

Draft minutes of the 21st Annual General Meeting of PCN Britain held on Saturday 27th April 2024, via Zoom.

Members present: Adrian Alker, Christine Alker, Chris Avis, David Coaker, Edward Conder, Simon Cross, Pat Fuller, Valerie Graham, Sandra Griffiths, John Hack, Susan Hinds, Richard Jackman, Jenny Jacobs, Janet Jenkins, Nigel Jones, Mary Kenchington, Roger Lasko, Mary McVay, Dierdre Munro, Naomi Nixon, Paul Onslow, Nicola Phelan, Christine Rayner, Tony Rutherford, Deborah Stebbing, Roger Story, Joy Stribblehill, Peter Stribblehill, Richard Tetlow, Mark Thompson, Bud Tillinghurst, Christine Whitworth, Jackie Wiegman, Roger Wikeley, Robert Williams, Carole Wynn, Watcyn Wynn

1. Appointment of Chair for AGM
Dave Coaker who is a Trustee, member of PCN Britain and Editor of Progressive Voices agreed to Chair the meeting. The meeting was quorate.
2. Apologies for absence: David Arnold, Peter Brophy, Michael Burn, Janet Carpenter, Diana Churcher, John Churcher, Peter Cotton, Paul Dawson, Gerald Drewett, Sally Eng, Joyce Firth, Richard Firth, Julie Groves, Molly Hall, Joanna Harries, John Haydon, Sue Hobley, Paul James, Hazel Kempton, Fran Lovett, Ian Lovett, Alan Powell, John Ramsbottom, Patrick Ramsey, Kath Rowberry, Tony Sanchez, Kevin Skippon, Liz Temple, Sally Thomas, Christopher Thompson, Val Trinder, Peter Turnbull, Andy Vivian, Jill Vogler, David Warrington
3. Adoption of minutes
The Draft minutes of the 20th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 1st April 2023 were circulated in advance of the meeting and no amendments were proposed. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Simon Cross and seconded by Jackie Wiegman; those present voted to accept the minutes as a true record.
4. Matters arising from the minutes
Nigel Jones asked about Student Christian Movement (SCM) and reaching out to non-church communities. Simon Cross replied that part of the focus of the podcast is on Christian Atheism and finding ways to talk in language that allows connections to be made. Need to find ways to have something meaningful to say to people who would not normally connect with an organisation with Christian in its name. Naomi Nixon, who is a co-opted Trustee of PCN Britain and CEO of SCM, responded to say that the links are strong and important to both organisations
5. Adoption of Chair's report, 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023
The report was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Simon highlighted the context of PCN's current situation, post-COVID a lot of organisations have found it difficult to bring people together but this is also part of a bigger question, a climate in which membership of organisations is not something people are keen to engage with. This is not just a financial issue but a broader societal move which has seen membership orientated groups struggling to recruit members. For PCN Britain membership numbers are not growing, they are on a moderate downward move, this impacts the number of available volunteers and income and so this is a matter of concern. There is talk of a volunteering crisis in the country and this is a wider societal issue and we are not immune to that, we have had issues recruiting Trustees and there is a need to safeguard the Trustees who have stepped forward.

On the positive side Simon expressed his thanks to those people who correspond with Simon and who give their time to help with the running of PCN Britain. Things have been slow to get back to normal after COVID but it feels as though we are moving in the right direction, albeit slowly. Simon asked once again for people to step forward to join the Trustees.

Questions from the members were invited.

Nicola Phelan asked about the recently deceased Revd Tim Yeager, his Galilee Course and Group and overlap between those people who had engaged with the Galilee group and PCN. Simon expressed his condolences to the family and friends of Tim and said that he hopes he will be able to talk to the people taking on the Galilee resources to find out how we can support them and work with them.

Richard Jackman suggested that each member be asked to recruit one other person. Simon responded that it would make a huge difference if people did feel able to meet that challenge to recruit. He also said that he has concerns about membership models going forward. Richard and Simon agreed that even if people were not successful in recruiting more members that spreading the word of PCN would be beneficial.

Jackie Wiegman commented that within chaplaincy work she has seen the need for spiritual connection. Progressive Christianity is useful in this as it encourages questions rather than providing certainties.

Roger Lasko asked about the podcast project and when it would be launched. Simon responded that progress had been slower than hoped but that a provider had been identified who had begun work on the project and that he had recently received the first draft of the podcast but that some more work was needed. As hoped the podcast was a short recording that was not dogmatic or didactic but story based and it will be accompanied by discussion material as with Made of Stories. Simon said they were looking to identify people who wanted to tell the story of some aspect of their life, specifically they are looking for people who identify as Christian Atheists to get in touch and tell their stories.

Richard Tetlow asked about Interfaith Partnership. He has a PCN group that he works with and that he also convenes a progressive faith group comprising mainly Muslims and Christians. Richard wondered whether those who are involved with different faiths can encourage people of those groups to get involved with PCN and that would present a new agenda. Simon responded that he is always encouraged to hear of Richard's interfaith work, this is the sort of thing that PCN as a network should encourage among our members, Simon questioned how well placed we are to invite people of other faiths to join our network but stressed that we want to welcome all.

The acceptance of the Chair's report was proposed by Jackie Wiegman and seconded by Jenny Jacobs. The meeting voted to accept the report.

6. Adoption of Treasurer's report

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Treasurer, Peter Stribblehill, commented to accompany a powerpoint presentation.

Thanks were given to Sarah Guilfoyle the PCN Britain Administrator for maintaining the accounts and also to Rachel Witham as Independent Examiner.

There was a small surplus of £413 for the year, once again the decision had been taken not to increase the costs of subscriptions but to ask members to consider whether they could afford a little extra and overall subscriptions were up slightly on the previous year. Costs had been trimmed, especially Management Committee expenses relating to residential meetings, they have value but the costs will be controlled. The rate of interest on the deposit account has now gone up and constitutes a more significant income. Gift Aid was higher than the previous year due to the timing of renewals. The anniversary events will result in a small surplus once the Gift Aid has been claimed. Greenbelt is a significant cost but is a large part of the outreach work of PCN Britain. The costs of the newsletter include postage. Peter commended the Give As You Live scheme to members as a source of passive income for the charity.

Peter confirmed that after seven years as Treasurer he is not seeking re-election but will remain on the Executive Committee as a co-opted member but asked for someone to step forward to take the role of Treasurer.

Peter invited questions from the attendees, there were no questions.

The accounts have been independently examined and signed off, without qualification, by an independent examiner. The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Simon Cross and seconded by Pat Fuller. The meeting voted to accept the accounts.

7. Appointment of new Trustees

Those seeking appointment were:

Simon Cross – Proposer: Paul Onslow, Secunder: Peter Stribblehill

Jackie Wiegman – Proposer: Peter Stribblehill, Secunder: Simon Cross

The vote was a single, confirmatory vote as the number of spaces available exceeded the number of nominees. The meeting voted to accept the nominations.

8. Changes to the PCN Britain Constitution

The wording of the proposed change to Section 6(3) and the addition of section 7(5) had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

All changes to the constitution need to receive an assenting vote of two thirds of those present at a quorate General Meeting. The vote to accept the changes was proposed by Jackie Wiegman and seconded by Susan Hinds, there was a show of hands with a single dissenting vote and so the proposed changes were approved by the necessary majority.

This concluded the business of the Annual General Meeting.