

30th May, 2020

NOTES of Zoom Meeting set up on the request of NSAM, Saturday May 9, 2020, in the following minute:

Nominations:

28/20 We ask AM Nominations and Elders/Overseers and Local Meeting Clerks to continue their search for Trustees, in particular women who can join the Board of Trustees and an assistant clerk who can provide a full triennium of support to trustees. We also ask the Clerk, Clerk to Trustees and Clerk to Nominations to set up an urgent meeting with General Meeting Clerk and Clerk of GM Trustees to discuss options for appointing Trustees. The clerk will circulate the current Trustee job description to AM Friends with this minute, noting that it would be useful to revise this document.

Present: Elizabeth Allen, Martin Burnell, David James, Piers Voysey, Robert Wilson

We started our meeting with a short period of worship.

1. What is the problem?

Friends from NSAM were asked to speak about the current problem, focusing on why this issue is before us now.

General

We heard that there is a broad issue of re-cycling willing and able Friends. There is difficulty in finding Friends to take on roles as the membership of NSAM is aging and geographically scattered. Identifying who might be suitable and available to take on a role is a problem but the AM Noms. Group now works with elders and overseers and LM clerks to help their search for Friends to serve.

List of serving NSAM Trustees

David James, Clerk to Trustees

Anthony Buxton, AM Treasurer (ex-officio)

Peter Heald, AM Assistant Treasurer (ex-officio)

William McEwan (1st Triennium)

Tom Sayles (ex NSQT), stands down December 2020

Oriole Hall, AM Assistant Clerk, stands down in December (ex-officio)

Finding Friends to serve as AM trustees

Factors which affect the trustees task

NSAM trustees have a complex and onerous job, particularly so over the last few years because of their involvement in taking on the property management work of the North Scotland Quaker Trust. The Trust has now been laid down, so that phase is over. However, the pressure will continue until the end of this year and possibly beyond, as NSAM trustees assimilate their expanded workload, including property management.

Finding Friends to serve

When the NSQT was laid down, there were 4 or 5 serving trustees on that body. Have any of these Friends been asked to serve as NSAM trustees?

At the moment there is one NSAM trustee from Aberdeen LM but there is optimism that another name might be brought forward. A young woman and/or someone from the premises committee would be particularly welcome.

Urgency of the situation

NSAM are concerned that if they can't find Friends to serve as Trustees, they might not meet the terms of their governing document.

There is confidence that annual report and accounts will be completed and submitted to OSCR in time for the 2020 deadline.

2. Suggested single charity for Scottish AMs

This has been raised with Friends at GM on several occasions over the past 3 years and it is clear that there is no appetite for this at the moment. The other Scottish AMs are not yet thinking about a merger, perhaps because their difficulties are not so acute. In any case, this is not a short-term solution. Bringing 4 AM charities into 1 is slow and complex. There are examples elsewhere which indicate that it would take between 3 to 5 years.

With future trends indicating a shrinking membership, it is likely that having 4 Scottish AMs will become unsustainable and other governance options might need to be explored. It is wise to make timely preparations for the future.

3. How might GM help? What else might NSAM do?

Looking to other Scottish AMs for help

In calling this meeting, NSAM has assumed that GM would know of other AMs in a similar situation but this is not the case. The NSAM clerk was advised to contact the clerks of the other Scottish AMs to find out if they are dealing with similar issues.

GM Training for trustees and other role holders

GM trustees have agreed to arrange a videoconferencing meeting this year with 3 speakers to talk about how the Society is organised, being a Quaker trustee and the relationship between trustees and area meeting – to inform Friends and demystify the role. Three possible speakers have been approached.

They are also going to set up a Zoom meeting this year for all AM and GM trustees to share current issues and experience and for networking.

Woodbrooke training

We discussed the advantage of Woodbrook training in Scotland and of using Woodbrooke distance learning to bring new trustees up to speed.

Current role holders talking about their role

NSAM is doing this.

Discovering and speaking about the spiritual significance of service is important. We are not just filling jobs.

Ideas for finding trustees

It would be possible to approach someone from another AM to serve as a NSAM trustee for a specified limited period. It would help if trustees listed their current skills and knowledge gaps. AM Noms. might take this forward by having exploratory discussions about possible suitable Friends, with the convenors of the other AM Noms Groups.

4. The way forward

A summary of suggested actions:

GM

- Set up agreed training opportunities for trustees and other role holders
- Continue to help build the Scottish Quaker community and to improve communications

NSAM

- AM Noms. to try to find a Friend from another AM , with trustee experience, to serve short term (2 years)
- AM clerk and others to open conversations with other AM clerks about issues of common concern.

Elizabeth Allen