

Minutes of the AGM of Lord Moray's Feuars held at 6pm on 22 June 2023 at the EIS offices in Moray Place

Present: Mr Andrew Dixon, Acting Chair
Mr M Baynham, Prof P Broda, Mr E Jeffrey, Mr G Henderson, Mr N Singh,
27 feuars

In attendance: Mr K Cattnach, Whitelaw Wells, Secretaries

Andrew Dixon, as Acting Chair, welcomed all to the meeting and summarised the running order for the AGM, as it would be slightly different to previous years. Mr Dixon drew feuars attention to the reverse of voting cards where a grid invited feuars to (1) sign up for communications via e-mail (2) pay assessments via direct debit (3) subscribe to the Bank garden and (4) volunteer for Committee membership - vacancies existed for Family, Digital and Website.

Mr Dixon spoke to his presentation providing background on the gardens, the gardeners, the Committee and, more generally, what goes on in and around the gardens and the wider feu. As an introduction he showed a number of photographs of the feu; referred to the bi-centenary book with over 300 copies sold to date; Chris Close was a photographer in residence during the bicentenary year and would have an exhibition later in the year to show his work; there were 30 bicentenary events with four main sponsors, 55 donors, 3,000 attendees, 100 photographs submitted to the photography competition, £12,000 raised for charities and many, many volunteers. Overall the bicentenary year has been hugely successful and later the meeting will consider a legacy project.

The Gardens (incorporating convenor reports)

Mr Dixon explained 28 new trees had been planted during the year, including 3 apple trees, 50 shrubs and 6,000 bulbs. New benches had been situated in the Bank gardens and infrastructure projects, such as the upgraded path in the Bank garden, had been completed. In Moray Place the Committee had looked to help the drainage problems by tining the lawn to stimulate improved root growth. A witch elm, sadly, had to be felled but some of the wood has been sold. Other tree pruning work meant limbs on various trees had to be removed for the benefit of the tree and safety. Mr Dixon explained recent filming for Belgravia had been, largely, managed by the Residents Association but acknowledged disruption was far greater than many feuars would have liked, so the Committee would be engaging with the Residents Association to establish a set of ground rules to be followed at future filming.

The BBQ had been well used last year but Mr Dixon warned that the awning, which had been professionally cleaned in the year, was nearing the end of its life, so would need replaced. The hire charge next year will increase as a result. Feuars will see the first border has been planted in Ainslie Place and a new notice boards erected in all of the garden. There were two Open Gardens Days in 2022.

Mr Dixon then outlined plans for 2023/24 as follows:-

- Significant gardener time was spent cutting the holly hedge in Moray Place so that the railings can be repainted. Half will be done in 2023/24 with the other half the following year
- Two years ago a report was commissioned from David Narro Associates on the condition of the arches in the Bank garden. There has been monitoring of the arches and remedial work will now need addressed
- Paths to be improved. Pea gravel to be laid on the top paths of the Bank garden and in Moray Place garden
- New lawn mower for the Bank garden
- Further tree planting
- 12 bird boxes, mostly in the Bank garden, put up at various locations
- Further borders in Ainslie Place to be planted
- Improve the website
- Replace the garden locks and keys as 12 years since this was last done
- Work closely with the Residents Association

Finally, Mr Dixon thanked the gardeners for all their hard work during the year, adding he thought the gardens were looking magnificent. He also thanked Prof Paul Broda, who was stepping down from the Committee, for his many years of service. Mr Dixon thanked his fellow Committee members and those supporters, volunteers and donor feuars who had assisted with the bicentenary and other events. He reminded feuars these individuals were volunteers who put in hundreds of hours of their time on feu business, much of it unseen.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs F Dobson, Gill Hollis, Grace Durham, Alan Dickson and Jean Keeling.

Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the AGM of 23 June 2022 were approved, proposed by Simon Laird (22 Moray Place) and seconded by Mr Bob Luther (34 Moray Place).

Treasurers' Report

Mr Jeffrey referred to the accounts appended to the summer newsletter. This year's accounts again include columns for Randolph Crescent and the Bicentenary. The results for the year report a surplus of £16,000, with sections 5 of the Newsletter including a detailed report from Mr Cattanach of Whitelaw Wells.

In broad terms 2023 had finished as expected. Accounts show income receivable, not received, but around 98% of assessments have been received and for those outstanding we know where we are with them. Expenditure was less than budgeted, but this was due more to timing rather than expenditure not requiring to be incurred.

The Committee has spent significant time considering the assessment increases and were keen to keep to assurances given previously that increases would be less this year than in recent years when reserves were being established and in line with inflation. Mr Jeffrey explained that it had been necessary to take a view on the likely inflation rate for the coming year. The budget for 2023/24 has been prepared and approved by the Committee and assumes inflationary increases at 6.5% per annum. However, whilst inflation is currently above this figure, they propose a 5% uplift and reserves are sufficient should inflation not fall as predicted. Outside Subscribers will increase by 6.5%. This means the targeted reserves position is expected to be reached a year later, 7 years from now. Mr Jeffrey noted in future the assessment increases between Front and Bank are likely to be different as the reserves for each build at different rates. Mr Jeffrey said the two main costs for the feu are gardeners wages and the secretaries fees. The gardeners are now paid fairly compared to similar positions and trainees are paid the Scottish Real Living Wage. The Committee noted the increase in the secretaries fees and after careful review had reluctantly agreed to it. They concluded it remained reasonable for the complexity of services provided and still represents good value for money to feuars. Mr Jeffrey commented that the range of services provided by our 'secretaries' included invoicing and collection of assessments, chasing arrears, key management, paying bills, bookkeeping and accountancy, payroll and PAYE processing and VAT processing. As well as administration of bookings and the dog registration scheme

Finally, Mr Jeffrey noted the Committee had recently opened a new bank deposit account with Skipton Building Society. He invited questions from the floor on the accounts.

Mr R Luther (34 Moray Place) observed the accounts included £56,000 for bicentenary events and asked for a breakdown of the expense. Mr Jeffrey replied he didn't have a full breakdown to hand but significant sums related to marquee hire with the balance made up of numerous small amounts for the various events put on over the year, all of which were supported by purchase invoices. Mr Dixon added that the bicentenary advisory group had kept separate detailed spreadsheets maintained on an event by event basis showing income and expenditure. He was comfortable expenditure was accounted for correctly and there was little benefit gained from a line by line analysis.

Mrs J McDonald (5 Darnaway Street) was upset that outside subscribers paid less than she did for her assessment. She paid by direct debit but noted this was now a significant amount so asked if assessments could be collected over, say, four or twelve payments rather than once annually. Mr Jeffrey replied that the average feuair pays less than an outside subscriber but acknowledged some feuars do pay more depending on the size, or more specifically rateable value, of their property. On variable direct debit collection he said the committee had considered this but it would have a cashflow implication so would need detailed analysis should feuars want it explored further. He invited Mr Cattanach to comment. Mr Cattanach agreed, adding variable collection should be possible but there would be an increase in administration as a result that may off-set any other benefit gained. Mrs McDonald questioned what the nurseries were paying as she thought it should be more. Mr Baynham explained all properties pay based on rateable value, with commercial properties paying more than residential ones. The basis of assessment is a significant issue that the Committee continues to look at.

Mr J Stirling (44 Moray Place) asked if film crews are contributing a lot financially to the feu as he has had enough of the disruption they cause. Mr Dixon replied that the Belgravia filming paid location fees to the Residents association. The gardens separately received £1800 + VAT for filming in the Moray Place Garden. The generally accepted location fee was £1,000 per day. It is the Council who approve filming in the street. LMF can only control filming done in the garden(s). Fiona Banatvala (32 Moray Place) said £1,000 was too low, it should be £5,000 per day. It was accepted the disruption this time was too great and Mr Dixon referred to his earlier comments that the Committee would be liaising with the Residents Association to set ground rules going forward.

Mr R Luther (34 Moray Place) asked a further question about the calculation of "months reserves". Mr Jeffrey explained that "months reserves" was the number of months of budgeted expenditure for the following year which was represented by cash held at the previous year end. He further noted that a minimum of three months was required to cover the period from the financial year end of 31 March and the receipt of the follow year's assessments in July

The accounts were adopted, proposed by Mrs F Young (49 Moray Place) and seconded by Mr C Rabb (10 Ainslie Place).

The assessment rates were adopted, proposed by Mr R Loudon (13 Moray Place) and seconded by Ms R McIntyre (25 Moray Place).

Resolutions

Mr Dixon introduced the resolution, referring to the 2021 AGM where a legacy project was first discussed. He explained 80% of responders to the bicentenary survey felt a physical legacy was appropriate with suggestions mainly being for a covered place, seating or meeting space, where feuars could come together. The Committee felt this view had been strengthened throughout the bicentenary celebrations so the proposal being put to the AGM was to explore options further with a view to making a firm proposal to the 2024 AGM. Mr Dixon added that in speaking to donors, some had indicated they may be willing to provide additional donations. Grant funding may also be available. Mr Raab asked for confirmation that this resolution only authorised further exploration of options. Mr Dixon confirmed that that was the case.

The resolution was proposed by R Loudon (13 Moray Place) and seconded by Mr S Laird (22 Moray Place). There being no further questions Mr Dixon moved to a vote.

- In favour of the resolution 27 feuars
- Against the resolution 2 feuars
- No abstentions
- Proxies included in the above votes cast

The resolution was therefore passed.

Election of members

Mr Dixon explained there was one current member of the Committee standing for re-election and two new members being proposed. Biographies of the new, proposed, members had been posted on the Moray Place Notice Board for the last week.

Existing member standing for re-election:-

Andrew Dixon, 12A Great Stuart Street

Proposed: Alan Dickson, 10 Glenfinlas Street

Seconded: Nigel Sharp, 8 Moray Place

New members proposed for election:-

Rosalind Davis, 10/3 Moray Place

Proposed: Michael Baynham, 18/1 Moray Place

Seconded: Ewan Jeffrey, 5/1 Ainslie Place

Jane Corrie, 1/3 Doune Terrace

Proposed: Ewan Jeffrey, 5/1 Ainslie Place

Seconded: Michael Baynham, 18/1 Moray Place

Both appointments were approved.

Re-appointment of Secretaries and Treasurers

Re-appointment of Whitelaw Wells was proposed by Mr J Sterling (44 Moray Place), seconded by Mrs Claire Smith (25 Moray Place) and approved by all.

Any other business

Mr A Dixon reminded feuars of the relationship between the Committee and Randolph Crescent Garden, which now had its own garden management committee, reflecting the separate ownership. who's AGM was on 6 July.

The feu Residents Association AGM has been scheduled for 19th September and Mr Dixon urged Feuars to join.

Mr Dixon invited **Mr Ghaleigh** to summarise the work he was doing on 'summer dogs on a lead' policy. Mr Ghaleigh explained the current rules and that they would be adopted for 2023 in July and August. His intention was to have a couple of workshops, each a maximum of 2 hours, with attendees representing a broad section of the feu to discuss dog matters with a view to revising guidelines for the 2024 summer. Eight volunteers had already come forward but these were all dog owners so Mr Ghaleigh asked for non-dog owners to volunteer so the workshop would be balanced. Information about the workshop had only just been circulated via e-mail and that e-mail had, so far, only been distributed to dog owners although it will go to the wider feu shortly.

Mrs P Sharp (8 Moray Place) reminded feuars the Moray Place garden shed housed various equipment for feuars use. It was noted, however, the croquet set was missing a hoop and mallet.

Mr C Rabb (10 Ainslie Place) noted Mr Dixon's earlier comments regarding bird boxes, however, he was aware no mention had been made about bees and the bee-keeping which went on in the gardens. Noted by all.

There being no further business the meeting formally closed. Mr Dixon invited attendees to drinks in the Moray Place garden – donations welcome.

Finally, former Chair, Mrs F Young, made a brief presentation, and vote of thanks, to Mr Dixon for all his hard work and enthusiasm leading the bicentenary celebrations. The year had been a huge success, enjoyed by many. She presented him with a small memento as a thank you from feuars.