

# Folk Camps Council Working Weekend 22<sup>nd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at The Boathouse, Rushden, Northamptonshire

**Saturday** 9.30 – 17.00 incl. 1 hour lunch break

Saturday 9.30 – 15.00 Council and Admin managers only incl. 30 min lunch break

## **Present:**

Patrick Self (Chair)

Liz Cooper (Vice Chair)

Claire Mycock (Company Secretary)

Barry Pollard

Oscar Roberts

Susie Savage

Lorna Flower (Saturday)

Brian Flower (Saturday)

Jenny Hopper (Saturday)

Steve Porritt (Saturday)

Kerstin Jewell

Chris Jewell

## **Agenda**

1. Chair welcome and report
2. Apologies
3. Approval of Minutes from 6<sup>th</sup> June meeting
4. Matters arising and open actions
5. Reports
  - 5a. Company Secretary
  - 5b. Admin report
  - 5c. Marketing and Communications
  - 5d. Catering
  - 5f. Development Fund and Bursary
  - 5g. ICT
  - 5h. Grant Sourcing Working Group
6. Staffing manuals
7. Policies
8. Camps feedback
  - 8a. Issues we need to discuss
  - 8b. Staffing - any feedback on this year's staff to note?
  - 8c. H+S arising from camps this year,
  - 8d. Covid
  - 8e. Summer camp breakdown
9. Staffing for 2024
10. Any changes to camps programme?
11. Sites for next year
  - 11a. Weekend events, Inbetweener
  - 11b. Summer site
12. Future Site finding
13. Equipment and any changes to simplify future summer camps

14. AOB that requires contractors present
15. Finance and prices for 2024
16. Contractors
17. Admin improvements
18. Extent
19. Reunion and AGM arrangements
20. Council election
21. Any other business
22. Next Council meeting

## **1. Chair welcome and report**

Ever since I have been on Folk Camps Council, I think one of my main aims has been to protect Folk Camps for the future, make sure it is sustainable in all aspects: repeatable processes, share the knowledge, write things down, and ensure the finances work.

We have had a few difficult years through the pandemic, low bookings leading to reducing the summer programme, to protect both our finances and to make the camps socially viable.

Now we need to look to the future and do what we can to grow safely again.

Looking at the finances in Quickbooks, I expect a small trading loss. Potentially £5K, possibly less once we take account interest and investment income. But this is not certain until the Accountant has worked on the figures. There are year-end effects that need her work to clarify.

We only ran 3 summer weeks rather than 4. But we had the same number (350) of summer campers as in 2022. This reduction did not lead to not much of a financial saving, due to contractual commitments, but all the camps were successful socially.

We had some very big difficulties with the landowner and the toilet supplier endangering their willingness to supply us. But with hard work from several of us, these were overcome, allowing the summer camp to run.

There were a small number of covid cases that we are aware of over the year. In each case I believe that people isolated if they tested positive. We refunded a few people that tested positive before camps. We are not aware of any bad illnesses. It is unclear if any covid spread at camp, or whether it was contracted elsewhere. In each case, rates were high in general in the UK.

This was the first full year of Brian as Equipment Manager (without any assistance from Graham) This was very successful, I think. Thanks to Brian and Lorna for their hard work, and camps innovations, which were well appreciated.

We were also fortunate that Jenny offered to have an extra summer as Provisions Contractor, which ensured that we were all able to eat! Thanks Jenny.

For next year, I think we should plan for 4 weeks of marquee camps, and hopefully set the staffing in a way that may encourage more campers to book 2 consecutive weeks.

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Amanda Colman and Anthony Keen.

### 3. Approval of Minutes from 6<sup>th</sup> June meeting

Approval of the minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 was proposed by PS, seconded by BP and were passed unanimously.

### 4. Matters Arising and open actions

**Action** – SS and CJ to finish working on Staff Manuals for marquee weeks and weekends.

**Action** - PS and KJ to update bursary application on website and the form

**Action** - PS and KJ to check that information about what to bring to camp and duties are clear and in the right place on the website

**Action** - PS to back up software for website and to put login details into the working data

**Action** - PS to move away from 123Reg and Sendblaster

**Action** - CM to re apply for planning exemption certificate for Wales/England together

**Action** – BP and PS to work out how to get better reports and on what out of the database

**Action** - PS to start "members network" section for website

### 5. Reports

#### 5a. Company Secretary

CM confirmed that everything legal is up to date.

#### 5b. Admin Report

KJ presented the admin report including:

Folk Camps had 117 new campers (14.4% of this year's campers) plus some returners after a long time.

3 new Governing Memberships.

Most of the bookers paid in time, late payments were paid without complaining. The same with most of the cancellations. Refunds were mostly accepted according to our booking conditions.

Some bookers from abroad had to pay bank transfer charges (Netherlands 3.6% and France 2.5%). I wonder if there is a way to avoid this?

The New Camper's Guide was very well received.

General information about each camp including start and finishing time, first camp meeting and a rough timetable should be on the website or as an attachment to the booking or in a welcoming email from the staff (with the music for the workshop) more than a week before the start of the camp..

Warden's account sheets

Although the warden's account sheet was redone, there were still problems with them. 1 warden didn't know that the warden gets the receipts and pays the person back from the float.

Some receipts were unreadable or had lots of private items on them.

Warden's (staff) packages

There are still (too) many documents to be sent out, not sure if they were read by the staff.

**Action** – CJ to post on Cold Bogmarsh to remind people about Governing Membership lapsing

- Action** – Finance Working Group to look at mechanism to help with international payments
- Action** – KJ to clarify camp directions and addresses
- Action** – KJ to draft standard letter incl. start and finishing times which can be added to by the camp staff and will be send out as a welcoming letter to campers
- Action** – CJ and KJ to clarify guidance for wardens in filling in the account sheet and for caterers to have their own float and account sheet
- Action** – KJ to share the documents being sent out with Council
- Action** – OR to read and check what is sent out

## **5c. Marketing and Communication**

### Folk Camps Social Media Update - September 2023

Folk Camps currently has two active social media channels, Facebook and Instagram.

#### **Objectives**

- grow our campers/membership
- grow our supply of folk musicians (musically competent) and folk (dance competent) staff
- increase awareness about Folk Camps and demonstrate what the camps are like
- encourage people to sign up for email marketing (starting the sales pipeline)

#### **Resources**

These social media accounts have been actively managed by volunteers for 18 months both using overt and covert marketing techniques. Approximately 4 hours a month (winter), 7 hours a month (summer), monitoring, producing content, interacting with relevant/target audiences, sharing content on over 80 Facebook groups, responding to enquiries/questions either in the Facebook messenger or Instagram chat tools or on the content itself. Interacting with other groups, such as camping groups and festivals.

#### **Costs**

Account management and content creation £0

Paid campaigns total £44

Facebook £20, Cost per link clicked £0.19, 107 people clicked the link

Instagram £24, Cost per click £0.09, 262 clicks

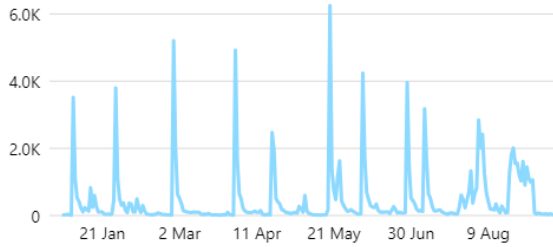
Depending on whether Google Analytics is tracking, we may be able to see how many direct email list sign-ups we've had via paid social and then track any future bookings.

#### **Year to date (Jan to Sept)**

## Reach

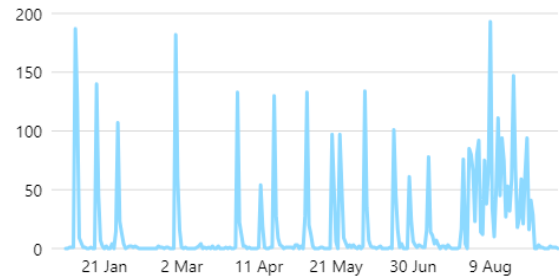
Facebook reach ⓘ

40,889 ↑ 17.3%



Instagram reach ⓘ

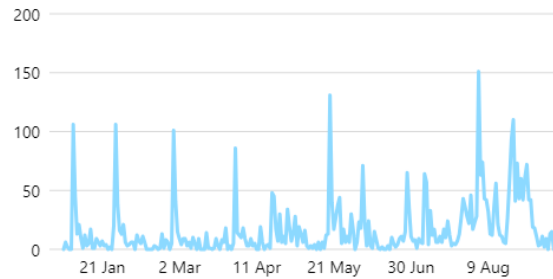
1,205 ↑ 99.5%



## Page and profile visits

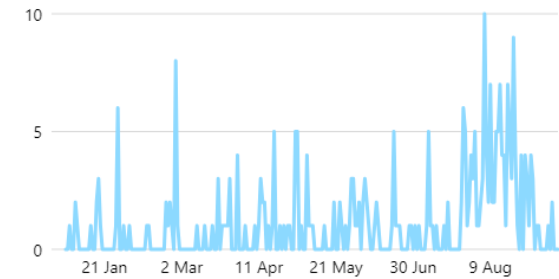
Facebook visits ⓘ

4,295 ↑ 43.1%



Instagram profile visits ⓘ

289 ↑ 91.4%



	September 2023
Facebook	2.8k followers
Instagram	570 followers

Reach on both accounts over the past year has grown considerably so our content is reaching more people.

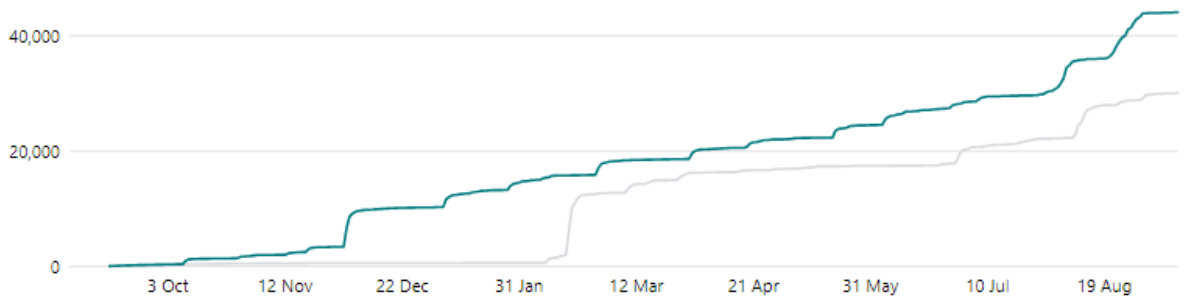
## Reach 📄

Compare your reach from this period to the previous one.

[See more about your content performance](#)

<b>Facebook reach</b> <b>44,125</b> ↑ 46.5%	<b>Instagram reach</b> <b>1,450</b> ↑ 2.3K%	<b>Paid reach</b> <b>3,403</b> ↑ 100%
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Daily Cumulative



## Email subscribers

Subscribers 1/9/2022 - 31/8/2023							
Date	Facebook	Internet Search	Word of Mouth	Another folk camper	Returning folk camper	Party Band	Other
	100	15	11	17	10	2	8

Total 163

## Bookings from new campers (Weekend & weeks)

Source	2022	2023
Facebook	8	4
Internet search	4	20

*(Numbers include all family members)*

## Next steps

### Branding clarity

We need some clarity on the Folk Camps Party Band branding and promotion to ensure next year there is no confusion. The Band currently doesn't share any Folk Camps posts or content so there is a disconnection between both identities; evidenced by one enquiring camper this year. Audiences need confidence that Folk Camps and the Folk Camps Party Band are one and the same if either organisation is to benefit from the relationship.

### **Using members**

If members are able and happy to share, like, comment on our content **on our page**, this will help with the natural growth of our social media. There is potential to grow Instagram and other platforms such as Tiktok to acquire more of our target audience.

### **Photography**

Pictures really tells the story of Folk Camps and we would love to use more, with all the appropriate consents. We are working on a proposal for an incentive for members to provide photography which can be used in marketing and social media.

**Action** - KJ to open bookings in October

**Action** – Marketing Working Group to develop merchandise and to look at the possibility of a photo competition

**Action** – Marketing Working Group to produce some advertising leaflets, business cards, stickers etc.

## **5d. Catering**

Special diets have been discussed and the work load for caterers and cooks of the day has become too much.

**Action** – LC to discuss with the caterers and propose to Council where the boundary is regarding special diets / preferences etc.

## **5f. Development Fund and Bursary**

This working group received no application for the Development Fund during this year.

Two bursary places were given to a Kurdish mother with 2 teenagers for week 2.

**Action** – The Development Fund Working Group to promote themselves more, in cooperation with the Marketing Working Group

## **5g. ICT**

I (Patrick) have been assisting Kerstin with IT where needed.

The main systems we use are as follows:

Slack is used for **Council Communications**. We use the free version, so messages disappear after 3 months, but anything meaningful (decisions etc) get minuted at a Council meeting, so Slack is only for temporary messages, not for posterity.

**Mass Email Software:** We were using SendBlaster – purchased more than 13 years ago. However, this is now no good, many messages it sends get returned as Spam. We need a replacement urgently. Big name alternatives such as MailChimp are expensive. We need something suitable for sending to approx. 3,000 email addresses, potentially up to a dozen times a year. At a price that we can afford.

**Website and email hosting:** We have been using 123-reg for more than 13 years. However, they level of service is poor, and they are changing their pricing structure, which will massively increase our costs (from approx. £300/year to possibly £800/year).

I (Patrick) have shared an options paper to Council on alternatives – this needs a decision this weekend.

**Website Maintenance:** Kerstin can make some updates. I assist where necessary. The website has a data-driven mechanism for publishing the camps' programme. I built the website a few years ago. It rarely needs a technical change. I wrote a manual for both how to update the site, and how to carry out technical improvements.

**Folk Camps Database:** This was developed by Richard Jones more than 15 years ago. It uses Microsoft Access. It is suitable for our purposes. I can make changes to it, and so can a couple of other Folk Camps members if necessary. Kerstin has a wish-list of improvements, but none stop her doing her role, but some changes could simplify her work.

QuickBooks is used for **book-keeping** – tracking our finances. A few years ago, we purchased a cloud version, accessed via web browser. This has an annual fee. Kerstin is now competent in using this, and it aids the accountant in producing our annual accounts.

**Backup Software** – we use Sugar Sync to automatically back up the Folk Camps files on Kerstin's PC. This includes the database. The files are accessible by the IT Group (primarily Patrick) in case of disaster etc.

**Action** – PS and OR to sort out mass email sending options.

**Action** – CM to look at website hostings alternatives.

## 5h. Grant sourcing working group

There has been no meeting. It is considered low priority at the moment.

## 6. Staffing manuals

SS is the co-ordinator for finishing the staff manuals for the summer and weekends camps.

Action in point 4. Matters Arising and open actions

**Action** – OR to coordinate expansion to staff information sheets, liaise with staff to check compliance and feedback

## 7. Policies

Policies need to be looked at and updated. OR is co-ordinator.

**Action** – LC to look at the Safeguarding, Guardianship and Dogs Policies

**Action** – CM to co-ordinate and delegate updating of policies

**Action** – OR to look at Judith Jenkins' change to the landowner policy

## 8. Camps feedback



## 8a. Issues that need discussing

Council discussed campers' comments and duration of weekend camps.

The Spring BH Weekend Camp should be 3 nights, proposed by PS, seconded by BP, passed unanimously.

**Action** – CJ to post some comments on Cold Bogmarsh to open up discussions

**Action** – SS to put flexible evening suggestion in the staff manual

**Action** - BF and LF to clarify emptying of personal toilets into septic tanks (into Warden's part of manual)

**Action** – OR to add to camper's guide that all campers should bring a fire bucket to place next to their tent

**Action** – OR to change title from New Camper's Guide to Camper's Guide

**Action** – BP to contact Adam Page re fire safety advice

## 8b. Staffing feedback

Staffing report:

2023 season Ran successfully with thanks to Paul Weir and Steve Porritt for setting up the initial staff.

All feedback from and about staff received was positive apart from two issues below.

Staff issues

One member of staff would like to staff again but was introduced by the person they were staffing with, who they no longer wish to work with. Another member of staff appeared to only work for part of the duration of the camp, after which an apprentice had to take over.

Apprentices/Assistants

We had 6 trainees this season: Leaders – Dom Self (week 2), Brad Stokes (week 1), Sian Haywood (week 3), Sarah Baldwin (Meonstoke w/e) Musicians – Laurie Glass (week 1), Steph Broodbank (Loxwood w/e & week 3).

All reports were positive. Sian, Dom, Brad and Steph were all recommended as ready for a full role. Sarah did very well and would be able to run a weekend.

My concerns

1. Over reliance on some key staff
2. Lack of clarity on roles, responsibilities and remuneration.
3. Apprentice programme – a. No clear pathway to a full role b. No clear process, i.e. selecting candidates, selecting mentors, what happens before, during, after, how to feedback c. Abuse of the system d. Do we need it?

The apprentice process needs better organisation. Staff need to know more about their role as mentor for apprentices. If any apprentice requires a reference, then it should be brief and factual with dates.

Not all staff profiles are on the website.

For the summer camps it was decided to have a drill and pop riveter for the warden's use.

**Action** – BP to develop the process for apprentices

**Action** – KJ and PS to put all received staff profiles on website

**Action** – LF and BF to buy a drill, pop riveter or appropriate tools

## 8c. H+S arising from camps this year

All H&S risk assessments need to be reviewed.

It was asked if Folk Camps insurance covers an accident that happens off-site during a Folk Camps activity and if Folk Camps need a first-aider at camps.

Do we need Gas certificate / training for wardens?

**Action** – CM to co-ordinate and delegate the update

**Action** – KJ to send all risk assessments to the H&S Working Group

**Action** – H&S Working Group to review the generic risk assessments for all camps

**Action** – OR to check insurance for offsite busking, walks etc.

**Action** – BP to find written guidance on need for first-aiders at events

**Action** – LC to investigate whether a gas certificate / training is needed for wardens

## **8d. Covid**

There were some Covid cases on camps this year. In each case it was announced on camp. On the summer week extra test kits were bought and those that tested positive isolated.

Folk camps policy was over and above the governments guidelines and caused us some difficulties with staffing.

**Action** – Council to look at our Covid policy again for next year and adjust if necessary

## **8e. Summer camp breakdown**

Various things were not done properly on the day of camp breakdown which caused unexpected work for BF/LF.

**Action** – SS to update staff manual to emphasize that camp duties continue into Saturday morning

**Action** – KJ to redo the camp duty roster and provide 2 copies for the warden

**Action** – LC to discuss amount of party food with caterers (too much left over from many Fridays)

**Action** – PS to initiate a wardens Zoom meeting about problems and new directives

## **9. Staffing for 2024**

Staffing for 2024 is already in progress.

Folk Camps have several offers for apprentice caterer.

**Action** – BP and SP to carry on staffing plan for 2024

**Action** – BP to send info about apprentice caterers to LC

**Action** – LC to get in contact with potential apprentice caterers

## **10. Sites for 2024**

All village halls and the marquee site are booked for next year.

### **10a. Weekends Events, Inbetweeners**

The Early May Bank Holiday Camp (Loxwood) and the Spring Bank Holiday Weekend South (Miserden) will be 3 nights.

It was decided to reinstate the Inbetweeners Camp.

This year the Inbetweeners Camp is during school half term and should be advertised/promoted more heavily. The field and hall will be available, however no organised activities, it is a DIY event.

**Action** – OR to co-ordinate advertising for the inbetweeners for 2024.

**Action** – KJ + PS to clarify wording on website re Inbetweeners.

## 10b. Summer site

It was decided to run 4 marquee summer weeks.

It would be good to have a single disabled toilet.

**Action** – SP to source a single disabled toilet

## 11. Future site finding

Folk Camps need more people to look for potential future marquee sites. Any follow up visits should be made more visible for campers.

**Action** – PS to put together criteria for sites – and update the current online document

**Action** – CM to send PS some site suggestions she has received from members

## 12. Equipment and any changes to simplify future summer camps

It was suggested there may be some useful points within the warden's logs.

**Action** – LF and BF to read through them

## 13. Finance and prices for 2024

PS had devised a spreadsheet to help determine the price structure for 2024 that had been used in the previous Working weekend.

Consider inflation, energy costs, likely impacts on outgoings – discuss, then used the Modelling spreadsheet for setting next year prices.

Various factors were considered before settling on the following factors to determine prices.

We assume: input costs to increase by 10% (cautious, given current inflation of 9%), 4 weeks of summer camps, expected increase of summer camper numbers to average 100/week. This leads to summer prices of £340/adult (less than 5% increase), weekend camp prices also up by 5%. This should leave to approx break even on running the organisation (ignoring increase / decrease in investments).

It was projected that a total of 400 campers during the summer would give a trading profit of about £3k. (400 campers is 80% of pre covid numbers). 390 campers would result in breaking even. 380 campers would result in a trading loss of approx £2k

Summer week	Early Bird Rate	Last Minute Rate	24h rate
adult	£ 340.00	£ 390.00	£ 68.00
18-21years	£ 255.00	£ 292.00	£ 51.00
12-17years	£ 170.00	£ 195.00	£ 34.00

5-11years	£ 85.00	£ 97.00	£ 17.00
under 5 years	£ -	£ -	£ -
BH weekend / long workshop weekend			
adult	£ 91.00	£ 101.00	£ 40.00
18-21years	£ 68.00	£ 76.00	£ 30.00
12-17years	£ 45.00	£ 51.00	£ 20.00
5-11years	£ 23.00	£ 25.00	£ 10.00
under 5 years	£ -	£ -	£ -
Short workshop weekend			
adult	£ 65.00	£ 75.00	£ 42.00
18-21years	£ 48.00	£ 56.00	£ 30.00
12-17years	£ 32.00	£ 38.00	£ 21.00
5-11years	£ 16.00	£ 19.00	£ 10.00
under 5 years	£ -	£ -	
Inbetweenner			
adult	£ 58.00	£ 68.00	£ 15.00
18-21years	£ 43.00	£ 51.00	£ 11.00
12-17years	£ 29.00	£ 34.00	£ 7.00
5-11years	£ 14.00	£ 17.00	£ 3.50

It was decided to change the names for the rates to “Early Bird Rate” and “Last Minute Rate”.

**Action** – KJ and PS to change website and database if needed

## 14. Contractors

Due to upcoming changes in contractors availability, and lack of applications for the previously advertised Provisions Manager role: It was decided to create the position of Logistics Manager which will be a combination of Provisions Manager and some part of Sites Manager. This is a larger role and not necessarily a one to one match to previous roles splits.

Start by advertising internally/Extent/ mass email/ Facebook.

Council would like to get back to a fixed monthly rate for contractors.

**Action** – PS and LC to put together a job description

**Action** – PS to speak to SP

**Action** – LC to talk to JH about being on standby for 2024

**Action** – CJ to provide PS with the hours worked in last year for Provisions and Sites Managers

## **15. Admin improvements**

KJ suggested to move the end of the financial year away from the 31<sup>st</sup> August to give more time to deal with payments for the summer weeks and the August Bank Holiday Weekend Camps within the current financial year.

**Action** – PS to talk to the accountant and check Mems&Arts to see if they need changing

## **16. Extent**

AK leaves Council, OR takes over the editing of Extent.

Content of the autumn edition should include job vacancy, reunion information and a Working Weekend write up.

**Action** – AK and OR to work together for the autumn edition

**Action** – SS to write a Working Weekend report

## **17. Reunion and AGM arrangements**

This year Folk camps want to trial a hybrid meeting for the AGM. JH has offered to do the catering. The Unexpected Polka Band will be led by Alistair Gavin and Chris Jewell. Agreed fee for Alistair Gavin of £200.00.

The admission for the evening Ceilidh will be a minimum of £5.00 for adults, children are free.

In 2024 the AGM will be just online. On both August Bank Holiday Weekend Camps there will be at least 1 Council member to host an “Any Other Business” type Q&A session.

**Action** – PS to organise online voting and resolutions

**Action** – CJ to advertise reunion on Facebook

## **18. Council election**

CM has finished her 3 years term and has to stand again.

Anthony Keen has to stand down after 6 years.  
Amanda Colman will resign.  
Therefore, there are 4 positions on Council vacant.

## **19. Any other business**

### **Information for landowners**

PDF on website not complete.

**Action** –PS to rework the info for landowners document

### **Party Band and other projects related to Folk Camps**

The relationship with the Party Band was discussed

**Action** – PS to adjust website content on Party Band

**Action** – OR to speak with Jenny Newman on how to make the relationship work better

**Action** – PS to create more space on website for other projects

### **Camper's Guide for Weekend Camps**

It would be good to have a Camper's Guide for Weekend Camps.

**Action** – KJ to send the Camper's Guide for summer weeks to OR

**Action** – OR to do some minor additions to it for weeklong camps then sending it to SS to change up for weekend camps

### **Website and email hosting**

For this item PS left the room.

Council want to move away from 123-reg due to both increased pricing and technical deficiencies. PS submitted a proposal for his website business to provide hosting. CM compared PS's costs against "Site Ground" which was recommended by an independent professional person, and several other options. Council concluded that PS's offer is value for money and in the charities best interest, but he needs to enter into a 3 year contract.

Proposed by LC, seconded by OR, passed unanimously.

### **Refund request due to cancellation**

A camper's request for a refund was considered. Council decided to follow Folk Camps booking conditions pointing out that camper should have a holiday insurance.

**Action** – KJ to send a reply

## **Kitchen bins**

Marigold requested purchase of new kitchen bins.

**Action** – KJ to send BF the link

**Action** – BF to investigate

## **Information about Social media marketing at AGM**

Sarah Malleson asks if she can provide some information for members as part of the AGM pack pre the meeting, for campers on the social media for the last year, statistics, etc.

**Action** – OR to clarify with Sarah Malleson exactly what she wants to provide and he will present it at the AGM

## **Digital Form for warden's Packages**

Sam Mason suggested warden's packages should be provided in digital form.

**Action** – OR and KJ to investigate (potentially digital for warden's that can work that way)

## **Staffing Dancers and Musicians Camps**

Mic Spenceley gave feedback about the Dancers and Musicians Weekend Camps. He pointed out that for the Dancers camp campers are getting older and suggested to have a younger joint leader. For both camps new wardens will be needed in 2025.

There was a discussion about the declining numbers at these camps, but no conclusions at the moment on how to reinvigorate them.

**Action** – KJ to send BP camp lists for both camps

**Action** – BP to seek out potential staff

## **Working Weekend Hosting**

A vote of thanks was given to Claire and Gary Mycock for hosting and feeding Council for the weekend, for all contractors for their work during the year.

## **21. Next Council Meeting**

Next Council meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 after AGM with the new elected Council

Next Working Weekend will potentially be 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024