**UK Fireball Association Annual General Meeting**

**8.00 pm Monday 21 August 2017**

**Lyme Regis SC**

**Present: an attendance register was taken**

**Apologies**

Ian Castle

Sophia Benson

**Confirmation of 2016 AGM Minutes-**

Proposed Andy Robinson Seconded Andy Scott

**Chairman’s Report**

“A year goes round quickly and there is never enough time to do everything planned!

Superficially there has been little sign of outward change with the association but in fact there has been a good deal of ‘structural’ work undertaken. Over the last 12 months:

* A new constitution has been adopted
* Membership subscriptions reviewed, changed and implemented
* A new website launched
* Fireball e-News created and the first three editions issued
* Direct debiting provided
* The Fireball Dinghy Centre Facebook page created
* A South West Co-ordinator appointed

However, there remains much to be done.

On the water Tom Gillard & Richard Anderton retained their world title and the 2016 Nationals were a success. The story is a little different at a local level as we continue to struggle to build club fleets and achieve good open meeting attendances. In my view, strong club fleets are necessary to provide the platform for a solid and well attended open meeting programme - the alternative is to become a ‘travelling’ class.

There has been welcome innovation in the fleet of late and that brings me on to the subject of twin poles where we hope to persuade FI to permit their use. We in the UK are to used seeing twin poles on many other classes but for Fireballers elsewhere in the world twin poles provoke concern over cost and a fear that fast teams will become faster still. Hopefully these worries will be allayed and a favourable outcome to a vote to be held at Lyme Regis this week will emerge.

We are trying to look further ahead when booking venues for future National championships. Looe was booked for 2018 some while ago but we are presently looking to slot in Weymouth, Torbay and Mounts Bay for 2019-21 although which club aligns to which year has yet to be determined. Dates are still to be finalised.

As ever I would like to thank my fellow committee members for all their hard work during the year. There has been a little change in the composition of the committee insofar as Rick Cornes and Sophie Holden have recently decided to stand down as Open Meeting Co-ordinator and Youth Co-ordinator respectively but I’m delighted to welcome John Piatt and Sophia Benson in their stead. Simon Benson joined us during the year as Nationals Co-ordinator and has set to the challenge with gusto. As most of you will know, Richard Anderton’s unfortunate injury means he is unable to sail Fireballs for some time at least and, after many years on the committee, he has decided to step down. His experience, enthusiasm and willingness to get involved will be greatly missed and he will certainly be difficult to replace. My particular thanks go to him for everything he has done for the class and the committee.

You will have gathered we have a vacancy on the committee – two actually – so if you would like to get involved in the resurgence of Fireball sailing in the UK please let me know!

Chris Turner

GBR 15111”

* Steve Chesney Proposed
* Derian Scott Seconded
* The meeting wanted to minute its heart felt thanks to Richard Anderton for all his hard work.

**Treasurer’s Report**

* Ian Castle had been unavoidably detained and was unable to be at the meeting to present the 2016 financial statements.
* In Ian’s absence, CT reported:
* The financial statements will be posted on the website in due course and that the membership will be asked to vote on them electronically.
* The association had made a small surplus in 2016.
* All creditors are up to date and the balance sheet is healthy.
* Cash position is good – c. £14K - and we need to consider how we might spend that with the caveat that he believed an ongoing reserve of c.£8K was required for a future time when the association was struggling badly and cash would be required for a last throw of the dice.
* David Mason asked how we have a healthy balance – Chris Turner said Hayling Island Nationals made a small profit and we should make a small profit from Lyme Regis. It is the associations intention to always generate a small surplus or at least break even. He contrasted that with past practice where losses were routinely incurred at Nationals and fingers were crossed that occasional international events would generate surpluses sufficient to keep the association going a few more years. Clearly an untenable business model.
* Toby Hamer asked about the new membership system and collecting funds. Chris Turner said the association had more control over subscriptions by using direct debits and could bring forward the peak collection period from July/August to January (members had become accustomed to ignoring the January renewal date preferring instead to renew just before the Nationals). We are trying to attract members who attend open meetings but don’t want to drive people away from attending a home open meeting making them have to pay membership – the rules are rather relaxed.

**Election of Committee Members**

* Collective proposal for the committee as a whole (Dave Hall, Andy Robinson, John Piatt, Simon Benson, Sophia Benson, Vince Horey and Nick Hurst (Chris Turner and Ian Castle being on three-year tenures). Steve Chesney proposed and David Sayce seconded.

**Any Other Business**

* **Future Nationals**
* Toby Hamer appreciates the idea of planning National events farther in the future and wondered if there is an opportunity for events to be away from the South Coast as they seem to dominate. Simon Benson has researched this at length. We need to have a holiday venue for families; good launching facilities; good weather. David Winder said do not worry about this as he was the only competitor who travelled from north of ‘Watford’ – the key is to pick venues that people want to go to. Steve Chesney – suggested a quick survey. In the past a vote was in Fireball News and the overwhelming vote was for Cornwall. The worry is that only those National Attendees were voted. Richard Wagstaff said Abersoch was the lowest turnout we have had for a long time. Chris Turner said we have more southern-based fleets. Clearly we want to build fleets in the north but that will take time. Derian Scott – lots of fireballs on the East Coast. The last nationals at Brightlingsea had some negative publicity but it was a great event and the club worked hard to produce a great event. Chris Turner pointed out that the lowest ever Nationals attendance was when Thorpe Bay hosted the event in 1981: just 40 entries in the days when entry numbers were routinely well into three figures. Basically, this was a numbers game: we go where we can maximise attendance.
* **Membership**
* Steve Chesney said lean on clubs to make sure Fireballs are legally signed up to the association. They should make sure the boat has a membership sticker. Ben Rayner felt there needs to be more value for membership. Chris Turner advised the committee was acutely conscious of this. In addition to launching Fireball e-News, a good discount scheme had been negotiated with UK Global and opportunities were sought for other trade supplier arrangements. Keith Walker queried the ‘needing value for money’; £60 is not a lot of money to be part of something and sailing a really wonderful boat. Richard Wagstaff corrected; it is £30 each which is nothing. Jono Loe – a lot of members are on social media so we could push this harder to encourage the membership scheme. Steve Chesney the more you charge the more credence the class will get. David Mason – suggested making a joining fee so that if it is lapsed a member would need to pay that as well as annual fee.
* **Website**
* A question from the floor regarding the new Fireball Website – how is this going? There was a feeling that the format is slightly annoying but Chris Turner said the committee was aware and was working on that. David Mason – we would get more value by having a members’ only section on the website. Chris Turner advised this was something the committee very much had in mind; for instance Fireball E-News could be posted in a members-only section rather than being accessible to all (many copies are downloaded by members other NCAs as well as UK Fireballers who are not UKFA members).
* **Twin poles proposal**
* Derian Scott- asked for some information on twin poles in advance of the Fireball International meeting on Thursday. Vince Horey – this scheme is aimed at making the boat easier to sail. David Sayce was concerned that it might make it a benefit for the bigger crews as the helm could do more. Derian Scott said that it is not only an interest for female crews but for those with shoulder / other injuries who find single poles hard work. Steve Chesney said we need to sell this scheme and the worry is that it will become compulsory without proper consultation. We need to sell the class. The class rules will not be changed if we do not go out and meet people from across the international scene – mix! Keith Walker – thinks the main appeal would make gybing the kite much more possible and therefore you are broadening the appeal for lighter crews. Chris Turner – outside the UK they see this as a cost issue. David Hall – the argument is that the twin poles is easier for the helm. It will not be much faster because we have the bag and twinners system. David Hall: reflecting on Steve Chesney’s comments about mixing with our international competitors; surely we should have all our boats mixed up not segregated into countries as we were at Lyme Regis (Chris Turner agreed this was not desirable but that Lyme Regis SC had gone down this route without consultation).

**Courses at 2017 Europeans/UK Nationals**

* Dave Wade asked why the courses or this event were so small and with fewer laps? Chris Turner replied that the PRO was tasked to work around a 50 minute race for the leading boat (flexed 10 minutes or so either way if conditions re particularly bad/good) and that he had decided to use sausage/triangle courses to reduce separation. The whole subject of race lengths and courses had been the subject of prolonged discussion between UKFA and LRSC and it was clear that our wishes were being resisted. We were not in control as we should be. Russell Thorne elaborated: PRO was trying to put on a ‘pure’ Olympic style event. The class has moved on – it should be more about enjoyment and participation. Emails have been back and forth – lots of meeting with Regatta Chairman. He apologised that this is not ideal. The first beat has to be a particular length so that then dictates the course. Dave Wade – but this is not going to encourage more competitors to large events. Ian Dobson – we are probably going to end up having 2 x three race days as a Nationals event which is exhausting. All agreed. Steve Chesney – since he became Commodore of FI, he has tried to give the power back to National Class Associations. Ian Dobson – it has been a good event so far but we, the Fireball sailors, need to keep control. A question from the floor: could we use trapezoid courses to avoid upwind / downwind collisions. Chris Turner said they were not planned as we had an ambivalent response to their use when a recent survey was undertaken. Russell Thorne and Chris Turner undertook to take the members’ strong feelings on courses and race lengths to the race committee the following morning.
* **Open Meetings**
* Vince Horey commented the open meeting circuit has been quite good this year but recognised we need to develop it further. He proposed that the Golden Dolphin series had 4 events; one each for southern, eastern, western (Chew Valley?) and Midlands (Grafham or Draycote). Split the results by the number of boats you beat at each event. John Piatt said Blackwater and HISC Open Meetings had a good turnout but they have good club fleets. However, Shoreham Open meeting only had 7 entries and we were unlikely to be invited back. Richard Botting noted one-day events were taking off for other classes; could we try this? Ian Dobson would only travel one day to a ‘local’ event. Online registration would help to show who has registered to take part then others might be keener to attend. Also need to market the class by writing up events. Why not pay someone to do this from Fireball UK funds? Nick Hurst: if we have more open events, home fleet attendances are adversely affected leading to a spiral of decline and death of the home fleet. Derian Scott attended a one-day open meeting in an RS 200 recently which had over 40 boats. The floor agreed that it is easier all round to sail / rig a 200.
* **Sailing performance/tracker app**
* Toby Hamer noted that a few years ago there was an app to record how fast a boat was going. He has talked with the youth members to develop a record of how many times they went afloat and how fast they went. It is no longer available. Is there a possibility to develop an app, with Fireball funds, to record how many times people go afloat as an incentive? Steve Chesney said it could be developed on the Fireball App. We would need to do this world-wide. We could put this to the FI AGM Thursday. Richard Botting – there are not many venues that use trackers.

**Thanks**

* Richard Botting – asked for a show of thanks to Chris Turner for all his hard work and commitment to the Fireball UK Association. There was a prolonged applause from the floor.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.15pm

Fiona Sayce September 2017