

**Minutes of Talking News Federation
Trustee Meeting Tuesday 12 July 2022
Birmingham Conference and Events Centre**

Attendees:

Amanda Reed	Chairman	(AR)
Richard Black	Treasurer	(RB)
Heather Bolton	Secretary	(HB)
Alan Dunderdale	Development	(AD)
Paul Ramsden	Strategy	(PR)
Mike Wood	Vice President	(MW)
Tim Baty (via Zoom)	Technology	(TB)

1. Welcome and apologies

AR welcomed everyone. There were no apologies. Tim Baty joined the meeting via zoom rather than in person, due to Covid 19.

2. Minutes of May meeting: actions & matters arising

- 2.1 May's minutes were agreed and will be added to the TNF website. Matters arising are below.
- 2.2 SRSB's auto response to emails – this was being used only intermittently. TB/GS will follow up with SRSB to make sure the auto response is always switched on and operational.
- 2.3 Non-renewing TNF members – to be discussed at the August meeting. In the meantime MW will update trustees on when non-renewing TNs will receive insurance cancellation notices from Verlingue.
- 2.4 Updating Guidance Notes – AR had had no response after contacting ML. PR offered to raise the issue when liaising with ML about his annual conference workshop slot.
- 2.5 TB/HB will liaise with GS about scheduling the 'Kitchener' email calling for new volunteers. HB reported that a call for TNF volunteers had been publicised by Thomas Pocklington Trust in July, using a 1-page leaflet provided by TNF.

3. Chairman's update

- 3.1 AR noted good work so far on preparing for the TNF AGM/ annual conference and reported a successful presence at Sight Village Central, making good use of new TNF marketing materials.
- 3.2 There were a lot of projects and plans, but people were spread too thinly over important areas. AR proposed a trustee awayday after the AGM to agree TNF focus and priorities.

4. Additional TNF trustees

- 4.1 TNF has a number of trustee vacancies. As a result, some trustees were covering more than one role, but this was unsustainable. At PR's suggestion, HB and TB have spoken to one potential new trustee who is well respected in the TN world and who may be willing to consider a role as a TNF trustee.
- 4.2 The committee agreed that the potential trustee would be a welcome addition to TNF – for example with a remit to help recruit further trustees and skilled volunteers to fill gaps. AR will contact the potential trustee for a discussion and invite her to attend the meeting on 9th August.
- 4.3 AD suggested that further recruitment should include a visually impaired person. AD will provide contact details for two potential VI candidates who could be considered for a trustee/ co-opted role. HB will circulate a Soundings interview with one possible VI candidate.
- 4.4 AR reported that she had met two people who could potentially assist TNF as marketing and communications volunteers. AR will make further inquiries into their experience and availability.

5. SP1: Improving dialogue/ideas exchange between TNs

Online Summer Socials:

- 5.1 The first summer social zoom event on 25th June was a success. However PR was keen to attract broader attendance at future events and consider what TNF could do to encourage more people to participate.

5.2 At the next event on 30th July, PR will ask attendees how they heard about the session and, before then, TB will advise on how TNF could run a short post-session questionnaire for attendees. The aim would be to collect member views about preferred contact methods and potential topics for future sessions. PR will ensure a reminder email is sent to all TNF members in advance of the next Summer Social on 30th July.

Update on AGM/ national conference. Musical Museum, Brentford, 16th-17th September:

5.3 AD asked for assistance in finding a speaker to fill one last slot at the annual conference. Now that the two workshops will run consecutively rather than concurrently, there is only one keynote speaker slot to fill. AR offered to provide contact details for a potential speaker who has a background in fundraising and VI charities.

5.4 AD will brief all conference speakers to reflect the conference theme 'Making the TN Voice Heard' in their presentations. This will ensure a coherent theme throughout the day in line with the promotional material sent to members. For example, Macular Society Speaker Cathy Yelf, with a background in external affairs, could provide tips to help TNs promote themselves to the VI community.

5.5 The conference venue is unwilling to offer a corkage charge, so gala dinner wine will have to be purchased through the venue.

5.6 Actions required to finalise the AGM/Conference:

- AD will contact the Musical Museum to clarify arrangements (and any costs) for offering TNF members real-time YouTube access to the conference. The AGM will be available online free and details need to be agreed with the venue for offering online attendance at the rest of the conference. Initial replies from the museum said this could be done via YouTube and, as a result, it has been included on the booking form sent to all members.
- AD and AR will visit the museum.
- AD will block book Friday/ Saturday hotel rooms for trustees and the TNF President.
- HB will comment on the draft annual report and accounts provided by RB and AR.
- HB will suggest ways of reducing cost/ pagination of a printed AGM/conference booklet. TB offered to help with formatting booklet content.
- AD will contact potential exhibitors/ booklet advertisers and ask Marjorie if she will assist with pulling together the conference booklet.
- HB will continue weekly AGM/ conference marketing emails and ask GS how we can extend the reach to non-member organisations such as BWBF.
- HB will ask Martyn Lycett how long he will need to produce an audio version of the conference booklet.
- HB to schedule a member email requesting proposals for discussion/ vote at the AGM. This will need to be sent in August to allow submissions at least 21 days prior to the AGM.
- PR will ask Andrew Stavordale if he is able to present a 30-minute quiz before the gala dinner on 16th September.

6. SP2: Offering more proactive support for TNs

Development report:

6.1 AD had been contacted by a former Leeds TN volunteer about potentially resurrecting a TN for the area. Leeds could be a candidate for Talking Info, but only if there is no existing TN. AD and MW will check the status of Leeds TN with the charity commission to establish what formal structures are in place.

TNF Website proposals:

6.2 TB set out proposals for a project to update the TNF website addressing: look and feel; structure, menus and links; and finally content, page-by-page. Visuals showed a new cleaner, simpler design that made the home page more compact as well as easier and quicker to navigate – but care would be needed to avoid including content that would need updating every few days. The same styling could be applied to the main TNF website, the Soundings website, the Talking Info website and any future websites. Trustees welcomed the proposal and endorsed the project to move ahead in line with TB's proposals.

6.3 TB will work with GS to progress the project with the aim of introducing the new layout by late August, although checking and updating content page-by-page would take much longer.

7. SP3: Improving 2-way communications with TNs

Update on communications work:

- 7.1 Following the last meeting Raksha agreed to work on a communications strategy for TNF. HB has subsequently responded in detail to questions on the scope of the project, suggesting that Raksha focus on two outputs – a communications strategy and style guide. Once drafts of these are received, they will be circulated to trustees.
- 7.2 In the meantime HB will continue to write weekly marketing emails to promote the AGM/conference to members.

TNF internal communications:

- 7.3 PR proposed regular, short Zoom or Teams sessions for trustees between formal committee meetings. Hour-long sessions - held either weekly or fortnightly - would allow trustees to keep up to speed with recent developments, resolve queries and share ideas more easily. The new, short meetings would not be formally minuted, but key points could be recorded on SharePoint, part of TNF's Microsoft 365 package.
- 7.4 Trustees agreed to trial regular, short meetings. **All trustees** will provide PR with their availability so he can schedule the first online sessions.

8. SP4: Raising profile/ awareness with partners and national organisations

Dr Amit Patel, Vice Presidential role:

- 8.1 Following a conversation with Dr Patel, AD will follow up by email with suggestions on how Dr Patel could be involved with TNF. Suggestions on how to scope Dr Patel's role were outlined in the committee paper, for example including some audio content for TNF's website. MW will ask GS about the viability of using Dr Patel and his guide dog Kika as cartoons/avatars to guide web visitors round the 'find a TN' function on TNF's website. AR will draft a formal letter to Dr Patel to follow up AD's email.

Sheffield admin support:

- 8.2 PR proposed setting up a shared email account where SRSB could direct TNF enquiries that they could not answer. SRSB have struggled to respond to more complex queries because emails asking for TNF advice/input have gone unanswered on several occasions.
- 8.3 Some TNF concerns remained about a backlog of unopened emails at SRSB.
- 8.4 TB will set up a new shared email inbox solutions@tnf.org.uk. PR will monitor this inbox and act as first point of contact for SRSB when they are unsure how to answer TNF member queries. PR will then offer a face-to-face visit to Sheffield to discuss how best we can help SRSB handle TNF enquiries efficiently.

Sight Village Central and future plans:

- 8.5 AR reported on TNF attendance at Sight Village Central in Solihull. It was a positive experience, with a good mix of VI and professionals among the 113 people visiting the TNF stand. Overall, exhibitor bookings were 32% down on previous years. New TNF marketing material and sample USB players proved popular, especially the 1-page leaflets on accessing a TN via Alexa or Google. Next time a leaflet showing an image of the BWBF app would be useful.
- 8.6 Helpful contacts were made, including an offer for TNF to exhibit at the Retina UK conference next year and an inquiry about how to start a TN in Jersey. TNF has booked exhibition space at two further Sight Villages this year – Leeds on 21st September and London on 8th-9th November.

9. SP5: promoting development of online service provision

Update on roll out of MS365 and Civi-CRM:

- 9.1 TB reported that the roll out of MS365 was going well. The next steps would be to introduce SharePoint and a library structure for document filing. Civi-CRM was working but there remained an underlying problem with the accuracy of member contact data.

Update on Talking Info:

- 9.2 MW reported that the first Talking Info trials were now likely to be in Kent during July, with the aim of going live in August. A volunteer – Deborah Harrison – has taken on a marketing role for

TI. It was agreed that TI would be introduced briefly at the TNF conference, with MW offering demonstrations at lunchtime.

- 9.3 Trustees agreed there was potential for sharing some TI content with Soundings once the audio had appeared on TI – for example, quizzes, blind sport and Peter White-chaired listener panel debates. Initially, TI areas would not pay the £42 TNF membership fee but would invite listener donations to TNF instead.

10. Ongoing TNF business

Financial update:

- 10.1 RB reported 217 member renewals processed so far. While down on last year, the number was still rising, and more renewals were expected when TNs received final reminders about access to discounted member insurance rates. To date it was still unclear how many TNs had closed permanently as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 10.2 RB reported that reduced expenditure over the past two years of Covid had contributed to healthy reserves.

Portfolio round-ups:

- 10.3 TB thanked MW for stepping in to present a long service award to FATN while TB was self-isolating with Covid.
- 10.4 TB and PR will liaise to create a standard format for reporting on SRSB performance – for the example number of TNF queries handled and response times.
- 10.5 TB will consider options for a TNF laptop/tablet for use at exhibitions – and how a device would cope in locations with poor wi-fi. TB will also review whether to replace one of the PCs in the Swindon office.

11. AOB

- 11.1 AR wondered about the best way to communicate national information to TNF members. TB suggested the TNF Facebook page was a good option, particularly as sign-ups were growing. TB offered to check the Facebook security settings to manage who could comment on TNF content. HB suggested a TNF e-newsletter would be useful (eg using Mailchimp or a similar package) but recognised this would not be possible without additional volunteers.
- 11.2 TB reported an email discussion with Dolphin Computer Access who wanted to make TNs available as a free offer via their subscription service. TB had explained that Dolphin needed to contact BWBF rather than TNF. PR/MW suggested TNF should prepare a policy position on the Dolphin request, making responsibilities clear and offering guidance to TNs on the pros and cons of making audio available via Dolphin.
- 11.3 PR had received a query about CIO status for individual TNs. RB had a document drafted by ML on CIO status – RB will review this and send it to PR. The option of making the reviewed paper available in the member guidance section of the TNF website would also be considered.

Next meetings

- 1. 9.30am Tuesday 9th August via Zoom.** NB – this will replace the planned 6 September trustee meeting, which is now too close to the AGM.
- 2. Saturday 17th September – following the AGM**