

Minutes of the AGM 2008

7/9/2008, Brno, Czech republic

Present: Kay Van Damme; Tony Miller; Lisa Banfield; Miranda Morris; Hugh Morris; Thierry Sergent; Isam Eldin Mohammed Ali; Dana Pietsch; Rowan Salim; John Dickson, Hana Habrova

Apologies: Dr. Sue Christie; Ursula Eigel; Julian Paxton; Jenny Balfour-Paul; John Farrar; Richard Porter; Richard and Myrtle Pont; Wolfgang Wranik; Peter De Geest; Diccon Alexander; Nick Jeffries

AGM Attendance: Discussion took place surrounding the definition of the Quorum. The FoS constitution currently requires 10% of members to be present for a meeting to be quorate. However increase in the number of international members and particularly Gulf-based members means that it's unlikely that we'd be quorate at a meeting held in Europe. The suggestion was made to change the constitution to requiring 5% of membership to achieve quorum. This will be voted on at the next AGM.

FoS members would like to encourage a delegate from the EPA to attend the AGM. This is important so that they are aware of what FoS is doing. Dana volunteered to communicate this to the Ministry on her next visit to Yemen. This would also respond to UNESCO's World Heritage Status policy to increase Yemeni/Socotri participation in international meetings on Socotra.

Agenda approval

Last year's AGM was the 6th AGM and not the 5th. This year's AGM is therefore the 7th. The minutes of the AGM were shared and approved.

Finances, Newsletter and Membership

Treasurer (Hugh) was initially unable access the account due to absent signatories on the account. Neil Oakman was contacted and agreed to cease being a signatory to the account. Hugh is now a signatory to the account. Next year we will need to look at having a different signatory because currently both Miranda and Hugh are signatories.

FoS' balance now stands at 3,4076.21 down from 6,280.05 pounds. This is a consequence of a deliberate attempt to fund projects and reduce assets.

Current spending on Tayf is unsustainable because it exceeds our annual income. It was agreed therefore that no large commitments are made to spend this coming year beyond Tayf. Any requests to finance projects need to be directed to the treasurer (up to 200pounds).

New financial systems: Treasurer will start claiming donations tax free through gift aid. This means that rather than allowing members to support FOS by making payments themselves (E.G. John Farrar has been paying annually for the website), FoS will pay itself and encourage the giving of donation. This way FoS can then make better use of subscriptions and donations from UK tax payers. Gift aid can be claimed back 5 years.

All memberships (except from Yemen and the Gulf) need to be paid in the same currency (Pound Sterling) because of changes in exchange rates and loss of value during conversion.

Tayf

The executive committee thanked Essam for his excellent and efficient job on translating Tayf. 500 copies were printed in St. Andrews. 250 were distributed and the rest are in storage in St. Andrews.

Printing on lighter paper would reduce costs of printing.

There have been some institutions which have been interested in receiving back copies of Tayf and Dioscordia. Tony to find out what past issues are stored at the RBGE in order to look into sending bulk copies to institutions such as the British Museum and SOAS. Sue to find out cost involved in producing back copies.

Next copy of Tayf to include invitation to include visitors' impressions.

Membership

Unpaid and potential members will be sent complementary copies of Tayf 4 and Tayf 5 with an invitation to become paid member.

Lisa will prepare a leaflet with information about FoS, including ongoing projects, newsletter, and instructions on how to become a member. Leaflet to be completed by the end of September, then translated and sent to all contacts by the end of October.

Membership payments are due on the 1st of October.

Membership fees will be changed as follows:

10 pounds for concessions

25 pounds for all other members

2 pounds for Yemeni and Gulf Members

All membership requests to be directed to Treasurer. Hugh to let John know to change details on the website

Overview of projects

FoS' donation to the Library, the DVDs and DVD player have been handed over. The previous library committee was dissolved and a meeting with 14 people was held in Hadiboh and a hard core of administrators was selected. The new committee meets every month. The library is to be connected to electricity to play DVDs and have fans, however. They now have funding to pay rent and a librarian for about 3 years. They have 2 years to show their commitment to the library and FoS can then choose whether or not to continue support after evaluation.

The library has been organized and categorized and there is a program for visits from schools and the college. The committee has requested funding for rent from the Ministry of Culture. They are also looking into requesting funding from Gulf visitors. There have been suggestions of moving the library to a different location, however the committee wants it to stay in the centre of Hadibo for easy access.

The library is being used and a list of books has been prepared to purchase from Oman. Library users are passionate for any information about Socotra, in any language. Miranda is collecting old photographs of Socotra to collate and send to the library. These are the most popular resources at the library. Anyone with old photos of the island is asked to forward these to Miranda.

There is also interest in having children's books. Rowan will look into whether the SWDA library is being used as it houses a good collection of children's books.

The opening of the Folk Museum was successful and they are now raising money for a second building, one for women's and one for men's artifacts. FoS members get a free tour of the museum.

The Socotra Exhibition went to Aden for 6 weeks and received 1000s of visitors (one estimate quotes 30,000). It was also opened in Sanaa in Tahrir square. Both exhibitions were opened by British ambassador. The exhibition has now been packed up and is in storage and the catalogue has been translated to Arabic.

The RBGE is looking into moving the exhibition to new locations and is discussing moving it later to a permanent home in Socotra, either at the folk museum or at a new culture museum planned near the hospital.

Other: 5000YR given to Socotra representative to use alternative internet facilities as the internet café went bust. Kay to email Diccon to follow up about the postcards. Soil project of Dana Pietsch is still in progress.

Future Projects

A second Darwin project by RBGE to train guides on ecotourism is in the pipeline. It would be based partly on the mainland and partly on Socotra. Amongst other things it would involve training people in succulent horticulture.

The RBGE will donate a GPS to FoS to be given to Ahmed Adeeb to support his botanical work.

FoS will look into sending reading glasses to Socotra for the library. Hugh will find out the best kind of glasses. Then will do an appeal.

Ecotourism

Discussion on whether FoS should get involved in providing eco-tourism information.

Miranda has prepared a leaflet with suggested itineraries and price ranges and will send out the information leaflet to individual members who can hand them out as individuals rather than as FoS.

It was agreed that our involvement as FoS is for areas visited and comportment, guidance on appropriate dress and behavior etc. Not on providing tourism information. A general guideline will be prepared and expanded for the website. A Discussion also took place on guidelines for scientists and means to stopping collectors and tourists from taking specimens out. This was identified as an important issue which warrants FoS' further attention.

Database

Access to the database will be possible for the chairman, treasurer, secretary and database manager. Mass emails go through the Secretary. The treasurer can send emails to individuals to follow up payment. Emails can also come from chairman.

Correspondence will take place with members regarding Tayf; Meetings; Updates on website and important current news.

Anyone who has current news should send it to Rowan to be incorporated in the periodic emails and this will be forwarded to the website as well.

Website

SCDP has a list of Yemeni and international specialists which can be incorporated in FoS website. Kay to send this around so that it can be updated and new details added.

John will kindly be asked to add a calendar onto the website to mark members' visits and events.

AOB

Mr. Abdul Malik Eagle, a dedicated member of FoS has passed away. FoS will report its condolences in the newsletter.

Election of Executive members

All committee members were re-elected.

Proposed date and place for next AGM

Tuebingen, Germany 5/6 or 12/13 TBC