**MINUTES EIGHTH SABI WINTER MEETING 27th JANUARY 2017**

Present- Richard Brown (chair), Simon Fairlie, Gill Barron, Phil Batten, Chris Riley, Janice Bell, Kevin Austin, Charlotte Oliver, Beth Tilston (host), Jez Hastings, Jim McVittie, David Kuegler, Colin Close

1: Apologies for Absence:-

Olga Damant, Mark Allery, John Letts, Mary Ellis, Steve Tomlin, Simon Damant,

Andi Rickard, Fiona Pollock

2: Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously accepted.

3: Committee Members and Executive

Richard Brown will continue as chair

Mark Allery will continue to be secretary

Chris Riley will continue as treasurer and membership secretary

4: **Treasurers Report**

The treasurer (Chris Riley with appropriate hat) advised that membership was up and that this had increased contributions by 8%

Expenditure this year was low leaving a surplus of £663.82

Total assets were £3046.80

It was noted that the Unity Trust Bank made a £18 quarterly bank charge this year.

Simon Fairlie pointed out that the Land magazine had not been charged for their account.

It was mentioned that perhaps Triodos Bank or the Post Office may be able to offer a better rate.

5: **Membership Report**

The Membership Secretary Chris Riley (with a different hat!) reported that membership was up by 8% in line with the increase of income.

There was discussion with regard to improving notifications of membership renewals and initially it was thought that reminders might be sent via the regional coordinators.

The collection of subscriptions would become easier once the NOCHEX account and button had been set up on the SABI website.

There was an in-depth discussion of the nature of SABI membership and renewals.

Various options were discussed.

The current situation is that members pay an annual subscription of £10 renewable each June (to coincide with the scythe fair and AGM). Currently Members who fail to renew are retained on the membership list so by default we have; full [paid up]members, and ‘associate members’ (those with lapsed renewals).

Steve Tomlin (in correspondence fed to meeting) questioned whether a membership fee was needed at all.

Kevin suggested replacing membership fees with a one off joining fee and free membership thereafter.

It was agreed that it is useful to maintain a full membership list (rather than sign off lapsed members). ‘Associate’ members can still contribute to the scythe community and the longer membership list could carry more weight in the political arena when needed.

The point was raised that if this model of membership was used SABI would have limited income.

Simon Fairlie Suggested that we could have funding drives for specific projects when needed (eg crowd funding) to allow Kevins suggestion to implemented.

Simon Fairlie said he could also add a suggestion to purchase SABI membership at the bottom of his scythe purchase forms to encourage farms and other organisations to join.

Chris Riley [as membership administrator] said that he favoured simplicity and was in favour of the free membership with joining fee model.

Colin Close suggested that membership was undervalued since the SABI mailing list had provided him with paid work.

Beth Tilston: Suggested that an annual email which would include the NOCHEX button should be sent to members to encourage them to renew their subscriptions or to make a voluntary contribution.

**Resolution**

The decision of the meeting regarding the proposed change in the membership arrangements was that we retain the status quo (membership subscription £10) but that the annual fixed membership renewal contribution would be changed to a voluntary contribution.

Simon Fairlie again raised the point about putting “Do you wish to join SABI” membership applications on his scythe ordering forms and asked for confirmation that this was acceptable.

Simon said he would undertake to forward these to the Treasure/Membership Secretary.

This proposal was accepted by the meeting

5: Windrow

Colin Close again accepted the task of laying out the next copy of Windrow with Simon Fairlie providing editorial material. CC also undertook to distribute via the mailing list.

It was suggested that two shorter issues of Windrow be published one in January and the other in April.

This was agreed.

There was some discussion about expanding the content of the magazine. It was felt that younger people should be represented perhaps by interviews on why they enjoy scything.

Charlotte Oliver agreed to approach young people with a view to creating copy

It was also suggested that profiles of some of the older members of SABI would make good copy.

6: Google Groups and Facebook.

Facebook interactions were up by around the same amount as membership 8%. The total number of SABI facebook group members stands at 246. SABI membership is not a requirement to join this closed discussion group.

It was noted that the Facebook group had a leading question before joining was allowed this has helped reduce the number of spurious memberships.

Generally the Facebook site is working well.

The level of discussion on the SABI google (email) group was down.

Colin Close suggested that an Instagram site be set up for photographs no decision was reached on this matter.

7: Regional Coordinators

Beth Tilston said that her entry was now out of date having moved to Blakeney, FOD

Chris Riley and Richard Brown said they would review the regional coordinators.

It was noted that the website had no automated means of updating email addresses Richard Brown said he would investigate this.

Charlie Quinell had volunteered to create an international site Richard Brown was asked whether he was pursuing this. The answer was yes but the contact was not responding to emails, he said he would keep on trying. The assembly agreed that it would be good if this continued to be pursued. RB to set up international links page and pursue contacts.

8: Festivals

New festivals were noted at Settle and South Shropshire

Simon Fairlie suggested that a grain harvesting event has never been organised.

The potential for a festival at Totnes was discussed. Totness need help to cut small areas of grain typically 1 acre but it was thought that it would be difficult to base an event around this as it needs a party of scythers at uncertain times. The event would have to be “promotional” as the optimum harvesting time couldn’t be observed necessitating the sacrifice of the cut grain.

9: **Promotion**:

Beth Tilston mentioned that Countryfile had been in contact with regard to scything at Blenheim Palace. Chris Riley said he would pick up this lead.

Simon Fairlie said that Gardeners Question Time had been in contact with him.

Simon Fairlie asked whether we should ask Gardeners Question Time to hold their show at the Green Fair.

National Meadows Day was also mentioned as a possible vehicle for the promotion of scything again in 2018.

Kevin Austin suggested that we approach young farmers clubs.

There was some debate about this, promotional material was suggested as a possible vehicle. Others suggested that special needs schools may provide fertile areas for development.

Jez said that he had already started exploring this at a school near to him with scything being added to the school curriculum.

Actions:

Kevin Austin to action Cornwall

Colin Close to approach Plumpton College

Simon Fairlie will write to Gardeners Question Time producers.

Richard Brown to explore promotion at National Meadows Day

Simon Fairlie re-raised the issue of a promotional video after some discussion this was considered a worthwhile project.

A Welsh producer Hugh was known to some and he was thought to be a good candidate to create the content. Phil Batten said he would contact him and explore the possibilities.

**10: Teaching**

Some issues occurred with the master class at the last Green Scythe Fair where a number of groups all converged on the peening tent at the same time.

Action on this issue will be taken by a subcommittee

Gill Barron stated that the LWA were adding a lot of extra stress to the organisation of the Green Scythe Fair and suggested that they may be moved to another site.

Jez Hastings asked that it be proposed to the Green Scythe Fair committee that an acre of grass be set aside separately from the Green Fair for the purposes of training. Any additional costs for this should be born by the Green Scythe Fair.

There was a break where scythe equipment was discussed for the purposes of continuity this is shown at the end of the teaching section.

David Keugler made a proposal that there be a skills sharing workshop for teachers to share their experience. This was discussed and it appears that local mentoring schemes seemed to be the best way forward.

Richard Brown said he would contact David about this with a view to putting out a circular.

**Website** course listing

It was proposed that the asterisks next to scythe teachers listed in Windrow and on the website be removed and that the paragraph in the minutes be substituted for this.

“Many of the teachers listed here have attended the scythe teachers’ course at the Somerset Scythe Festival. This two day course is taught by Simon Fairlie, Christiane Laganda, Phil Batten and Steve Tomlin. It covers the methods and practicalities of teaching the use of the scythe, including a strong emphasis on safety.

Richard Brown will liase with Steve Tomlin and indicate that this has been agreed.

**Equipment**

Simon Fairlie spoke briefly about scythe equipment and passed around a high quality peening jig from a new manufacturer in Czech Republic. A bulk order has been placed for these jigs and they will replace the former type. SF also warned that there would be a price rise on equipment due to Brexit. This could be up to 10%.

**11: A.O.B.**

SABI involvement in Europe

Kevin Austin had attended a competition in Switzerland where competitive scything is serious stuff.

It was suggested that we might use some of the accumulated funds to provide financial assistance to a young person either in training or travel so that they could attend such an event. It was decided to take this forward.

Chris Riley Stated that a new batch of leaflets were required but before production some changes were required. Chris Riley said he would attend to this.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Jez Hastings for Beth and Will for hosting the meeting in their new home.

Chris Riley said that he might be able to host the next winter gathering event at his new home in Gillingham.

The next meeting will be the AGM at the Green Scythe Fair on 10thJune 2018

Meeting Closed