

UKNOF Annual Meeting 2021

Manchester Central and Zoom
19 November 2021

Present

In-person

Cathy Almond, Louise Ashtonhurst, Denesh Bhabuta, Tom Bird, Brandon Butterworth, Ben Cartwright-Cox, Ian Chilton, Greg Choules, Andy Davidson, Will Hargrave, Tom Hill, Marek Isalski, Keith Mitchell, Pavel Odintsov, Laura Winters.

On-line (via Zoom)

Willie Black, Ray Bellis, James Besley, Rebecca Class-Peter, Steve Dyer, Steve Karneinsky, Kurtis Lindqvist, Fearghas M^cKay, Chris Russell, Leo Vegoda.

Apologies

Tim Chown, Chris M^cMorris, Nigel Titley

Materials

- [Slide Deck](#)
- [Communications report](#)
- [Treasurer's report](#)
- [Managing Director's report](#)

Key Points

Events

- 2021 was really 2020 (part 2). We did most of our learning on how to run virtual events in 2020. We maintained our momentum in 2021 and delivered a series of well attended events, including UKNOF48, our first hybrid event. It had almost 90 people on-site (~20% no-show rate), and over 200 people watched the stream, with over 30 concurrent viewers.
- The planning for virtual events had to take account of people's need for a social element, which has always been a key driver for physical events. We tested that with both Zoom and Spatial.Chat but the demand was for people to meet each other in the same venue.
- UKNOF48 was held at Manchester Central as we were tied into a contract and would have lost the money whether we ran the event or not. We ran the event with support from LONAP as sponsor and Patrons but despite keeping costs as low as possible, it did not break even. One way we lowered costs was to re-use existing technical

solutions (thanks to Bogons!) rather than pay for a dedicated hybrid conference solution. This speaks to the challenge of sustainability in a volatile time. Virtual events are relatively cheap to run but do not bring in much in the way of sponsorship.

- There will be a short virtual UKNOF early in the new year to maintain momentum and reduce the risk of a UKNOF event being a vector for COVID-19 transmission. This will be followed by UKNOF49 in Manchester in April and UKNOF50 in September, possibly in London.
- There was a question about whether we were satisfied with Manchester Central and why we planned to return. Denesh noted that we are happy with them but signed the contract for 2022 in 2019 before the pandemic because it gave us predictability on both dates and pricing. What has changed is that some of our service providers, like for AV, have gone out of business with Manchester Central performing that function in-house.
- The UKNOF48 COVID-19 safety protocol was a balance between the community's need to meet in person, our need to act as responsible hosts, and some demands for more and less strict controls.
- There was some discussion of the German multi-site model. It was noted that this involved a site-sponsor for each hub location.

Committees

- Chris Russell stepped down from the PC after chairing it for several years, and Mike Hughes stepped down from the PC after more than a decade of service. James Besley has taken over as chair, with Marek Isalski as incoming co-chair. Cathy Almond will step down as co-chair in February.
- Rebecca Class-Peter has joined the Communications Committee and she is helping us diversify the number of people who can do each of the jobs we need to perform. This was also the key reason for the new website: it allows multiple people to create and publish content, giving us flexibility and resilience. The new site could not have been launched without the help of Mike Hughes and Chris Russell.
- While older forms of communication have relatively steady state usage, we have seen more than 25% growth in Mattermost accounts in 2021 and usage of about 200 messages a week, growing to 1,000 a day during events. Similarly, the Facebook page and Instagram have both seen significant growth and this speaks to new audiences.
- New audiences is one of the key items on the 2022 CC plan, which is intended to help the overall succession planning situation.

Finances

- Willie shared the high level financial history since 2005. It was fairly steady-state until 2013, when the number of people attending required larger venues. This significantly increased costs and moved us to a different model with income balanced between sponsorship and attendance fees. This became the new steady state until 2019, when the pandemic changed both income and costs. Sponsorship and Patronage declined and UKIF reserves declined. In part this was related to reduced attendance despite not charging for virtual events and in part because sponsors want to meet participants in person.
- There has been some pushback from sponsors on charging attendance fees in addition to sponsor revenue but the board feels that it is important to have diversified

income streams. Further, the board has spoken with peers who run other NOGs and they inform us that a significant proportion of their income comes from attendance fees.

Governance

- UKIF Ltd was set up as an industry association and is the legal entity for UKNOF events. Some directors charge a portion of their time at a fixed rate of £30/hour, with quotes submitted at the start of each year.
- UKNOF's governance model is lightweight, which reflects the fact that it does not operate any critical resources. A third of the board steps down each year. Willie Black and Steve Dyer stood down and were reappointed in 2021, although noting that they were happy to step down when replacements were found. Laura Winters was appointed to the board on the recommendation of the PC. Keith Mitchell noted his wish to move from executive to non-executive role.
- The board is looking for more new members. It has been speaking to likely candidates but would also welcome suggestions and self-nominations, although it will get the view of the UKNOF committees on any board candidates.
- There was discussion about making more public calls for people to join the board.
- Concerns were raised that more junior people were not allowed, or did not feel empowered, to attend UKNOF. This might be a UK issue as it doesn't appear to be a problem in other countries. Neil McRae's call to allow staff to attend UKNOF is on the front page of the site and the Communications Committee has a goal of attracting more people at the start of their careers as a high priority work item for 2022.