

FEDERATION OF RECORDED MUSIC SOCIETIES

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by Zoom technology on Saturday 7 November 2020.

Before the meeting opened, Ron Mitchell (Website Manager) requested permission to record proceedings; this was unanimously agreed.

1. Chairman Allan Child welcomed everyone to the first Zoom AGM to be held by the Federation and thanked them for participating. He ascertained from the Secretary that the meeting was quorate, 19 affiliates being represented.
2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** The Secretary reported that apologies had been received from the following affiliates: Bradford-on-Avon, Cheltenham, City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society, Hinckley, Lewisham, Southport, Stafford and Wolverhampton; as well as the following individuals: Dianne Board (Weston-super-Mare), Geoff Trinick (Cardiff), Mick Birchall (Hinckley), Tony Baines (Stafford and Vice President), Jim Bostwick (Barnsley and Vice President) and Brendan Sadler (Street and Glastonbury).
3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM** at Weston-super-Mare had been circulated to all affiliates. They were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record.
4. **MATTERS ARISING.** There were no matters arising.
5. **CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW.** Allan Child (Jubilee Music Circle, Derby) commented that he had reported last year that 2018/19 had been an interesting year. It would be an understatement to claim that 2019/20 was even more so. The year had started well: plans had been made for the Ilkley Music Weekend with leaflets printed and distributed. Final details had been arranged in January 2020 ready for the event to take place in April. However, the pandemic meant this all had to be cancelled. It is planned that the weekend will still take place during the last weekend in March 2021 although this is far from certain. The pandemic has also had a major effect on affiliates and meetings have been cancelled for several months. The Jubilee Music Circle, Derby, had re-started in September but there would be no November meeting and it is not clear whether it will meet in December. Some affiliate societies have already disbanded and some have suspended their affiliation on a temporary basis. The national committee has also been affected: meetings at the Brunswick Inn in Derby have been suspended which has the benefit of no travel costs. Record shops across the country have also been affected: even before the pandemic, specialist shops of this kind had already started to close or moved to an online service. Stephen Coster's shop had recently closed in SE London and a number of local societies – Croydon, Lewisham and Orpington – paid tribute to his support and wished him well in his future endeavours. The Chairman commented on the importance of supporting businesses like this in future or we will lose them all.
6. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND TREASURER'S REPORT.** Paul Corfield Godfrey referred to the papers that had been circulated earlier. A major concern for the Federation is the fact that many societies have paid their subscription with the intention of starting meetings again in September. However, now that meetings cannot take place, some have asked for a refund. This could result in the Federation bearing the loss. While this is not in itself a problem as the Federation has made considerable savings this year, the Treasurer commented that this would have to be discussed by the national committee before a decision could be made on the way forward. There have been some problems with the annual insurance invoice where costs that should have been directed to affiliates for equipment insurance came directly to the Federation; this has now been resolved. Last year's problems with PRS and PPL have now also been resolved and a final invoice is imminent. The Treasurer will then be able to extract costs associated with suspended societies, so any other societies in this position should let him know as soon as possible.

Suspended societies who subsequently choose to have their affiliation re-instated will return to having full insurance and performing rights cover. Acceptance of the report was proposed by David Wherrell and seconded by George Steele. The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his report.

- 7. SECRETARY'S REPORT.** Adele Wills commented that her report would cover some of the same ground as the Chairman's report. Firstly, she wanted to add some detail to the decline in affiliated societies. Since April of this year, she had been notified of fourteen permanent closures which is a little higher than the previous year's total and only reflects eight months. In addition, a number of societies have temporarily suspended their affiliation and many have indicated that they are unsure whether they will be able to resume meetings. (However, the Treasurer commented that, where societies are still operating, there is evidence that membership numbers are actually increasing.) Some societies have lost venues and many are simply deterred by the new and more stringent health and safety regulations that now have to be met. According to the Secretary's membership database, the Federation currently has 110 affiliated societies. However, what has been deeply impressive about this difficult time is the inventiveness that so many societies have shown in trying to keep in touch with their members and, in some form or other, sharing a common love for music. Committee meetings have, since March, been held using Zoom technology and this has allowed us to keep the business side of the Federation functioning relatively smoothly. In fact, it has given us a more efficient way of working and it has been agreed that all committee meetings will now be held using Zoom, saving considerably on travel time and expenses. The AGM is a different matter and it is hoped to continue the tradition of having different host societies on an annual basis, although it has not been possible this year. Today's meeting should have been in Leicester, but this has been postponed until next year's AGM when we hope it will be possible to go ahead. While Zoom is not a useful mechanism for listening to music together, it has also provided many societies with a means of keeping in touch and for musical discussion. A number of societies have distributed listening programmes in advance and then met on Zoom to talk about them. Members often have their own extensive collections, but most music is available in performance on YouTube or Spotify and can be watched enjoyably at home. Others have set up email discussion groups. One society, in Bradford-on-Avon, even approached their local radio station and now offer a weekly programme on Sunday afternoons called 'The Classical Music Hour' for West Wilts radio. We have all had to become more resourceful and certainly willing to conquer any fears of technology if we want to keep in touch.

We now have eight committee members, leaving four vacancies, although this could reduce to two if we make the changes to the Constitution that are being proposed later in this meeting. However, there will certainly be room for anyone who wishes to join. The changes we have made this year mean that committee members will only have to travel once a year to the AGM. So the Secretary made another plea for any volunteers who would like to join the committee. She also wanted to pay tribute to Mick Birchall who has retired from the committee after long and sterling service as Minutes Secretary. She commented that she will certainly miss his administrative support as well as his company at our meetings. Officially, she reported that all the duly signed and supported Nominations for Officers and Committee to serve in 2020/21 have been received and are available for inspection.

She concluded by thanking all her fellow committee members for their patience and support in helping her with her duties and to thank everyone for attending this AGM, albeit remotely. We have also seen newer members of the committee embracing their roles and bringing in new ideas and projects. Although we have been sorry to see the end of the Bulletin, we now have a twice yearly newsletter produced by Simon Rawlings which has provided an ideal means of

keeping in touch and providing essential information. We have received very positive feedback about this. Ron Mitchell is now our Website Manager continuing the excellent work of George Steele who is our new Vice Chairman and the website continues to be an interesting repository of information. We are also delighted to welcome Jim Bostwick as one of our Vice Presidents. All the vital roles are covered but new members are always welcome. Finally, she thanked everyone again for attending this meeting and participating in the Federation's first Zoom AGM.

8. **CONFIRMATION OF COMMITTEE AS PER COMMITTEE LIST 2020/21.** Nominations have been received as follows:

- Allan Child (Jubilee Music Circle (Derby)) – Chairman
- George Steele (Rochdale GD) – Vice-Chairman
- Adele Wills (Street and Glastonbury RMG) – Honorary Secretary
- Paul Corfield Godfrey (Cardiff RMS and Committee Nomination) – Honorary Treasurer
- Ron Mitchell (Leicester Music Society) – Website Manager and Committee
- Tony Sanderson (Northampton RMS) – Committee
- Simon Rawlings (Weston-super-Mare MAS) – Newsletter Editor and Committee
- David Wherrell (Letchworth RMS) – Committee

The committee for 2020/21 was unanimously approved.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to Mick Birchall for his long service to the committee; he hoped to make a presentation of an engraved tankard to Mick as soon as it was safe to do so.

The Chairman also expressed his pleasure at welcoming Jim Bostwick as a Vice President. Sadly, the Federation had also received news of the deaths of three previous committee members: former Vice President John Davies, Tony Pook and former Chairman John Gilks.

9. **APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTS EXAMINERS.** The Treasurer reported that Ruth Williams and David Brook were willing to serve and suitably qualified. Their reappointment was unanimously approved.

10. **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FRMS CONSTITUTION.** The Chairman talked through the detailed paper setting out four changes to the Constitution:

- Removal of the roles of Technical Officer and Bulletin Editor reducing the committee from twelve members to ten; making the Website Manager role an appointed, not elected, post; reducing the committee quorum to five.
- Removal of the reference to 'annual audited statement of accounts' and replacing it with 'annual statement of accounts certified by independent examiners' – which reflects legally what is required.
- Increasing the level of authorised expenditure needing approval from two committee members from £50 to £100 and clarifying the process of approval and reporting for any such items. Expenditure under £100 can be approved by the Treasurer.
- Making explicit the fact that Proxies can be included as part of the quorum for an AGM.

All of these amendments were unanimously approved.

The Secretary reported that she would now action these changes for final approval at the next committee meeting on 28 November. The amended Constitution would then be distributed to all affiliates electronically in December, with a hard copy available on request. It was asked if the Constitution could be posted on the website and it was agreed that this would be discussed by the committee. It was also recommended that the final version is clearly dated to avoid any confusion with earlier versions.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.** There was a wide-ranging discussion about the pros and cons of running electronic meetings: the tendency of older members to be averse to new technology; balanced against the wider flexibilities and opportunities offered by virtual meetings.

12. The Chairman thanked the Secretary for her work in arranging the AGM and then declared the meeting closed at 15.10.