the life and work of Professor Philip James, who sadly passed away in October of last year. James was one of the UK's most influential nutrition scientists, who developed our understanding of how poor diets contribute to obesity and helped establish the Food Standards Agency. As one of the

UK's early campaigners on obesity, Professor James helped develop the Body Mass Index (BMI) and establish the criteria for obesity assessment, management and prevention for policy makers across the globe. His attempts to raise awareness of the problem of obesity on society as well as individuals from the early 1970s were nothing short of prescient. KW particularly highlighted that the obituary appeared in the same issue of the British Medical Journal as an article on Ultra Processed Food, looking at a recent systematic umbrella review analysing 45 pooled analyses that has confirmed the harm it is causing to western (and beyond) diets and its connection to the growing obesity crisis (which Professor James predicted). The UPF article recognised the importance of smallholders and small food producers in terms of helping to reverse problematic dietary habits and championed the need for governments and populations to support people who are producing 'real' food, slowly in the face of the rising dominance of UPFs, drawing the parallel with the ambition of the Slow Food movement.

KW went on to summarise the key highlights from the Chair's Report, including that 2023 had been another year of growth and increased activity for Berwick Slow Food, which is one of the most active Conviviums in UK Slow Food. Membership has grown from a low of just over 20 a year ago to 38 at the beginning of 2024 and that we have ambitions as a group to increase our diversity, continue to add new members and volunteers, and to continue to extend our activities and educational programming in ways that support the local community.

KW ended by thanking everyone involved in making Berwick Slow Food a success.

At the end of the meeting, a member of the group recommended Chris Van Tulleken's book, *Ultra Processed People* for anyone interested in learning more about the detrimental impact UPFs are having on our lives.

5. Treasurer's Report

KH confirmed that the Accounts had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. He then ran through the Accounts for the Berwick Slow Food Convivium and the Berwick Food and Beer Festival, highlighting in particular:

- A healthy combined cash balance made up from the Festival Account, the Convivium Account and a separate Savings Account (set up in late 2023).

Festival Accounts

- That the 2023 Festival had an income total £2.9k higher than 2022, in part due to generous sponsorship from Simpsons Malt (our main sponsor, donating £10k), as well as Tempest Brewery, NCC Community Chest, Berwick Chamber of Trade, Rennie Welch, GWA, the Curfew MicroPub, Slightly Foxed and Rojo Antiques. It was noted that Berwick Town Council had declined to support the Festival financially in 2023.
- The slight change in location to the Parade Car Park had not inhibited footfall and £16.7k was generated in gate revenue.
- Expenses were slightly up on the previous year at £39,987, but in-line with the budget; savings were made on publicity and printing costs.

- The Honorarium paid to the Festival Directors was able to increase slightly to recognise the volume of work, whilst still registering a profit of c. £4k.
- A budget is in place for the 2024 Festival with an increase in stall-holder fees to off-set rising costs and still deliver a budgeted profit to support the work of the Convivium.

Convivium Accounts

- A new savings account was set-up to take advantage of higher interest rates (£25.76 generated in interest to date).
- The Call my Wine Bluff event generated not just a £60 profit, but also 12 new members to Slow Food.
- Total expenditure for the year was £3,059.78, which included a 'surprise' bill for a number of years' worth of website support and domain fees, as well as a grant of £2,000 to Prior Park First School for their school gardening project.
- This represents an in-year loss of £2,974.02 but the group retains a healthy cashbook balance.

6. Election of Committee Members and Officers

No questions were raised and nominees were confirmed in post.

2024 Committee

- Laura McGinlay - Chair
- Millie McRobbie - Vice-Chair
- Treasurer - Vacant
- Secretary - Jo Thomas and Alison Edwards
- Members elected to the management Committee: Ray McRobbie and Laura Scruton

At this point, LMcG took over as Chair of the meeting.

7. Expressions of Interest/Recommendations for a new person to be Treasurer

LMcG asked for expressions of interest or recommendations from members to fill the post of Treasurer on the Committee, following the resignation of KH. **Action:**

Anyone interested in the post is requested to get in touch with the committee at secretary@berwickslowfood.org

8. Update on Berwick Slow Food activities and events

LMcG noted that only two UK groups run an annual Food Festival and that ours is significantly larger and more complicated. She invited RMcR to give an update to the meeting on the 2023 Festival and plans for 2024.

RMcR noted that the 2023 Festival event had been a success, in spite of the change of venue from within the Barracks to the Parade Car Park (due to planned development of the Barracks complex) and had generated a profit. Lessons have been learnt following problems in 2023 caused by high winds and plans are in place to mitigate against this (as much as is possible) for 2024.

The 2024 Festival will continue to be held on the Parade Car Park and will also stick to the August dates, as this opened up the event to a new and broader demographic than the September timings allowed for (the event attracted a much bigger family audience in 2023 than previously).

Organisation of the 2024 Festival is well underway, with 30 traders already booked and 7 brewers, 14 producers and 6 street-food stalls already paid-up.

RMcR thanked all those who have volunteered for the Festival in the past and made an early plea for members to consider helping out at the 2024 event. **Action:**

Anyone interested in volunteering at this year's Festival should contact festival@berwickslowfood.org.

LMcG thanked RMcR and MMcR for their work as Festival Directors in 2023 and for the work already undertaken to make 2024 even more successful!

LMcG pointed members to the Chair's Report for detailed information about the group's activities this year, but took a moment to highlight the impact that had been delivered by the Berwick Slow Food grant to Prior Park First School. The school had been able to create outdoor garden spaces for each year group - embedding gardening and outdoor learning across all ages. Having set up an after school gardening club, sign-ups were so successful that within 3 weeks they had a waiting list of 20 children and had to start an additional club. And finally, thanks to the grant from BSF demonstrating a commitment by the school to gardening, Prior Park received a donation of a greenhouse to support their growing.

Berwick Slow Food hopes to use the work with Prior Park School as a pilot to then roll-out to other schools in the Berwick partnership, as well as building more of an educational offer into our current activities and programming. A number of members in attendance expressed support for the schools initiative in furthering the ambitions of Slow Food.

LMcG finished by inviting members to submit suggestions for projects/activities that they would like to see Berwick Slow Food involved with in the local community.

Action: The Committee are always delighted to receive suggestions, please email ideas for community@berwickslowfood.org

9. Any Other Business

LMcG expressed the group's thanks to Kevan Wylie as outgoing Chair and to Ken Hardy as outgoing Treasurer for all of their work for Berwick Slow Food. KH has brought rigour and process to the accounting that means that BSF have strong foundations from which to continue growing and supporting the aims of Slow Food. KW has been endlessly enthusiastic, knowledgeable, supportive and responsive to the needs of the Management Committee and the wider group.

No other business was raised and the meeting concluded.