Minutes of the 99th Annual General Meeting of English PEN
Tuesday 1 December 2020, 5.30-6.30pm
Via Zoom

Presiding: Maureen Freely (MF), Chair; Daniel Gorman (DG), Director

Present:

1. Claire Armitstead
2. Yousef Azizi
3. Adam Blitz
4. Deborah Bourne
5. Antonia Byatt
6. Francis Coles
7. Rachel Crome
8. Will Forrester
9. Maureen Freely
10. Daniel Gorman
11. Daniel Hahn
12. Catheryn Kilgarriff
13. Keith Lowe
14. Cat Lucas
15. Dan Miller
16. Stephen Murray
17. Jill Nichollss
18. Alastair Niven
19. Carlotta Ottonello
20. Angela Paine
21. John Price
22. Shazea Quraishi
23. Marion Rankine
24. Nick Revell
25. Lynn Ross
26. Nadia Saeed
27. Samantha Schnee
28. Ros Schwartz
29. Burhan Sonmez
30. Sandy Tozer
31. Hannah Trevarthen
32. Lindsay Trevarthen
33. Emma Wadsworth-Jones
34. Sara Whatt

Reports:
Francis Coles (FC), Honorary Treasurer
Daniel Gorman (DG), Director
Cat Lucas (CL), Writers at Risk Programme Manager
Hannah Trevarthen (HT), Events and Development Manager
Will Forrester (WF), Translation and International Manager
Rachel Crome (RC), Head of Communications
Marion Rankine (MR), Membership Officer

1. Apologies
MF thanked all for attending and opened the meeting. She informed the meeting that there were apologies from four members for non-attendance and three proxy votes.

2. In Memoriam
MF requested a minute’s silence for members who had died during the year, thanked them for their support for English PEN and offered condolences to their families.

Raficq Abdulla
Tom Atkin

Also for Azimion Askarov, a PEN Writers at Risk Case who died in prison, and Emma Langley, former literature relationship manager at Arts Council England, who died while climbing in New Zealand.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of the 98th Annual General Meeting of English PEN
held on 3 December 2019
MF asked the meeting to confirm the accuracy of the minutes and for any matters arising. Accuracy was confirmed by a Zoom poll of 83% and no matters arising were brought forward.

4. To receive and consider the Annual Report and Audited Accounts 2019-20

The Annual Report and Audited Accounts for 2019-20 were considered and received by the members.

i) Chair’s Report
MF addressed the AGM, recapping on points made in the annual report.

MF then invited FC to deliver the Treasurer’s report on English PEN’s finances for the year ended 31 March 2020.

ii) Treasurer’s Annual Report/Audited Accounts
FC reported that the outcome had been encouraging with income rising from £523k in 2019 to £641k in 2020, largely due to increased restricted funding. Together with some expenditure savings, this had improved the reserves significantly during the year, with free reserves of £268k at year end. FC noted that this comfortably met the reserve’s policy.

FC commented that the charity had gone into the new financial year with some trepidation due to the Covid-19 pandemic but experience to date had been encouraging with income holding up well and close control of expenditure.

FC opened the floor for questions. None raised.

iii) Director’s Report
DG recapped on points made in the annual report, thanking English PEN’s funders, trustees and staff. He then reported briefly on the annual PEN Congress which had been held online for the first time in 2020.

iv) Activity Reports
MF introduce reports from staff, requesting any questions be posted into the chat to be addressed after the reports.

A) Campaigns and Writers at Risk
ML invited CL to report on English PEN’s international campaigns and writers at risk programme. CL outlined relevant activities summarised in the annual report.

B) Public Programmes
MF invited HT to report on English PEN’s Public Programmes and Development. HT outlined relevant activities summarised in the annual report.
C) Writers in Translation
MF invited WF to report on English PEN’s Writers in Translation programme. MF outlined relevant activities summarised in the annual report.

D) Communications
MF invited RC to report on media and communications. RC outlined relevant activities summarised in the annual report.

E) Membership
MF invited MR to report on membership. MR outlined relevant activities summarised in the annual report.

5. Re-appoint the auditors, Grant Harrold Leman Davis LLP

Action: Passed by 93% Zoom poll

6. To delegate authority to the trustees to fix the remuneration of the auditors on an ongoing basis until this authority is revoked by further members’ ordinary resolution.

Action: Passed by a show of hands and proxy votes, agreed by Zoom poll, 93%

7. Election of trustees to the board of English PEN
MF introduced three new trustees, all appointed on 23 June 2020, who the board recommended for ratification by members: Milena Buyem, Ted Hodgkinson, Guy Gunaratne. MF also thanked the trustees who had stood down during the year: Sanjay Jawa and Lulu Norman.

Action: Passed 93% Zoom poll

8. Any Other Business
HT gave a short update on plans for the centenary and explained how the programme had been impacted by the pandemic.

9. Questions from members
One member asked for the dates of the 2021 Congress. This was confirmed as 20-23 September 2021.

MF closed the meeting.

END