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## MINUTES

**BFS Executive Meeting**

**5 January 2022**

**Zoom**

**10:00 – 15:00**

**Attendees:**

**President:** Alison Murdoch

**Executive Officers:** Raj Mathur (Chair), Kevin McEleny (Secretary), Marta Jansa Perez (Treasurer)

**Elected:** Uma Gordon, Mostafa Metwally, Harish Bhandari, Mark Wilcox, Bryan Woodward, Ippokratis Sarris, Angela Pericleous- Smith, Matt Noble, Yvonne Wedden, Debbie Evans, John Parrington, Annabel Rattos

**Co-opted:** Stuart Lavery, Jacky Boivin, Yadava Jevé, Matthew Prior

**Observers:** Gwenda Burns (FNUK), Adam Balen (FEI), Melanie Davies (FP), Sarah Norcross (PET and LPE), Allan Pacey (Human Fertility), Mark Hamilton (Chair of Trustees), Kate Brian (RCOG Women's Voices)

**Invited:** Richard Lea (SRF), Jackson Kirkman-Brown (ARCS), Rachel Cutting (HFEA), Clare Ettinghausen (HFEA)

**Apologies: Melanie Davies**

**1. Executive Committee membership**

Next vacancy October 2022 when YW first term comes to and end. YW can stand again.

**Action: CB to advertise the position in August 2022**

**2. Membership:**

**a) Membership numbers**

As per report.

**b) Lapsed & cancelled members**

**Action: Exec members to check if they know any and remind them to renew**

**c) Honorary members**

Not being awarded this year.

Henry Leese does not wish to be recognised.

Honorary members will be awarded in 2023.

Allan Pacey will be given Honorary Membership next year.



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**d) Membership categories & rules**

These are now in place.

**Action: Profile to make sure that all new members sent to Exec have full information**

**e) Membership working group**

As above.

**Action: Remove from the agenda as a standing item.**

**3. Website update & tender**

Annabel Rattos has joined the website working party. Time so far has been spent deciding on a logo, nearly at a stage to share with wider Executive Committee. Should have some short listed logos to share by the end of January.

Archive. Need to ensure the website forms an archive for the BFS. Minutes, newsletters, meetings, eponymous speakers

Discussion as to whether this should be publicly accessible or mediated access through the society. Discussion around accessibility of content. SN suggested perhaps two fold – some protected for a certain period of time e.g. 5 years. JB supports open access. KM supports mediated access. SL supports open access. BW expressed caution at having all documents open access in case of legal challenges.

MH: Minutes will be shared on the website from now on, this was agreed recently in the new Articles. Caution advised but shares the desire for transparency.

**Action: CB to put historical minutes from Jan 2021 to date on the website**

AM: HFEA – discussion about the openness of their decisions. Difficult for us to ask them to be open, if we are not.

SN: The Wellcome Trust would be interested in the BFS archival content too, if we wish to have a contact there ask SN.

YJ: Suggested a separate cloud storage system. MP: the new website should be able to serve as an archive meaning no need for extra cloud storage. MP: Absolutely essential that an archive is part of the new BFS website. Should be able to decide on mediated access and some open access on the new website. RM agrees this is preferable as keeps our costs down.

RM: Do we have the resources to manage things being 'open'.

AP: work to do to specify what our archive consists of. AP happy to create this.

**Action: RM to make contact with the Wellcome Trust.**



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**AP to create list of archive content**



#### 4. Media & PR Update

Nothing to update.

#### 5. Newsletter

Roughly 1/3 opened.

Suggestions for content:

- Mentee/Mentors to write for the Newsletter.
- BFS Exec members volunteering to write for the newsletter in place of RM.
- Summary of Fertility 2022 in January newsletter.

**Action: Executive to think of new names for a newsletter and send to CB**

**CB to ensure recipients of travel grants write a report for the newsletter**

**SL to write about Fertility 2022.**

**DE to write a mentorship article with her mentee**

#### 6. Mentorship Programme

Keeps steadily growing. 25 pairs. 12 doctors, 8 scientists, 5 nurses.

MJP would like to hear from the mentors as to whether their meetings are regular.

Discussion around the 2 year period – suggested that pairs review during their mentorship, reflect before the end of the 2 year period and help people concentrate on what they want to achieve.

**Action: Mentors to update MJP with how mentorship is going**

#### 7. Trustees & Governance update

- Trustee minutes

Shared

- **Articles of association**

These will be approved at the AGM and then put on the website.

Encouraged all Executive members to read the Articles.

Reminder that all Executive members are Directors.

Trustees have been updating Governance Documents. These are on the website – encourage all Executive Members to read these.



Allan Pacey steps down as a Trustee in April 2022. There will be a position available for a Trustee.

RM: Note of thanks to the Trustees, and in particular to Mark Hamilton for the huge amount of work in creating the new Articles which form a solid foundation for the Society.

**Action: If any Executive member has a suggestion for a replacement for AP please email MH**

## 8. Journal update

As per report.

2021 – 330 submissions. Almost exactly the same as for 2019, stabilised from the peak in 2020.

Do Fertility submissions get published in Human Fertility? If so AP needs the file asap. Copy deadline is 7.01.

**Action: SL to discuss with JEC**

Volume 25 of the Journal is published this year – Henry Leese and Allan Pacey have written a piece describing the history of the journal.

In anticipation of needing to appoint a successor for AP, AP has included the previous expression of interest in his report. This needs some editing. We need to send out for this appointment and to decide if we wish to follow the same method as before.

KM reported that the Officers have met with Taylor and Francis. The cost of the journal to the Society is large - £35k and it makes sense to go to an open access format as the income is only between 5 and 8k. The contract means we need to give a year's notice otherwise it rolls for another 3 years. Therefore notice has been given and will use that year to negotiate the terms of open access, a possible stipend for the EIC and possibly some editorial waivers, only 7% come from the UK.

RM commented that the publishers seem to prefer open access, additionally it is good for people who read the journal as there is no barrier to anyone accessing it, and it is good for the philosophy of open science. The disadvantage is that people have to pay to publish. There are however possibilities for waivers of fees for BFS members. There are also discounts for submissions from less developed countries.

We can't afford to ignore the financial implications which will save the BFS £35k a year.

JB: will there be any monitoring of what is being put into the Journal – the disciplines being put into the Journal. AP agreed that this can be done.

RM: if we see the journal going in a way we do not like, is there any going back on this decision. To be discussed with the publisher.

MM: People outside the UK will have other options which are cheaper/free – we need to monitor this change and be sure there is a way to come back from it. Make sure there is an element of reversibility and period of monitoring, look at what our submission rates are and where they are coming from.

MJP: It will cost about £2.5k to publish a paper in the journal - we can negotiate favourable rates for members. If from a less developed country, lower rates which are negotiable. Small percentage of papers at the moment are UK based, just 7%.

JB: The people disadvantaged will be more junior staff. It would be good to set our threshold the same as universities threshold so that they get free open access. JB will try to find this out.

SN: Have a clear policy for all the discounts/waivers etc. Needs to be clear, simple, visible on the website.

RM: How do we progress this and tie this in with the next Editor coming in? AP: the new Editor should be central to these discussions and be in place before this is cast in stone. Timelines however are somewhat compressed as notice has been given. Therefore AP assumes this takes effect from Issue 16, therefore we need gates open for Open Access from July/August this year. He anticipates no change in editorial process because of this.

Need to advertise for new EIC asap in this case.

AP: The BFS need to have Open Access in place by July/August 2022.

MM: is it worthwhile engaging with journals that have made this change, and learn from their experience and what they have done.

RM: how do we find out which journals have gone open access. MM: not just open access but also changing publishers if we have given notice. There must be experience we can learn from.

JB shared a list of journals that have changed to open access. MH: Suggested talking to Professor S Bhattacharya.

Member of the editorial committee to be appointed to oversee the appointment of the new editor in chief. Jane Denton suggested.

**Action: AP to update the job description and send to RM for dissemination.**

**RM to contact JD to ask if she will oversee the appointment of new editor-in-chief**



## 9. Finance update

### a) Quarterly report

As per report

**Action: CB to remove “Merck” from notes as they are not the only sponsor.  
CB to chase RCOG payment.**

### b) Sponsorship

Officers have met with sponsors to thank them and discuss packages going forwards and to ask them for feedback on current packages.

## 10. Strategy & Development:

### a) Planning

Nothing to report

### b) Royal Charter

The RCVS are supportive

### c) Sub-Committees

## 11. Meetings:

### a) Fertility 2022

Thank you to all for a successful pivot online.

### b) Planning Fertility 2023

Discussion around Belfast as a venue.

## 12. Training:

### a) Study Week 2021 & 2022

Study Week 2021 has been hugely successful. Particular mention to Nursing and GP study days and the leads on those for making them so successful.

PGT – needs to be the main focus as numbers have fallen for the last few years.

PR day – meeting with the HFEA – agreed to continue collaborating with this. Thanks to Clare and Rachel. Ideas from the HFEA will be taken to the training committee.

General direction for training committee: room for expansion on new modules but not in the current ‘virtual’ climate.

Discussion needed as to whether 2022 should be virtual or in person. Decision taken to be virtual.

MM reached out to overseas centres – waiting on responses.

IFFS collaboration: credit to Mark Hamilton. BFS & IFFS to collaborate and the BFS will be a partner in Global Education.

Formal ratification of this approach was given.



Masterclass: cancelled for 2022 as cannot run virtually. Hopefully will run in Belfast in 2023.

**b) Training Committee update**

Fantastic involvement from new members on the Committee.

The TC has just reached out to the wider membership regarding leads on the PU and CMF modules. These applications will be considered at the next TC meeting at the end of January.

**c) Joint BFS/RCOG course**

Virtual again for 2022.

**d) IFFS**

As above and report.

**13. Policy & Practice**

Oocyte cryopreservation. Please send feedback to Harish by 21.01.

**Action: CB to share the guideline again with the Exec**

ICSI – HB has asked the GDG Lead if this can be condensed at all and suggested it be made into two documents rather than one long document.

Thromboprophylaxis for ovarian stimulation during assisted conception: Final meeting happened mid-December. 1<sup>st</sup> draft should be ready in a few weeks.

Assessment and optimisation of medical conditions to fertility treatment – first draft should be ready in spring.

Management of women with endometriosis – first draft should be ready spring/summer

Extended carrier screening – progressing well

IUI - progressing well

UK Maternal Cardiac Society have requested BFS support for a joint best practice guidance on 'care for women with existing cardiac disease or risk factors for cardiac disease, seeking assisted conception treatment' - Two BFS representatives have been nominated - Dr Jyotsna Pundir and Dr Meenakshi Choudhary

**a. Joint BFS/RCOG policy**

A proposal was received from Dr B Watter, SST at UCLH for developing a joint RCOG / BFS green-top guidelines on 'antenatal and intrapartum care of women following assisted conception' - agreed, but HB to clarify with the authors if this will be a RCOG green-top guideline with BFS endorsement or a joint RCOG/BFS guidance.



**b. When your baby dies before birth**

Not discussed

**c. SIGs**

**a. SIG governance**

SIGs are a part of the BFS and as such are subject to SIG governance rules. The term that is envisaged for a SIG Chair is 3 years, extendable for 3 years with the agreement of the BFS Executive Officers.

SIGs that were in existence prior to introduction of the Governance rules – the Officers are liaising with the Chairs of these SIGs to ensure they are in line with the governance.

**b. Fertility Preservation UK**

No update

**c. Fertility Education Initiative**

Male animations together with the Andrology SIG are now completed.

International FEI set up with ESHRE.

Who decides which resources are put on SIG websites? Do we have a procedure for this?

**Action: JB to send to MH and officers**

**d. Andrology**

4 videos ready. Will be launched at Fertility.

Varicoceles – please respond to that survey. Only 54 responses. Please can it be sent to the BAUS group.

Next project is on information sheets. Next meeting 25.01.

**Action: Chase Marc Lucky to send to BAUS group. UG to send link so it can be tweeted**

**e. Law, Policy & Ethics**

Renewal of the Act will be discussed at the next meeting in January.

**d. HFEA Update**

1. COVID - no change to our current position - clinics stay open unless local decisions mean shortage of staff etc - have not indicated this is happening. Scotland different – treatment paused by Scottish government for unvaccinated patients until February. We will clarify understanding of compulsory vaccinations for healthcare workers as soon as we can.
2. Inspections carrying on as hybrid. We will review April to whether we go back to unannounced (depends on pandemic).
3. Work continues on planning for 2023
4. Shared motherhood – ongoing active discussions with DHSC
5. Patient survey - over 1200 responses - will compare to last one in 2018 and also further info e.g. on patient experience with GPs, multiple births etc - publication late spring together with all the underlying data



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6. Ethnic diversity in fertility treatment - 2 workshops - working group of LCP members - Bryan Woodward from BFS exec  
We have pencilled in dates for an early March workshop on donor availability and multiple births, and an early June one on success rates and access to treatment.
7. Law modernisation - speech on at Fertility 2022 following up the PET speech - look forward to engaging with BFS and SIG on this. Hope to get consensus on as many issues as possible.
8. SCAAC new member recruitment – areas of interest below – will be advertised in Clinic Focus and on social media.
  - Clinical embryology with special interest in research
  - Research and statistical methodology
  - Artificial intelligence or future technology
  - Developmental genetics
9. Government vision for women's health - Note throughout, mention of fertility, for example, in relation to inequality of funding, availability of information including on success rates, awareness from GPs and level of concern for 30-39 year olds.



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## 17. External Meetings:

### a) RCOG World Congress

13-15 June 2022 in London. It is planned to be a hybrid meeting.

4 talks allocated to BFS

RM wants to maintain gender equality so 2 female/2 male speakers.

Looking for an international female speaker on POI if anyone has any suggestions.

Currently have Adam Balen/Yacoub Khalaf/Cindy Farquharson.

### b) RCOG PD Conference

Happened 23 November online. Meant to be hybrid but there were so few people registering for f2f, it was turned 100% online.

Very well attended and received. 260 delegates.

The BFS stream had excellent feedback.

**Action: If you can think of a speaker please email Uma directly.  
If any clinicians wish to mark abstracts for the RCOG there is a big call for it.**

## 18. Relationships with other organisations:

### a) Associated Fertility Societies

Nothing to report

### b) FNUK/Fertility Fairness

Held National Fertility Awareness week. Very successful.

Also looked at how covid affected Fertility treatment and the impact it has had.

Very well received globally.

Big thank you to everybody who helped FNUK during the week.

Busier than ever with "Fertility in the workplace" initiative. Pleased to be working with some great companies e.g. Lloyds, Unilever, Transport for London, Ernst and Young. Companies can see it is good for business as well as employees.

New England coordinator starting next week.

Clinic ambassador scheme going well – it's designed to be a bridge between the Charity and clinics. Please can clinics ensure they have an ambassador to sign up – so that we can work together to improve patient experience.

Working with North Central London – the new merged CCG. Positive to see that they are looking at providing 3 fresh cycles, with a maximum of 6 embryo transfers. Not quite what NICE recommend but better than we had hoped. Continue to work closely with other CCGs.

Webinar programme is going very well. Thank you to everyone who has taken part.



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- c) **NHS England**  
Nothing to report
- d) **Dept of Health**  
Nothing to report
- e) **PET**

**Really good feedback on the annual conference.**

26<sup>th</sup> Jan – Global perspective on Add ons

9<sup>th</sup> February – Prioritising patient safety - this may be postponed as it's being funded by Scottish Government.

PET has it's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year so will be doing lots of things to celebrate including post-April a number of events looking at a number of hot topics within the Act to discuss and debate.

**19. BFS Representation on other committees:**

- a) **IFFS**  
As above – regarding collaboration with Training Committee.
- b) **RCOG Council, SST & Liaison committees**  
No update  
SST committee – new representative – Yadava Jevu.  
Liaison committee - Change this to IS as representative.  
RCOG Council – Adam Balen. No update.
- c) **NQAAP**  
No update
- d) **ESHRE**  
Arianna d'Angelo is happy to be our representative and attend BFS meetings and feedback to us.
- e) **RMCSG**  
No update  
Thanks to RM – gave facilitation for the CSG to have a stand at Fertility. Hope that this invitation extends to Belfast.
- f) **NCO (National Casemix Office)**  
No update.  
This is now being covered by Jyotsna Pundir in place of Harish Bhandari

**AOB:**

- **Covid-19**

Was hoping to have an updated version of the vaccine FAQ but this has not yet been received.

**Action: RM to chase Dr Lisa Webber Teoh for updated guidance, or look at alternative**

- **Revising the Act**

Julia Chain is looking at revising the Act asap.

Within the next weeks/months, AM suggests a small group of people should come together to discuss next steps.

SN: need a meeting with the Exec, or a small sub group of the Exec, before the next Exec. The HFEA are going to present something that is a consensus before the end of this year.

**Action: document from AM will be circulated to the Exec. Please send any feedback to SN so this can be fed into the SIG meeting at the end of Jan.**

**SN: will talk to the DOH to check timescales**



- **Viruses in donor semen**

Discussion took place around the paper filed. Can we draft a position statement in the next few months? BW happy to work with new SABTO rep.

**Action point: AM will pass this to the new SABTO rep**

- **Joint funded PhD Centre for Reproduction Research**

This came up at the last AFS meeting. The idea of having a joint funded PhD. Slightly difficult for BFS to fund this. Probably more aligned to the SRF aims than our own.

Decision made to watch this space.

- **ARCS365**

A series of monthly webinars. Would there be an appetite amongst BFS to do similar and may be an appetite among sponsors? JB: would you have the number of people ready to do the talks? KM/RM: let's wait and see how ARCS goes. JB: maybe when the new website is up.

- **Jobs board**

New initiative. You can advertise any job you have – it is emailed to the membership and included in the newsletter. Extra income for the Society.

- **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

How to mark it? Plan an in person event in the course of this year. RM preference to be an event in London – a lecture, followed by a reception for 100 pax.

YW: Party in the park? Marquee?

Could hold a large party at Fertility 2023.

Have an event for a small section and then a larger event for the membership.

BW: how about an event in Scotland/Ireland/Wales?

Any founder members still alive? Howard Jacobs? Ian Cooke?

Need AP's archive.

**Action: Send ideas to RM**

**Dates of 2022 meetings:**

**Weds 27 April - zoom**

**Tuesday 21 June - Manchester**

**Monday 17 October - zoom**