

Minutes of Talking News Federation Trustee Meeting Tuesday 8 February 2022 via Zoom

Attendees:

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

1. Welcome and Apologies

AR welcomed everyone. There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of November Awayday: actions & matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes were agreed and will now be added to the TNF website. Matters arising are below. Actions carried forward are in section 11 alongside actions from today's meeting.
- 2.2 RB said any future subscription increase - as discussed at the awayday - needed care to avoid a loss of members, leaving TNF no better off financially. RB advocated a clear plan linking any subscription increase to costed projects that TNF would deliver.
- 2.3 Progress on updating TNF's 'How To' guides will be revisited once 365 is in place to allow shared access to folders and files.
- 2.4 AR has made contact with Ayrshire TN to start a Scottish dialogue.

3. Office 365: next steps

- 3.1 TB explained that TNF's licensing costs for the MS 365 suite of office and email applications would be higher than originally anticipated because research had revealed that only trustees or paid staff qualified for free licences. This is counter to initial advice from the Charities Digital Exchange who suggested TNF could access 300 free licences.
- 3.2 Although costs are now higher than had been hoped, MS 365 costs would still be lower than the current Rackspace email-only system and would give TNF access to the full range of MS software, including Office applications, Teams and SharePoint.
- 3.3 **Trustees agreed the revised costs and agreed to implement MS 365 as set out in TB's committee paper.** TB will check the cancellation period and terms for the current Rackspace email contract and update RB on requirements.

4. Winter Workshops: review to date, plans for WW3 on TNs in 1,3 & 5 years

- 4.1 Winter Workshops in December and January attracted good engagement from TNF members. The GDPR session on 15 January was particularly popular – with over 100 participants on the day and 60+ views of the workshop video on TNF's website after the event.
- 4.2 WW3 on the future of TNs would include different views from four TN speakers and input from TNF trustees, building on their written contributions to today's committee paper. The aim is to share ideas to assist TNs as they recover from Covid and help prevent TN closures.
- 4.3 To deliver further proactive support for TNs, PR will send out a health check questionnaire to all contacts in all member TNs. PR, AR and AD agreed to share responsibility for contacting around 30 TNs that had not renewed TNF membership and encourage them to re-join. The list of 30 will be generated by RB.
- 4.4 It was agreed that a new 'Welcome to TNF' letter and pack should be created for new members. New communications volunteer Raksha will be asked to help draft these. In the meantime, PR, TB and HB will review and update the TNF 'offer' to members.

5. TNF strategy: next steps

5.1 PR stressed the importance of better interaction with TNF members but added that TNF needed to be clear on its priorities in doing this to maximise results. The committee agreed to focus initially on short term priorities using the 1-page strategy format circulated by AR. PR and HB will work on a 1-page strategy for discussion with AR. They will also consider how best strategic priorities can be reflected in future trustee meeting agendas.

6. AGM & regional meetings: dates and plans for 2022

6.1 A regional event will be held in Blackpool on Saturday 14 May 2022. A venue has been booked but speakers still need to be sourced.

6.2 A second venue – the Musical Museum – in Brentford, West London, has been booked for Saturday 17 September 2022. **It was agreed that this date and venue would become the TNF AGM as a one-day event with high profile speakers.** RB will record a video update because of a date clash. RB confirmed that it would be possible to bring forward the accounts and annual report to mid-September. **Discussions on AGM format agreed:**

- A social evening will be offered on Friday but no sessions on Sunday.
- Potential AGM speakers to be approached asap include Sophie Wessex (AD to approach via Steve Barrett-White) and Dr Amit Patel (PR to contact). MW to approach TNF President Peter White to run a session on how TNs can source content.
- A local hotel needs to be identified for delegate accommodation and as location for Friday's social event and a Saturday conference dinner. This is an action for AD.
- RB will produce a schedule for delivering the TNF annual report and accounts in time for the AGM on 17 September 2022.

6.3 **It was agreed to defer a second regional event until early 2023** to prevent overloading committee members.

7. Communications volunteer update

7.1 After a zoom call with AR and HB, Raksha Malde-Kara agreed to become a communications volunteer for TNF Soundings. Her initial focus will be on two projects:

- Review of TNF's branding, image and exhibition material - to be in place by Sight Village Solihull on 28 July
- How TNF can improve regular member communications, making use of MS 365 features once implemented.

AR asked trustees to send her any copies of old exhibition materials so she could forward these to Raksha as background.

7.2 **It was agreed to move the May trustee meeting to Saturday 28 May at 10am** so that Raksha could attend and present her recommendations.

7.3 Raksha is keen to attend a local TN recording to learn about operations but this is proving difficult as many are still recording remotely. HB will forward TB's video and offer her the option of joining a zoom call to observe a Stockport TN recording.

8. Ongoing business reports

8.1 Ongoing business reports were noted and trustees thanked for their input to the work of TNF. Specific points raised and not discussed elsewhere in the meeting are below.

8.2 Financial update: RB predicted a TNF surplus of around £7,000 for 2021-22. The surplus is mainly due to a donation received in the year – without this TNF would have broken even. Another potential donation following the closure of Leeds TN is still being pursued by AD.

8.3 RB will draft a potential TNF financial reserves policy and circulate it for comment.

8.4 Talking Info: This new service will offer failing TNs a formula requiring only modest local input that can be operated fortnightly with minimal volunteers. Subject to finalising IT and scripts, Talking Info is scheduled to go live in mid-April using Swindon TN as a guinea pig. Next in line is Halton.

8.5 AR explained that MW will be standing down from TNF office/ admin role to concentrate on Talking Info. Options for sharing the office work will be explored by PR who is visiting Sheffield

to discuss the overall service agreement between TNF/Sheffield, and by TB who will advise on sharing access to enquiry emails.

- 8.6 Volunteers: AR continues to explore options for sourcing additional volunteers for TNF. A potential new IT volunteer is under consideration but doubts remain over the suitability of his skills. HB will send AR the skillset required for Soundings moderators because it has proved difficult to recruit for this role.
- 8.7 TB outlined a plan for future improvements to TNF IT and areas where technology could assist TNF operations including: TNF technical assets and information management; development support for TNs; member support; and technical solutions for listeners.
- 8.8 A request for TNF to endorse a particular recording software was discussed but rejected because it is not TNF's role to promote a specific commercial package.
- 8.9 TNF Soundings continues to be popular, with data to 31 December 2021 showing over 330 articles published, more than 11,130 article downloads and more than 8,400+ listens via Sonata+.

9. **AOB**

- 9.1 **It was agreed that the new TNF strategy should include RB's suggestion for a TNF video to explain what TNs are and what they do.** It should answer basic questions about TNs often asked by other organisations. Making the video widely available (for example on the TNF website and You Tube) would help raise TNF's profile and could help attract volunteers.
- 9.2 Trustees rejected the idea of a link from TNF's website to an online 'funding finder' because the service in question had been found to be unpopular and difficult to use.

10. **Next meeting**

- 10.1 The next trustee meeting on Tuesday 5 April 2022 is scheduled to be a face-to-face meeting. AR will look at options for a venue to meet in central Birmingham.

11. **Summary: Key decisions and consolidated actions**

11.1 **Key decisions. Trustees...**

- a) Approved revised costings for MS365 and implementation of the new system.
- b) Agreed that the AGM will target high profile speakers for a 1-day conference on Saturday 17 September 2022 at the Musical Museum in Brentford, West London. There will be an optional social event on Friday but nothing on Sunday.
- c) Agreed a regional event will be held in Blackpool on 14 May 2022, a second event will be deferred until early 2023.
- d) Agreed that the May trustee zoom meeting will move to Saturday 28 May at 10am
- e) Agreed the new TNF strategy should include RB's suggestion for a TNF video to explain what TNs are and what they do.

11.2 **Actions** - from 8.2.22 and carried over from November awayday.

Everyone:

- Trustees attending Sight Village events should write and circulate a report to the committee.
- Send AR any copies/ photos of past TNF publicity/ exhibition material as background for TNF's new communications volunteer.

AR will:

- Work with PR and AD to contact around 30 TNs that have not renewed TNF membership and encourage them to re-join.
- Book TNF's Sight Village exhibition space at Exeter, Leeds and London.
- Identify and book a venue in central Birmingham for trustees' face-to-face meeting on 5 April 2022

TB will:

- Proceed with MS 365 implementation and update RB on the cancellation period and terms for the current Rackspace email contract.
- Arrange for the spare IT system access code to be stored in the Swindon office safe.

- Look at how AD can be given read-only access to the new TNF database and how AR can access both the database and the enquiries@ email account.
- Propose suitable wording to be added to trustees' TN Talk signatures.
- Work with PR and HB to review and update the TNF 'offer' to members.
- Advise on sharing enquiry@ emails to spread workload when MW steps back from office duties.

RB will:

- Generate a list of TNF members that did not renew membership last year so that AR, AD and PR can contact them and encourage them to re-join.
- Draft and circulate a potential TNF financial reserves policy.
- Produce a schedule for delivering the TNF annual report and accounts in time for the AGM on 17 September.
- Follow up the grant application from Bedford TN to clarify how they would use any TNF funding.

HB will:

- Work with PR and TB to review and update the TNF 'offer' to members.
- Work with PR on a 1-page TNF strategy for discussion with AR. HB and PR will also consider how best strategic priorities can be reflected in future trustee meeting agendas.
- Arrange purchase of official Belbin questionnaires for all trustees, plus vice president and 2 volunteers involved in strategic delivery.
- Forward TB's TN production video to Raksha and offer her the option of joining a zoom call to observe a Stockport TN recording.
- Send AR the skillset required for Soundings moderators.

AD will:

- Work with PR and AR to contact around 30 TNs that have not renewed TNF membership and encourage them to re-join.
- Approach potential AGM speaker Countess (Sophie) Wessex asap via Steve Barrett-White
- Identify a hotel local to the musical museum in Brentford, suitable for AGM delegate accommodation, Friday's social event and Saturday's conference dinner.
- Pursue potential TNF donation following the closure of Leeds TN.

PR will:

- Make contact with Dr Amit Patel about the TNF Vice Presidential role and invite him to speak at TNF's AGM in Brentford on 17 September 2022.
- Visit Sheffield Society for the Blind on 4 March to meet the new chief executive and admin support, and explore how they could assist TNF when MW steps back from office duties.
- Send out a health check questionnaire to all contacts in all member TNs.
- Work with AR and AD to contact around 30 TNs that have not renewed TNF membership and encourage them to re-join.
- Work with TB and HB to review and update the TNF 'offer' to members.
- Work with HB on a 1-page TNF strategy for discussion with AR. PR and HB will also consider how best strategic priorities can be reflected in future trustee meeting agendas.

MW will:

- Contact Peter White about running a session on content at the TNF AGM in Brentford, West London on 17 September 2022.
- Start insurance negotiations with Brian Watts to start negotiations in May to renew TNF's insurance offer to members
- Send past Secretary role profiles to HB and
- Staff the TNF stand at Exeter Sight Village with Helen McIntosh.