

Local Groups Weekend Report

Attendees Ian Glen and Julian Pursey

Date: 18/11/2022 - 20/11/2022

Throughout the Local Groups weekend there were many discussions, both formal and informal. These will be summarised by the organisers in a fairly lengthy document, alongside formal meeting minutes.

Meantime, C&D delegates have highlighted some topics from the weekend which might be of immediate interest to C&D members:

- **Vacant Officer Posts:** there are vacancies coming soon on the NEC for Treasurer, Environment and Membership. (Because SIEntries will be taking over a lot of the administration involved in Membership, this post should be less onerous than at present).
- **Volunteering:** There are also 15 different opportunities to support the NEC in support roles. Such as several IT, and a volunteer support officer for volunteering support officers!
- **Bequest:** LDWA have had a bequest of £100,000 from Martin Greaves, a Sussex group member. The decision has been taken for it to be ring fenced, and likely grant-distributed to local groups for starting or reviving Challenge walks. An email will be coming out asking for proposals.
- **New Membership System:** at the end of Q1 2023, our membership system will switch to SIEntries. This is in fact the first phase of the redevelopment of our IT System
- **IT Development Project:** around the same time, a volunteer team will be drawing up the tender documents for replacement of the entire IT system (having said that, the entire project will certainly extend into 2024). The fund currently stands at around £140,000.

- **Comms:** we have a new, enthusiastic communications officer (Matt). He will be willing to advise C&D on any initiatives we might have to better market ourselves across our area.
- **Data Analysis:** a data analyst (Poppy) has started working with the NEC. [Her first report](#) has been posted on the toolkit and makes interesting reading. Some highlights: C&D have one of the highest proportions of female members across all groups (~42%); C&D have done well to restart their Challenge events post COVID. We can actually put questions to Poppy directly and she may well analyse the data for us. We could ask for example “how has the average age of our members changed over the last 10 years?” or “over each of the past 5 years, how many of our members have failed to renew their membership?”
- **IT Support:** as of now, if we have any issues with the current website (eg failure of bulk email service) details need to be emailed to LDWAITManager@LDWA.org.uk
- **Meetup:** [C&D Meetup Group](#) have certainly had more success attracting Meetup people than other LDWA groups (some of whom have chosen not to renew their subscription). However, because we do not know how many Meetup people have actually converted to become C&D members, we should probably start trying to to maintain a count of all non LDWA members attending walks
- **Insurance:** all members are covered by LDWA insurance when taking part in social or group walks. This also includes when conducting a recce of a route prior to the actual walk. (The crucial thing with the recce is to register it beforehand as you would a social walk, then type RECCE after the walk title - that will prevent it getting into Strider or on to the website. Any potential claims will not be considered if the walk is registered retrospectively.
- **Food Handling:** there were lengthy discussions regarding food safety (allergies and food handling - see “Natasha’s Law) specifically on Challenge Walks (For example: is sufficient allergy advice provided for homemade food at checkpoints?). The NEC will fund two members of each local group to obtain a basic food handlers certificate, the idea being that they will then pass on the information around the group. The course is online and takes about an hour. The cost is £14 per person should additional members wish to take part.

There is also an allergy awareness course along the same lines except the NEC will fund an unlimited number of entrants per local group.

- **Expenses:** there were also lengthy discussions regarding the payment of expenses to members. Probably the only consistent view was that the NEC should at minimum issue guidelines for payment of expenses
- **GPX Files:** groups who are diligent about uploading GPX files of their walks onto the LDWA system (Northumbria, East Lancs, West Lancs, West Yorks) anecdotally have reported a significant increase in the number of hits to their website. [Instructions are here.](#)
- **New Strider:** in addition to the paper Strider and the online version there will be a new electronic type 'Strider' with different content,
- **Special Interest Groups** have now been set up ([Pubs and Beer Group](#) - thanks Tim - and [History Group](#)). They should soon be included on the List of Local Groups on the LDWA website. There may be other specialist groups starting up: geology and wildflowers were suggested.
- **Rights of Way Issues:** as part of the LDWA Toolkit, there is now a [guidance note](#) for blocked/overgrown footpaths.
- **2023 AGM** will be at the Mercure Abbots Well in Chester on Sunday 12th March. Walks will be led by Merseystride and the evening talk will be given by John Pucknell who has walked the E4 route from Spain to Cyprus (whilst getting through six pairs of boots).

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