

# Board Matters

Number 47. Our update for members about the activities of the Board and governance of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Issued with EDS magazine, Winter 2021.

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## From the Chair

I write this in late November. Cecil Sharp House is fully open and is happily buzzing with music and dancing. We are pleased to see that numbers at our evening dance classes on Tuesdays (morris) and Thursdays (English Country Dancing) are significantly higher than two years ago, despite plenty of evidence that many people remain cautious about a return to dancing. If you organise dances yourself, we hope that the 'Getting Back to Dancing' article in this edition of EDS will provide useful advice, remembering that no single solution is appropriate for all circumstances.

Many of our activities across the country are also now taking place in person again. We have chosen to stay with Zoom for some events, including next year's Library Lectures and Broadside Day, after seeing

a substantial increase in numbers during our enforced move online. It is great to see participants logging in from all around the world to attend Library events – as they also did for our Conference in November, which took place live at Cecil Sharp House and was also streamed to people who were unable to travel.

The Autumn EDS Magazine gave notice that we have started a structured consultation about the name of the organisation. I give more details overleaf, and encourage you to engage with this important conversation.

At our recent Annual General Meeting I had the pleasure of welcoming two new board members, Arti Prashar and Angeline Morrison, both of whom will

bring highly valuable skills and experience to the organisation.

Grateful thanks are due to our outgoing board members – Alistair Anderson, Sherry Neyhus and Corinne Male – who have all served with dedication for many years.

Last but definitely not least, we can now announce that Eliza Carthy has generously agreed to become President of the Society. Eliza has already been Vice-President since 2008, and so is the perfect person to succeed Shirley Collins in the role.

I wish you all a peaceful and safe holiday season, with lots of music and dance!

**Lorna Aizlewood Chair**

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## 2021 AGM and November Board Meeting

The AGM and a Board meeting were both held on 13 November 2021. At the AGM the minutes and the Annual Report and Accounts were accepted, with no one voting against.

The results of the Board elections were announced. Robyn Chicot, Lucy Hooberman, Nicola Kearey, Martin Parker, and Eleanor Telfer were elected to the Board. They are all existing Board members who are seeking re-election. In addition it was announced that Angeline Morrison and Arti Prashar

had been appointed to the Board. Their appointments will need to be confirmed at the next AGM.

All the Resolutions were passed with large majorities. The purposes of them are

- 1) to set the 2022 subscriptions
- 2) to re-appoint the auditors
- 3) to appoint Eliza Carthy as President
- 4) to confirm Martin Parker's appointment to the Board last year and
- 5) to amend the Articles of Association to allow AGMs to take place virtually (eg by Zoom) if desired.

The full minutes of the AGM will be available on the website shortly

At the Board meeting Lorna Aizlewood was re-elected as Chair, Alan Davey was re-elected as Vice-Chair and Ed Fishwick was re-appointed as Hon Treasurer. The General Purposes Committee for the next year will consist of Lorna Aizlewood, Ed Fishwick, Mike Heaney, Lucy Hooberman, Nicola Kearey, Sherry Neyhus and Martin Parker. A full report on the Board meeting will be in the next issue of Board Matters.

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# Board Meeting, September 2021

The Board met on 18 September 2021 with eight members attending in person (possible for the first time since March 2020) and five attending by Zoom.

The resignation of Steve Roud was noted.

The Board discussed the possible change of name of EFDSS. There is an article about this in the Autumn edition of EDS.

The Chair reported that Eliza Carthy has accepted the offer to become President. This will be put to the members at the AGM.

The Treasurer presented his report. He said that EFDSS is in a surprisingly good state when the effects of the pandemic are considered. This is true of both the end of year accounts and the accounts since. He said that the main risk to the budget for this financial year is the uncertainty about lettings at Cecil Sharp House. However,

the year to date is within the budgeted range. The Board discussed the policy on reserves and decided to increase the amount of money designated as reserves.

The Chief Executive introduced the latest version of the Business Plan and the first draft of the plans for 2022–23. The latter will be discussed in detail at a future meeting. The Chief Executive's report had been circulated in advance. The Chair asked about the marking of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Ralph Vaughan Williams. The Chief Executive said that a conference is being organised and the focus of the commemorations is likely to be on the library.

The up-dated Inclusivity and Relevance report was discussed in detail.

The motions for the AGM on subscription rates and the appointment of the auditors were approved unanimously. The

nominations for the Board to be put to the AGM proved too difficult to discuss over an unstable internet connexion and will be determined by internet discussion.

[Note: This has now been done and the Board elections were reported at the AGM.]

It was noted that three members of the Board were stepping down at the AGM. The Chair thanked Alistair Anderson, Sherry Neyhus and Corinne Male on behalf of the Board.

It was agreed that Zoom facilities should be available at all future Board meetings for the benefit of any members who are unable to attend in person.

The next meeting will be on Saturday 13 November 2021 at Cecil Sharp House immediately after the AGM.

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## A consultation about our name

If we have an email address for you on file, you should already have received a link to this important consultation.

Online submissions are considerably more efficient for us to process, but you can also choose to complete a paper form, as enclosed with this mailing. This survey will remain open until Monday 13 December.

We believe that the time is right to change. We have a long and illustrious history of championing the folk arts at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape. We passionately believe that everyone should experience England's folk music and dance – its rich traditions and its present-day vibrance. But, far too often, our name creates unnecessary barriers to our important work.

People regularly tell us that the current name causes confusion and often suggests that the organisation is not for them:

**'The English Folk Dance and Song Society' is cumbersome and is usually shortened to the acronym EFDSS – meaningless to**

**the vast majority of the population, and even to many people who already enjoy folk music and dance.**

**There is incontrovertible evidence that many people feel excluded by the word 'English'.**

**'Dance and Song' neglects our significant activities on music.**

**To many, 'Society' suggests an inward-looking and reactionary bureaucracy.**

In summary, the name is no longer appropriate for the organisation's multi-faceted activities as the national champion of the folk music and dance of England.

It would be easy to keep the status quo. But our Aims and Objectives include an undertaking to 'celebrate diversity and promote equality'. We must now consider a change of name if we are to fulfil our essential ambitions of widening the appeal of the folk music, dance, customs and traditions of England.

The Board consider **Folk Arts England** to be an appropriate name.

Why 'England'? Well, the Society was formed as a merger in 1932 between the Folk-Song Society (note neither English nor England) and the English Folk Dance Society. Our activities usually take place within the geographical boundaries of England. Equivalent organisations are well-established in Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Just as there is no consensus on what makes a person English, there are many competing definitions for how a dance or a song or a tune could be identified as English. But everyone in England understands that England is where we make our home – and that many dances, songs and tunes have roots in the cultural heritage of England.

We are already hearing many different views. We want to have mature discussions, putting preconceptions aside. I encourage you to respond to the consultation.

**Lorna Aizlewood Chair**