

**Minutes of the BHA Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**9 May 2015, 11.00-15.40 at 39 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB**

**Present:** Robert Ashby (RA, Chair), Patricia Rogers (PR, Vice Chair), John Adams (JA, Treasurer), Tom Copley (TC), Guy Otten (GO), Alan Palmer (AP), David Pollock (DP), Mary Porter (MP), Jeremy Rodell (JR).

**In attendance:** Andrew Copson (AC, Chief Executive and Company Secretary), Sierra Schraff Thomas (SST, minutes), Lisa Rønsholt (LR, Head of Education, for item 13/15)

[illegible]

Item		Action
09/15/03	<b>The Board noted</b> that the Darwin Day lecture had been extremely successful and drew a more diverse audience than usual, especially due to promotion to local schools.	AC
09/15/04	<b>AC reported</b> that JR has taken on the role of voluntary Dialogue Officer, reporting to LR, and is moving ahead with several promising initiatives.	
09/15/05	<b>The Board congratulated</b> JR on this new role and noted that dialogue work is essential to how people perceive the BHA and Humanism.	
09/15/06	<b>AC reported</b> that the BHA social media reach has extended as usual and that current social media strategy has been very successful. In response to Board discussion, <b>AC suggested</b> an opportunity for social media training be offered to the Board in order to increase personal use and improve oversight of the BHA use of social media. <b>This was agreed.</b>	
09/15/07	<b>AC reported</b> on the positive impacts of recent staff and structural changes. The creation of the Communications Manager role and its move from Education to Public Affairs and Campaigns has had positive results and allows for more efficient working. Both the Events Manager and Campaigns Manager roles have added significantly to our capacity and they and their managers have all been performing well.	
09/15/08	<b>AC reported</b> on several issues that have arisen with the AHS. These include an inadequate executive and low attendance at the convention. This has exposed problems with the systems of management and governance currently being used that AC would like to bring to the Board's attention (for example that there is no mechanism for line management of the AHS President role). AC expects that this will improve with the introduction of the Groups, Membership and Sections Coordinator, who will be able to provide support to the AHS through creating more robust processes to be implemented in the coming year and updating the AHS Handbook.	
09/15/09	<b>AC reported</b> on the successful launch of the Young Humanists and the Board expressed their hope that they might be able to provide some mutual reinforcement to the AHS.	
09/15/10	<b>AC reported</b> that section support has improved with the new Groups, Sections and Membership coordinator post and that data as well as systems and processes are being improved. This means we will have clarity on the number of members in sections and be able to more easily identify members of certain sections.	
09/15/11	<b>AC clarified</b> that the Defence Humanists are a section of BHA but that, due to internal MOD rules, there is also an internal MOD Defence Humanists network, run by the same people. This could lead to changes in section structure in future. Roger Hutton, who is a high ranking civil servant with the MOD, created this internal network, which should make it much easier for service people to join since it is 'endorsed' internally.	
09/15/12	<b>AC reported</b> on an update to the Galha section name change: There have been several consultations with membership and LGBT Humanists is the most popular option. There was a non-binding discussion of this at the AGM. The Galha Committee will take a final decision at their next meeting and it is likely that they will choose LGBT Humanists.	
09/15/13	<b>AC reported</b> that the Celebrants Network has been cleaned up and non responsive and	

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	non paying Celebrants have been de-accredited. There are still approximately 300 Celebrants in the network currently and this should remain more or less static as new celebrants are accredited and others retire. AC reported that he would hope to see total number of Celebrants in the network rising throughout year, and if it doesn't, the Board and AC should turn their attention to this.	
09/15/14	<b>The Board requested</b> information on how many celebrants have recently completed training and are soon to be accredited. AC will check this with IR and report back to the Board.	AC
09/15/15	<b>AC reported</b> that the new Ceremonies website is functioning well and has seen an increase in traffic. The promotion campaign for all three ceremonies in service stations was very successful and produced a spike in web traffic	
09/15/16	<b>AC reported</b> that Ceremonies management is currently undertaking a Review of the Network and a consultation on increased regionalisation. Some re-organisation will result from this, but consultation must take place first. This would include a regional level and local groups at a level where they make sense.	
09/15/17	<b>The Board enquired</b> about the new NHS Guidance. AC reported that Church of England chaplains are staging a huge fight back, holding sessions, writing letters, and generally saying that they can cover these things themselves and that BHA volunteers are inadequately trained. The responsibility for chaplaincy has been moved from Equalities to Nursing and Patient Experience which poses a problem in policy terms, but not as big of problem as it would have been if it happened before the new guidance was written.	
09/15/18	<b>AC reported</b> that a meeting to discuss strategic relationship between the BHA and NHS will take place in June or July in order to ensure that the BHA is a key player when local trusts consider who non-religious chaplaincy should go through, as the BHA is not always the obvious choice.	
09/15/19	<b>The Board enquired</b> as to who Trusts are going to for non-religious chaplaincy needs. AC reported that this presented multiple problems: 1) Some trusts have gone to religious chaplains who say they offer 'non-religious' pastoral support despite being religious. 2) Some hospitals have gone to local secular groups who say have in some instances told them not to work with the BHA for chaplaincy needs. This feeds into what Christian chaplains are saying that our services are inadequate. This kind of fight back is national, from top, mostly concerns ignoring the guidelines.	
09/15/20	<b>The Board requested</b> additional information on what is included in Pastoral Support training. AC reported that currently, this includes an accreditation weekend with very high threshold for entry (most participants have previous relevant experience) as well as eventual CPD. The BHA accredits people that we can put out into institutions (prisons, hospitals), to participate in that institution's further trainings. This is normal for non-religious chaplains. Many religious chaplains go into hospitals without any training, their only qualification is as religious leaders. We are also looking at the possibility of developing a certificate in humanist pastoral care over the next five years.	
09/15/21	<b>AC reported</b> that having an SMT member who is a volunteer is difficult, so there may be eventual cost implications for Pastoral Support.	

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09/15/22	<b>AC reported</b> that the website for Pastoral Support has now been set up under 'Humanist Care'.	
09/15/23	<b>AC commented</b> on the importance of growing and professionalising the BHA Pastoral Support network and ensuring that quality service is provided.	
09/15/24	<b>The Board enquired</b> about the possibility of working in coalition with other organisations that provide non-religious pastoral care. AC reported that a very positive meeting was held with the Board of Healthcare Chaplains. Our Pastoral Care volunteers will be able to join as members.	
09/15/25	<b>AC reported</b> on progress with the judicial review about inclusion of humanism in GCSE and A levels. The BHA received a robust response to our letter before action, which probably means that the DfE took legal advice during the consultation period. The question arose as to if we had standing in the matter, and to ensure this does not create a problem we have found three parents with whom to take the case forward.	
09/15/26	<b>AC reported</b> that he and PD met with the Prime Minister of Jersey to speak about legalising humanist marriages there. A BHA member who was elected to the Jersey parliament will now be proposing this. Any marriages performed in Jersey would be recognised in the rest of the UK, which would be very positive.	
09/15/27	<b>AC reported</b> that we will need to look again at what will happen with Humanist marriage and how we communicate this to celebrant network in light of the election. AC emphasised that we shouldn't give up on this issue in light of new government as this was referred to the Law Commission, who are still theoretically to look at this issue. We will also have to look at the issue of using unlicensed venues going forward.	
09/15/28	<b>AC reported</b> that there was media attention around the death of Terry Pratchett and that a BHA celebrant conducted his funeral and will almost certainly be conducting a national memorial for him later this year.	
09/15/29	<b>AC reported</b> that we now have two cases to take in regards to assisted dying: one man with severe liver damage, and a woman with chronic pain condition. We are now actively exploring how we might take these cases forward.	
09/15/30	<b>AC reported</b> that, in light of the election results, the issue of Buffer zones around abortion clinics is probably unlikely to go forward. If a private members bill came around, we would have to consider if we want to spend a lot of time on this.	
09/15/31	<b>AC reported</b> on significant staff changes that have taken place, with both internal promotions and the hiring of new people. Jessica has taken HR responsibilities to the Office and Administration Manager role. An HR group has also been created and will be meeting for half an hour every month to keep up with HR issues. The BHA is still small enough for AC to remain involved in this. Group discusses general HR issues and policies as well as particular issues with individual staff and complaints received. This group will also deal with complaints against volunteers, trainers, consultants, etc.	
09/15/32	<b>The Board enquired</b> about a reference to ambient awareness of the BHA mentioned in the report. AC explained that this includes adverts and publicity that is put out without a	

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	specific ask but is about the organisation in a marketing sense. Examples of this include the Three Ceremonies campaign, facebook adverts, google ads, posters. The question remains if this is justifiable for the size of the BHA.	
09/15/33	<b>The Board requested</b> that the new BHA organisational diagram be disseminated to Groups, Sections and others who might find it useful.	
09/15/34	<b>The Board received</b> a report from AC on progress with Board Chair Recruitment. Despite advertising widely and conducting an executive search, we were unable to procure sufficient candidates to proceed to next step of recruitment. Only three applications for Board Chair were received in response to advertisement, none of these met the three main criteria that had been agreed. The Board Chair Recruitment Committee agreed that finding the right candidate was more important than finding a candidate that is available now and that the next step should be an executive search. MB will continue to proactively headhunt qualified candidates through the end of May. The Committee also asks that Board members use the application materials circulated by SST following this meeting to search for appropriate candidates among their own contacts. We will also be approaching more Patrons to see if they may know people that might be interested. It was agreed that a personal approach may be more productive than advertising for such a post.	
09/15/35	<b>The Board noted</b> that, in light of the election, we may want to consider someone who is more conservatively inclined with useful contacts for the new political landscape.	
09/15/36	<b>The Board received</b> the 2015Q1 Accounts and congratulated the management on an extremely successful Q1 cash appeal, which has raised over £90,000. AC reported that we may have to find more ways to spend our money as we have created a structural surplus.	
09/15/37	<b>The Treasurer applauded</b> an exceptional financial year in 2014 and first quarter in 2015. He commented that this organization is doing very well financially and that this gives us an opportunity for strategic investments in new work.	
09/15/38	<b>The Treasurer reported</b> on the status of BHA Investments: In 2014, the Board took the decision to move investment to a fund for Charities run by Barclays. Funds were moved in July of 2014 and additional funds have been moved since which now total £496,324. Thus far, our rate of return is 11.6%, which is very good. We are bought into an existing fund, so we don't have much room to manoeuvre this, the people managing the fund make adjustments as necessary and seem to be managing this very well. The fund is mostly composed of equities from developed economies (68%). The remaining percentage is split between developing countries, land, government bonds, etc. JA reported that the investment policy agreed last year is going very well.	
09/15/39	<b>The Board enquired</b> as to the ethical guidelines of this fund. JA reported that the ethical guidelines include the standard list of things we wouldn't want to invest in (pornography, arms, tobacco, etc.). This particular fund does not exclude abortions and birth control.	
09/15/40	<b>The Treasurer reported</b> that the BHA currently has 9 accounts (7 bank accounts plus 2 Paypal accounts). In JA's opinion, this may be too many for an organization of this size. JA is urging AC to consider consolidation and there may be costs associated with closing some down. If those who are operating the accounts have a handle on it, that's fine, but	

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09/15/41	<p>what if a new person came in? There may be virtue in consolidation.</p> <p><b>The Treasurer reported</b> that the financial position of the association is better than it has ever been. It is important to note that it may not always be like this, however we are in a position where we can cope with any foreseeable ups and downs.</p>	
10/15	<u>Annual Report and AGM (AC)</u>	
10/15/01	<b>The Board approved</b> the Annual Report and Accounts for 2014.	
10/15/02	<b>The Board agreed</b> the Letter of Representation to the auditors and authorised the chair to sign it.	
10/15/03	<b>The Board received and noted</b> the auditor's management letter and noted the following: Employee holiday pay needs to be accrued at year end. AC reported that we are looking into what this will mean for the BHA. In note 7, community is misspelled.	
10/15/04	<p><b>The Board approved</b> the AGM notice and agenda with the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pg. 68. Item 8. Line was removed about candidate's statements being attached as this was an error.</li> </ul>	
10/15/05	<b>The Board noted</b> that there are eleven candidates for three Board vacancies and that an election is therefore being administered by the Company Secretary according to our Byelaws.	
10/15/06	<b>The Board appointed</b> JR and MP as scrutineers from its number to scrutinise the election count on 10 June.	
11/15	<u>Governance</u>	
11/15/01	<p><b>The Board reviewed</b> the Trustees Handbook and agreed the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under Vice Chair person specification the word 'Chair' was removed</li> <li>- Under the role of the Vice-Chair, Overseeing the agreed process of appraisal of the Chair and Trustees was added</li> <li>- The word 'Board' was capitalised</li> <li>- In Appendix III: Key additional duties for the Vice-Chair (iv) Overseeing the agreed process of appraisal of the Chair was added</li> </ul> <p>SST will add these changes to the handbook and circulate an updated version.</p>	SST
11/15/02	<b>The Board appointed</b> Alan Brine as a BHA representative to the RE Council in place of Lisa Rønsholt.	
12/15	<u>Strategy</u>	
12/15/01	<p><b>The Board resolved</b> that the previous Reserves Policy (currently in BHA FP4) be replaced as follows:</p> <p><i>The Trustees consider that the level of financial reserves that the BHA should hold should be sufficient to:</i></p>	

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>allow the Association to continue its work in the event of a temporary downturn in income streams. An obvious concern might be an absence of any legacy income for a few years which, while we deliberately don't budget for legacy income, may restrict a number of activities from being undertaken;</i></li> <li>2. <i>take advantage of an unforeseen opportunity; an item of news, for example, which could trigger a publicity campaign;</i></li> <li>3. <i>meet an unforeseen need; a legal challenge, for example, or default by a major creditor;</i></li> <li>4. <i>provide financial protection for the trustees. Incorporated charities, such as BHA, are subject to insolvency law. Should an insolvency arise and it can be shown that the trustees allowed the Association to continue to trade, when it should have been apparent that there was little prospect of it being able to meet its liabilities, then they could be deemed personally liable for a proportion of the Association's debts.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>The Trustees consider that a reserve expressed in terms of equivalent monthly expenditure meets all the above contingencies and also, in being expressed proportionately, takes account of the change in size of the Association. The reserves policy is therefore for an upper limit of three month's expenditure and a lower limit of two month's expenditure.</i></p>	
12/15/02	<b>Two members of the Board opposed</b> this resolution because they believed the limit too low.	
12/15/03	<b>The Board noted</b> that if income continues similarly to 2015Q1, AC might bring new budget to the Board half way through year. The BHA could certainly invest heavily in various areas of our work, experimenting with different areas that would provide a return on this investment.	
12/15/04	<b>The Board received</b> a report from AC on relations with the Humanist Society of Scotland. The HSS Board has unfortunately declined to note the Heads of Agreement proposed at their May Board meeting. In a follow up call from their Chair, they made clear that they did not want to participate in this level of cooperation at this moment in time, but that a conversation could be had with their Chief Executive about future collaboration.	
12/15/05	<b>The Board agreed</b> that the BHA should continue to operate across our range of ordinary programs and activities in Scotland on the same basis that we operate in England and Wales. This includes providing relevant services to respond to our member's needs there in a reactive (not proactive) manner. No organizational development activities will be undertaken in Scotland until a strategy paper has been presented for discussion at the August Board meeting by AC but HSS would be made aware of the BHA's present intentions.	
12/15/06	<b>The Board noted</b> the following e-mail sent by AC to BHA staff and Board members regarding the post-election situation:	

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	<p><i>Dear All,</i></p> <p><i>Now that the new Parliament is confirmed, some of you have already asked me what it means for the BHA. Since the next staff meeting is not for a while, I wanted to email you about this. The nature of the new Government and Parliament will also form an important part of the context for our next staff away day, when we will be spending time together discussing our strategy for the next five years. This is just one of the ways in which staff and board members will be working to meet the challenges that the election result has delivered.</i></p> <p><i>There is no disguising the fact that the result is extremely disappointing for us in terms of the new Parliament's position on our issues. The increase in the number of Conservative and SNP MPs and the drop in the number of Labour and Lib Dem MPs has significantly decreased the favourability of the Commons towards us. We have also lost great stalwarts of the Parliamentary Humanist Group and some of our best humanist activists in the House of Commons - especially in Scotland. The fact that the Conservative Party has a majority in the Commons also means that they have formed the Government, and - as you will know - their manifesto and policies are the least favourable to our positions.</i></p> <p><i>But lobbying in Parliament is not the only way we can achieve policy changes. We have a chance in the next few years to pursue many of our issues through legal action, as in the case of assisted dying and Humanism on the curriculum. We will also continue our extra-parliamentary work on scrutinising and bringing to regulatory and public attention outrages like unfair school admissions and holding the government to account. We also shouldn't underestimate the possibility that some individual ministers may turn out to be friendly to us, even if the flavour of the Government as a whole is not, nor that there may be individual MPs we do not yet know who will turn out to be supportive.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, it's worth remembering that, although the Parliament of the last five years was certainly more favourable to us than this new one, the Government of the last five years was not particularly more so. Nonetheless the BHA has thrived in that time, increasing our number of members, our number of ceremonies, and our number of local groups. We've expanded the quality and extent of our events programme. We've also established whole new streams of work like our pastoral support programme and our community based sections. We've been able to do this because we're not just an advocacy group concerned with influencing public policy, but a social and cultural movement. This will of course continue whatever the Government and it is even sometimes the case that people become even more convinced of our necessity and importance when they see their own worldview embattled by government policy and the attitudes of those in power.</i></p> <p><i>One of the most notable developments in the BHA over recent years has been the development of an exceptional staff team - all of you! - and so I know that whatever challenges we do now face, we have never been better equipped to meet them.</i></p> <p><i>Cheers,</i> <i>Andrew</i></p> <p><i>P.S. Specifically (because you may get asked about it specifically) none of the three parties that were committed to legal recognition for humanist marriage are in a position to</i></p>	



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	<i>deliver that. We will now await the report of the Law Commission report into this matter to see what our next steps on that campaign will be. There is always hope!</i>	
13/15	<u>Presentation from Head of Education</u>  <b>The Board received</b> a presentation from Lisa Rønsholt on developments within her departments over the past year.	
	<u>Date of the next Meeting</u>  <b>BHA AGM, 11 July 2015</b> at Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH  <b>BHA Board of Trustees Meeting on 1 August 2015 11.00-15.40</b> , at 39 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB	