

Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps Online AGM 28th July 2021
The full video record of this meeting can be seen at <https://www.guildofmaster-chimneysweeps.co.uk/video-presentation-agm-2021/>

Meeting Agenda

- Finances
- Various developments that effect how we work as an organisation
- Training and course information
- Guild website developments
- Marketing and advertising update
- Update on the Federation of British Chimney Sweeps
- Guild industry activities
- Guild culture, identity, ambition and future plans
- Vote on special resolution for company nomination, election and voting procedures
- Any other business

Introduction from Lawson Wight - Chair

This is our first online AGM. Its purpose is to provide a company meeting and report on aspects of the Guild business since our last AGM in March 2020. As a trade association, we are a not-for-profit private limited company, we have our own set of company rules – the company articles of association. This means there are no shareholders and that any profits need to be reinvested to the benefit of the members and the wider sweeping industry. All activities that we undertake must provide benefits in this respect and the board of directors are legally bound to serve this requirement within the company rules.

We haven't been made aware of any matter arising from the previous AGM minutes and the board have moved to accept them.

Steven Howard - Technical Director

It is sad not to be able to have our trade show and meet in person at this time. Since lockdown last year, the directors have met weekly online, for which they waived their fees. We have had more time to get through a lot of topics and we have supplied the right information to our members through this time. As a team we have worked together much better, with greater levels on communication. Steven thanked his fellow directors and Nina for the support they have given at this time. He thanked Lawson for steering the Guild in the right direction. Steven said we are already planning next year's trade show and AGM when we can all meet up again.

Gavin Cater - Director and Trainer

During the time of lockdown, we held weekly meeting online and a new operating system for company business was set up. This allows the board to work more effectively as a team. Gavin and John Stone altered the Refresher course so it could be delivered online. Over 50 members have attended this course online in the past year. They also updated and delivered the Masterful Chimney Sweeping Course. Gavin has been lead trainer on 3 courses and now also works as an assessor. Gavin thanked companies who support the Guild by providing new equipment for candidates to use on our training course, Rod Station, Rodtech, Advanced Chimney cameras, Wakefield Brush and Tamar Brush have all donated equipment. Gavin, John and Dave held an online onsite trainers and mentors meeting to bring in new members to the onsite trainers programme. He would like to thank the onsite trainers for all their help during this most difficult year.

John Stone - Scotland Director and Trainer

In Scotland they have seen a sharp increase in demand for services from our members. He worked on updating and providing the Refresher course online and the feedback responses have been very positive. There has also been significant work on updating the chimney sweeping manual. There have been two masterful sweeping course in Scotland this year with a rotary sweeping element added in. These took place in a new centre in Aberdeen. In December representatives of the Guild, National Association of chimney sweeps, BurnRight, the federation of British Chimney sweeps and Chimney Skills Training were asked to join in a consultation by the Scottish government regarding emissions and the environment which has had positive results and we have been invited onto various working groups to advise Getting status for sweeps as industry experts is being acknowledged in Scotland. The Scottish Guild membership now makes up 10% of the entire Guild membership with over 40 qualified members.

Dave Wooffindin - Training Director and Treasurer

David said the decision to move all administrative procedures online has been invaluable in the current circumstances and thanked Lawson for driving the change. Financial report: the Guilds finances remain healthy, balance sheet available and any other information can be obtained by sending an email to info@guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk.

Training has proved challenging and in the first part of the pandemic many courses had to be cancelled, but the Guild have still managed to provide training online and eventually in person with extra precautions in place as required. Thanks to the onsite trainers who continued to help the Guild through this time, especially Gavin Cater and John Stone.

Lawson Wight - Chairman Director

The Guild can currently meet all its financial commitments. The board had weekly meetings during first lockdown and waived all fees, adding significant value for members. Many thanks to board for their commitment at a very difficult time. We took the opportunity to introduce a new administration system during lockdown and the changeover was managed

successfully. Every administrative procedure including advertising and promotions, communications and website updates is now more efficient, more accurate and more secure and cheaper. The new admin has proved a great success and will add value to every task undertaken. During the first lockdown, we concentrated on back to work advice for our members and this proved to be the industry standard for many, providing a sound guidance at a time of great uncertainty. We introduced brand new permanent online advertising to generate work opportunities for the membership as they got back to work last summer.

Website development and promotion is having a massive effect on visitor numbers to findchimneysweep.co.uk. The site was completely re-coded in 2018 with the aim of becoming the top visited chimney sweeping directory site. We have made further coding updates in 2021. Alongside the new developments we make constant site updates, we post engaging consumer content, we use effective Facebook advertising and online Adwords advertising to drive visitors. Pre-pandemic in 2019 we achieved a 30% increase in visitors. However, by June 2021 we'd seen a massive 115% increase in traffic compared to the same period last year. The Sweep Search has been improved to be even more mobile phone friendly, with a 'Show sweeps near me' box, and there's a new map view feature to make it even more user friendly. The new member profile features are well worth adopting – see your emails or search 'Profile' on the website. I encourage members to update their profile. The 'Tips & Advice' section contains many items you can use / share on your pages. Many of the newer changes are only just bedding in, so we predict even better results going forward.

The Trade website guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk continues to offer the best platform in the industry for association information and news. Once again, we are very active in keeping it updated and fresh. The 'Latest News' the digital 'Sweep Stuff Magazine', all the training info and the Trade Partners sections all contain a wealth of business and technical information and the links to help you. Latest news has multiple useful articles and links. The search box is the best route to find anything in particular.

Marketing the Guild as an organization to both consumers and to the industry is going very well. Our investment in the foundations is really paying and the good results will continue.

The Federation of British Chimney Sweeps represents 80% of the sweeping industry. It has given sweeps a voice to communicate with government and other industry bodies and helped us promote the trade, improve standards and make good relationships. The Federation promotes environmental issues and a review of National Occupational Standards. This review will define the role of a professional sweep and secure the sweeping industry as a distinct trade.

Guild directors have been working with DEFRA and SEPA on their air quality working groups, both as the Guild and through the Federation and Burnright. It is very important that we engage with government on these matters as we see sweeps as the best route to improving consumer awareness of efficient burning.

Lawson thanked all those who had helped the running of the Guild over the last year.

There was a special resolution vote to adopt new Nomination, Voting and Election procedures into the Guild Articles of Association. The vote was carried with 96% voting for the resolution.

No other business was received. Lawson Wight thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

List of Attendees

Brooke Mason, Colin Unwin, Darren Cooke, Darren Hallam, David Barrott, David Sudworth, David Wooffindin, Emma Roddy, Frank Diment, GARY CRINGLES, Gary Nicol, Gavin Cater, Glenn Howat, Ian Cooke, James Hughes, Jethro Vivian, John Eardley, John Stone, Julian Raffe, Lawson Wight, Les Bowering, Maria Smith, Mark Ellis, Mike Petryszyn, Neil Scott, Peter Stubbings, Russell Peace, Steve Borrowdale, Steven Howard, Tim Sumner, Tony Lavin, Trevor Nippress