

Minutes of the 27th (112th) Annual General Meeting of the St Beghian Society
held in the Whitelaw Building on Saturday, 25th June 2022 at 11.00am.

There were 21 people present, including Howard Graham (President), Carter Croft (President Elect), David Lord (Treasurer), Pam Rumney (Secretary) and nine Committee Members.

- 1) **Welcome by the President, Howard Graham** – Howard welcomed all those present to the 112th Annual General Meeting of the St Beghian Society and thanked everyone for their attendance. He referred Members to the OSB Day Programme for a list of OSBs who had offered their apologies.
 - 2) **Brief Silence in memory of departed OSBs** – A listing of 69 OSBs whom the Society had been advised had passed away since the last AGM in 2019 had been prepared and was made available for attendees to view. A brief silence in memory of the departed was proposed by the President.
 - 3) **Confirmation of the Minutes of the 111th A.G.M. held on Saturday 28th September, 2019 (published in the January 2020 Bulletin). No AGMs had been held in 2020 or 2021 due to Covid-19** – The Minutes of the previous meeting in September 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record. They were proposed by George Robson and seconded by Sara Calvin.
 - 4) **Matters Arising** – There were no matters arising from the minutes.
 - 5) **Election of Officers:**
 - a) **President 2022-2024 – Carter Croft (FN 60-65).** Howard thanked Carter for offering to take on the role and wished him luck for the future. He went on to mention that Carter was an avid rugby man, currently living in Yorkshire.
 - b) **President Elect – Vacant.**
 - c) **Committee – Newly proposed Committee Member – Lucy Cox.** In Lucy's absence, through Covid, Howard thanked her for offering to stand for election on the Committee. It was unanimously agreed that the injection of younger blood would be of benefit to the Society. It was hoped that Lucy could be welcomed in person at the next meeting.
Retiring this year were John Dunn, Richard Hall and Mark Roberts. John, Richard and Mark had all expressed their willingness to stand for re-election.
 - d) **Treasurer** – David Lord expressed his willingness to continue.
 - e) **Secretary** – Pam Rumney agreed to continue.
 - f) **Golfing Secretary** – Tom Wright was willing to continue as Golfing Secretary.
 - g) **Accounts Checker** – Jason Spires was also willing to continue as Accounts Checker.
 - h) **Bulletin Editor** – Tony Reeve.
Recommendation: That the Bulletin Editor is recognised as an official officer of the Committee. It was explained that for several years, the Bulletin Editor had attended and contributed to the St Beghian Society Committee Meetings. Therefore, a recommendation had been put forward to ensure that this position was officially recognised in the future.
- A proposal to elect all the officers, as above, was made and unanimously agreed. This was proposed by Steve Crossley-Smith and seconded by Dacre Watson.
- 6) **President's Handover.** Howard Graham commenced by saying that, ironically, this was both his first and last meeting, due to the Covid situation over the previous two years. He once again thanked Carter Croft for offering to take on the role of President and then officially handed over to Carter as the new President of the Society.
Carter thanked Howard and briefly introduced himself to the meeting.
 - 7) **School Update** – Robin Silk, the Headmaster, began by stating that it was 'work in progress' at St Bees. He confirmed that four years ago when the school re-opened, there were just nine students. Currently there are 72 and in September 2022, it is hoped that the figure will rise to 100. He agreed that there had been many

bursaries awarded in the early years but confirmed that now many students were paying full fees. In September 2022 it was hoped that the 6th Form would comprise one third of the school and that just over half of the students would be boarders, including some local students.

Robin went on to remind members that the school buildings were owned by the St Bees School Charitable Trust and that they currently needed funds to invest in the properties. He confirmed that Full Circle had already invested around £5m in the development of the school.

Robin acknowledged that the new St Bees was a different school from the past, particularly with regard to the Fusion aspect of the curriculum. The way maths was taught and partnered with the University of Durham, School of Education, plus the learning of Mandarin Chinese for all students, were two examples of change identified by Robin.

He went on to emphasise that the interest in the school was growing and that they are still moving forward, despite the problems of Covid. This year's OSB Day, the school's first Founders' Day and the Black Tie Dinner were all testament to the school's advancing and overcoming the challenges of the last two to three years. Robin praised the excellent staff, in particular mentioning David Lamb's 40 years' service, and the outstanding pastoral care offered in the school. He expressed his passion for the school-community and the exciting challenges ahead. Robin concluded by saying that, although it was a different school now, he sincerely hoped and believed that it would live up to the standards of the previous St Bees School.

Questions then followed from St Beghian Society members present at the AGM.

John Ogden asked about the school's plans should China invade Taiwan. Robin confirmed that there were currently no plans in place.

Steve Crossley-Smith asked whether there were any Ukrainian students in the school. Robin stated that there were currently three and that two more were coming. He went on to describe the huge amount of fundraising that had taken place for the West Cumbria Ukrainian Appeal. Around £1200 had been raised and 40m³ of aid items collected. Tom Kelly from the St Bees School Charitable Trust had driven a minibus to Poland to deliver the donations. Robin confirmed that this had been a very positive and successful venture.

David Lord enquired where the proposed increased number of boarders would be housed. Robin confirmed that both Grindal and Abbots Court were to be sold as, owing to their current state, the cost of refurbishing these properties was prohibitive. He went on to say that the school had looked at prefabricated buildings, similar to those used at Loretto School. The Bunkabin buildings, which had a 12 year life span, could be rented on a three year basis and erected in three days. Robin indicated that the school had considered two possible future sites for boarding accommodation, one near the cricket nets and the other on the stackyard site, where the existing porta cabin could possibly be used as a day room. He hoped that once the school had grown in size, the provision of permanent boarding accommodation could be considered.

Carter Croft asked whether the school currently ran a Summer School. Robin stated that they did, but that it was on a small scale and was not a huge income generator. The initial Chinese intake that had attended sadly diminished owing to Covid. The Headmaster hoped that in 2023 the Chinese market would regenerate.

David Marshall enquired about the ownership of the school and the involvement of China. Robin explained that the company running the school was owned by Full Circle, but that the site and buildings were owned by the St Bees School Charitable Trust. He went on to mention the two schools in China currently also owned by Full Circle, which are at present still fairly small operations but with the potential to expand. Robin emphasised that the Charitable Trust was in debt to Full Circle, but he also mentioned that Danny Wang from Full Circle had promised that any payment of debt would go back into the development of the school. Robin stated that he had faith in the individuals who were involved in the Full Circle group and that Laurence Gribble, an OSB himself, was a university friend of Danny Wang and was very much involved in the company. Robin concluded that, in his opinion, it was important to be an optimist and to work with China. David Marshall, who lives in Kenya, expressed his concerns, citing the problems between Kenya and China. He acknowledged, however, that the UK was very different from Kenya. Howard Graham indicated that he believed that many OSBs had concerns about the school's involvement with China but, personally, he felt that the opportunity should be taken to get the school back on its feet and working towards a better future. He also stated his confidence in Robin and Laurence to achieve this aim. In addition, he reiterated the fact that Full Circle had rights to the school but not its infrastructure.

John Ogden raised the question of the proposed site to mine coking coal currently under discussion with the government. Robin confirmed that if it went ahead, a third of the mineral rights would go to the Charitable Trust, which would amount to around £250k a year and this income would in turn go back into the school.

George Robson conveyed his praise and thanks to the school for an extremely well organised Founders' Day, which had taken place the day before. He spoke of the immaculately behaved and presented students and the general success of the day. George requested that the event should be repeated in the future; however he did mention that not many OSBs had attended and hoped that more would do so next time.

Dacre Watson asked about the other students from Europe that had been mentioned and, in particular, where they were from and what attracted them to St Bees. Robin praised the admissions and marketing work done at fairs throughout Europe. He confirmed that Ceara Fisher, as Head of Marketing and Admissions, liaised with Full Circle over daily tasks but that Full Circle had no direct role in recruitment for St Bees UK. He went on to say that the traditional old school and its past pupils, such as Rowan Atkinson, plus the excellent pastoral care on offer are the most important factors to prospective families. Academically, he felt there was work to be done but he stated he had faith in future plans and improvements.

Dacre went on to ask if Robin saw St Bees as an international school or a British public school. Robin replied that at the present time, approximately one third of the pupils were international, however, the school was also beginning to attract several local students into the sixth form, who were very good academically. He stated that he did not want too many international students and nor did he want too many of the international pupils to be from China. He felt that a balance was required with international students from a range of countries. Laurence Gribble pointed out that most international students actually want more British students in a school. It was also stated that the school remit was to educate Cumbrian pupils first and foremost. It was confirmed that in September two Chinese students would be joining the school. Robin mentioned that the many short-term students that the school attracts often stay on for a further couple of years at St Bees. He concluded by talking about the Chinese staff who are trained by St Bees UK and also about the online training platform which is gradually expanding to other Chinese schools. Robin was thanked for a very useful and interesting insight into the current position of the school.

8) St Beghian Society Finances and Accounts (2021-2022) - David Lord, Treasurer of the Society, presented the AGM with a copy of the accounts for the year ending 31st January 2022. He reported a loss of £5778 for the 2020/21 accounts, in comparison to a profit of £6492 for the previous year. Despite this loss being disappointing, David pointed out that a donation from the Kendal Branch of the Society on its closure of over £5k, a 200 Club contribution of £2k and several one-off subscription payments during 2020/21 as opposed to annual donations (£9k subs in 20/21 and £5k subs in 21/22), had all contributed to the difference in figures between the two years.

David also drew attention to the lack of Life Membership payments received since the closure of the school. However, he reported that discussions had taken place with the school regarding a membership payment of £5 a term being paid by each pupil, which would then be transferred to the Society as their Life Membership fees. Although this had not yet come to fruition, David confirmed that this would be followed up with the school to resolve any problems causing the delay in implementation. He also referred to the cost of producing and distributing the hard copy issue of the Bulletin. Around £1500 a year could be saved if all copies were distributed electronically, though David stressed that he was not advocating this at the present time, as many of those who received such copies were loyal supporters of the school and Society and had, in many cases, contributed financially to continue to receive a hard copy Bulletin.

David identified the £56k loan to the GTF, but confirmed that now the Lonsdale Terrace properties had been sold, this would be repaid in the near future.

He concluded by confirming that the Society currently held assets of around £90k and therefore should survive for a few years to come.

George Robson raised the question of legacies and suggested that the OSB membership might be regularly reminded that legacies to the Society would be very welcomed.

Carter Croft recommended contacting surviving relatives of OSBs and inviting them to relevant OSB events.

9) Lonsdale Terrace and GTF – Anthony Fox reported that the Lonsdale Terrace properties had been sold in April 2021 and that, following the repayment of loans, the net proceeds of £400k had been invested. He

stated that in 20-25 years' time, following sufficient capital growth, it was the intention to use the income to provide educational bursaries. In the meantime, Anthony confirmed that the existing debt to the Society would need to be repaid.

Anthony concluded by requesting that St Beghian Society members consider putting themselves forward as Trustees of the Guarantee Trust Fund (GTF).

10) Branch Activities – The Dinners/Events List which had been distributed was referred to and the two London events, due to take place in September and October, were mentioned (London Dinner - 16th September and London Social - 14th October).

George Robson requested clarification about which regional OSB Branches currently existed.

11) The 200 Club Report and Draw – Darryl Davies presented a report to the AGM identifying the current number of members and also the funds held in the bank. He requested that new members be encouraged to join. A discussion took place about the cost to enter the draw and whether this figure should perhaps be increased.

Darryl also reported that there had been no March draw and recommended that the March and September draws were combined, both today and in the future, as it would increase the prize values and, in turn, potentially attract more members to join. There were no objections to this recommendation.

The subsequent draw produced the following winners:

PRIZE	No.	WINNER	PRIZE	No.	WINNER
£200.00	69	CH & CS Taylor	£40.00	53	Don Williams
£100.00	25	Terence Mayne	£40.00	5	Simon Daley
£60.00	65	Sam Ashton	£40.00	54	John Dunn
£60.00	58	Tom Lowrey	£20.00	3	Charles Graves

12) Any Other Business – There were no matters raised.

The President thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 12.12pm.