

**LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION DORSET GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021 - MINUTES (draft)**

Durweston Village Hall 2.30pm Sunday 28 November 2021

Members present:

Wayne Bartlett, Kathy Bingham, Anne Brown, Ian Brown, Richard Brown, Sandra Brown, Martin Callow, Mike Childs, Rachel Christopher, Pat Clifton, Peter Cowlyn, Patricia Dashwood, Deirdre Flegg, Joan Fox, Angela Gray, Richard Lang, Tracey Lang, Kim Legg, George Legg, Alan Mattison, Steve Mayne, Debbie Murphy, Keith Nicholson, Chris Pitt, Robert Powell, Diane Ruffle, Pete Stockley, Ted Tupling, Colin Utting, John Widdowson, Sue Widdowson.

1. Chair's welcome

Chris Pitt welcomed everyone to the meeting, commenting that he had not seen some members for a while. He then thanked Robert Powell for leading the walk in the morning and Deirdre Flegg and her team for the preparing and serving a great lunch.

2. Apologies for absence

Heather N Giles, Sue Phillips, Brian Taylor, Jan Williams

3. AGM 2020 (online) - approval of minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes for the AGM 2020 (online)

Proposed: Martin Callow; Seconded: Peter Cowlyn

The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. AGM 2020 (online) - matters arising

Chris Pitt commented that the Dorset Duddle had not been run this year, due to ongoing uncertainty caused by the Covid pandemic. This meant that £500 had been donated from group funds to Cancer Research UK in accordance with motion 6 from the AGM 2020. Which was: *To grant approval to rename the 2021 Dorset Duddle 'The Bill Peach Dorset Duddle' and gift the event surplus to Bill's nominated cancer charity, Cancer Research UK. Should the event fail to make a surplus of at least £500, or should the event be cancelled, the group will make up the shortfall from group funds.*

5. Reports from officers

- Group Secretary (Pat Clifton)

Pat Clifton explained that she was unable to give the usual statistics, regarding the group membership, because the LDWA website was temporarily closed due to a Cyber-attack that had occurred on Saturday 27 Nov. She agreed to obtain the numbers, once the website was running again, and add them as an appendix to these minutes.

Pat went on to say that there had been a total of 6 committee meetings since the last AGM, the first in Dec 2020 and the rest spread throughout 2021. There had also been an open meeting on 14 Sep 2021 to discuss how to get more support for the committee and fill the posts due to become vacant at this AGM. All meetings had been held online, which generally worked well, and the current committee had been happy to continue that way.

- Events Secretary (Richard Lang)

Richard Lang said that it had been a very quiet year, with the only event being The Cerne Giant Anytime Challenge. For this there had been 74 entries, 41 of whom had submitted their results. A small profit had been made. He went on to comment that it was now over 2 years since the group had run a full challenge event.

- Walks Secretary (Anne Brown)

A PowerPoint presentation was given by Anne Brown, including some lovely pictures of group walks. She included the following:

- There had been 43 social walks since the last AGM, despite more than 3 months of lock-down. These were mainly at weekends with a total mileage of 707 miles.
- The midweek walks, which are still taking place, are no longer LDWA walks. Anne said this is a matter of regret and she would be happy if anyone wished to resurrect some official LDWA walks midweek.
- A further 11 walks, which would have added a further 172 miles to the total, had to be cancelled or postponed.
- 14 members volunteered to lead at least one walk, none of whom were new to the group. Some walks were run more than once due to the restriction on numbers as we came out of lockdown.
- Starting points for the walks were spread throughout Dorset.

Anne then went to mention the 4-day trip to Snowdonia, organised for the group by Colin Utting, and she thanked Colin for doing so.

In addition Anne thanked the walk leaders and said that 14 new members had come on at least one walk over the last year and numbers on social walks were now getting up to about 20, so the future was looking bright.

Peter Cowlyn proposed that thanks to Anne should be recorded and this was seconded by Martin Callow.

- Treasurer (Robert Powell)

Robert Powell stated that his task was to report on the accounts for the year ended the 30th of September 2021, the figures for which were shown on the screen at the meeting.

Robert went on to cover the following points:

- Thanks to Colin Utting for his inspection of this year's annual accounts and confirming that they are a true and accurate record of our financial dealings. The matter of the Examiner of the Accounts for the current year will come up next under item 8 on the agenda.
- The accounts show that Group funding decreased by £823 in the year to £9,595.
- The only challenge event that the Group was able to hold was the Cerne Giant Anytime Challenge, from which a surplus of £150 arose.
- There were two main payments during the year. One was a donation of £500 to Cancer Research UK in respect of the memory of Bill Peach, while the other was a £400 contribution to the Group trip to Wales.

No questions were put to Robert when he asked if there were any.

Robert then went on to say that, in accordance with our constitution, he had completed his four years as treasurer. His primary aim had been to reduce the amount of funding held by the group in a controlled and proper manner. To that end, group funds are healthy at just over £9,500, compared to over £13,600 when he took office.

Robert then wished the new treasurer well in the post, and said he will ensure that there is a thorough handover in due course.

Angela Gray thanked Robert on behalf of the group membership.

6. Adoption of accounts

Motion: To adopt the accounts for the year ended 30 September 2021.

Proposed: Deirdre Flegg; Seconded: Mike Childs

The motion was carried unanimously.

7. Election of Committee

Chris Pitt said that since the opportunity for nominations had closed on 31 Oct 2021 there had been an additional nomination for Heather N Giles to become Chair of the group. Heather, who was unable to join us at the AGM, had prepared a short statement as follows:

My name is Heather Giles and I live in Drimpton, on the Dorset/Somerset border, with my husband David and retired greyhound Olive. I am currently working for a small international business that manufactures herbal supplements for animals and I am their PR & Marketing Manager, although I am due to retire in December.

I did my first social walk with the Dorset group in December 2018, although I had already done several challenge walks with a commercial company. Joining the LDWA was one of my best decisions ever and being a member of the Dorset group is like being part of a big family. I have always believed in trying to put as much back into my sports and activities as I take out, and I will do my absolute best to help the Committee take the Dorset group forward post-pandemic.

So the nomination was put to the AGM as follows:

For Chair - Heather N Giles (Proposed: Angela Gray; Seconded: Kathy Bingham)

The vote in favour was unanimous.

As Heather was not present at the AGM Chris Pitt agreed to chair the rest of the meeting (Proposed: Pat Clifton; Seconded: Robert Powell).

Chris then went through the other nominations, received as follows:

Officers:

- Group Secretary - Pat Clifton (Proposed: Robert Powell; Seconded: Ian Brown)
- Treasurer - Ian Brown (Proposed: Anne Brown; Seconded: Richard Lang)
- Walks Secretary - Tracey Lang (Proposed: Anne Brown; Seconded: Ian Brown)
- Events Secretary/Challenge Events Co-ordinator - Richard Lang (Proposed: Chris Pitt; Seconded: Martin Callow)

Other Committee Members:

- Chris Pitt (Proposed: Martin Callow; Seconded: Robert Powell)
- Pete Stockley (Proposed: Pat Clifton; Seconded: Richard Lang)
- Sue Phillips (Proposed: Anne Brown; Seconded: Deirdre Flegg)

Chris Pitt then proposed that the AGM could vote en bloc for the nominations listed above. This was done, with the result being unanimous.

8. Appointment of the examiner of the accounts

It had been recognised that Colin Utting had been examining the accounts on behalf of the group for many years and it was time for someone else to take over. Wayne Bartlett had agreed to do this.

Motion: Wayne Bartlett to be appointed Examiner of the Accounts for the year ending 30 Sept 2022.

Proposed: Colin Utting; Seconded: Angela Gray

The motion was carried unanimously.

9. Motions

No motions were received by the group secretary before 31 Oct 2021, which was the deadline for inclusion in this AGM.

10. Open discussion on walk leaders' responsibilities when planning and executing social walks, with regard to the current national LDWA policies relating to minors and vulnerable adults.

Chris Pitt said that Rachel Christopher had asked for this discussion to be included and invited her to set out her thoughts.

Rachel explained that she had been looking at the guidance on walk leaders' responsibilities (in the toolkit on the LDWA website) and had become concerned about some aspects of what is expected. She said that she was particularly concerned about the parts dealing with minors, vulnerable adults and assistance dogs. She went on to say that the toolkit mentions that the policies on inclusivity don't have to be adopted by all groups and this made her wonder if the LDWA was trying to be all things to all people.

Rachel continued that she had realised that none of the social walks she led in the past had been fully compliant with the guidance and questioned where this left her with regard to the insurance provided by the LDWA.

This led to a wide ranging discussion among the members present with regard to inclusivity and making reasonable adjustments for diversity of all kinds. The point was made by several individuals that the guidance in the toolkit was just guidance, therefore not compulsory, and that common sense should be applied to work out what is most appropriate for any particular walk.

The following points were made:

- A responsible adult should accompany all minors on social walks.
- Inclusivity and diversity were topics discussed at The Local Group Representatives Weekend 2021.
- Non-members are not allowed to bring dogs on social walks.

And questions asked:

- Are children, who do not have family membership, allowed to come on up to 3 walks, in the same way that adult non-members may do so?
- Can a walk leader who feels uncomfortable with continuing to lead a walk, due to safeguarding concerns, cancel it at the start?
- Are new members given information about the nature of our social walks?

The following action points were identified:

- Walk leaders can cancel a walk, or cut it short, at any time if they are concerned for the safety of anyone on that walk.
- When posting details of a walk, leaders can include information in the description to explain why the walk is unsuitable for dogs and/or children.

During the discussion Rachel Christopher left the meeting stating that she would be discontinuing her membership of the LDWA. Chris Pitt expressed his disappointment that she felt it necessary to do so.

11. Forthcoming Dorset Group challenge events

- The Cerne Giant 2022

Richard Lang said that traditionally the group ran 2 events a year, one in the spring and The Dorset Duddle in August. The spring event varied but included The Cerne Giant and The Dorset Giant. He expressed concern that the skills needed to run such events were being lost and that we may no longer have the volunteers required coming forward. There was some discussion of this.

Chris Pitt said that subgroups were needed to support the planning of events and this could not be done by the committee alone. With regard to the Cerne Giant he said the committee had been reluctant to plan it, and possibly have to cancel it again, due to the Covid pandemic.

- The Dorset Duddle 2022

It was decided the group should go ahead with this event and make it the first challenge event following the pandemic.

- The Dorset Giant 2023

Martin Callow pointed out that The Dorset Giant was part of a trio of walks, run by 3 different groups in rotation, making up the South West Triple Challenge. In the summer the committee had received an email from the Bristol and West Group saying they had cancelled the Wye Forest 50, which is part of the Triple Challenge, and they are unlikely to run it again. He said the three groups involved need to decide what is happening with regard to the Triple Challenge and let the National Events Co-ordinator know.

When the Dorset Giant would be run again was left for the new committee to discuss.

12. Social walks programme

Tracey Lang, the new walks secretary for the group, introduced herself, thanked Anne Brown and said she would be a challenging act to follow. She said she had enjoyed all the walks she had been on and that it was fine for leaders to repeat walks. Looking forward to 2022 Tracey asked if everyone present could volunteer to lead at least one walk.

13. Group support for events run by other groups in 2022:

- The Trans-Pennine 100 (Vermuyden Group) 3 - 5 June 2022

Chris Pitt said that the Dorset group are not committed to supporting the main event for the 100, but Deirdre Flegg and Mike Childs are running a check point on the marshals' event, on behalf of the Dorset group.

14. LDWA 50-Year Anniversary

Anne Brown had come up with a suggestion on how our group might celebrate the anniversary which she described in her power point presentation.

Anne's idea is named The Dorset 50:50:50 Social Walk Challenge and involves 50 Dorset members (primary or associate) walking 50 miles each, on Dorset social walks, over 50 days, 8 May - 26 June 2022.

There will also be an opportunity for members to complete 50 miles in one weekend Fri 24 - Sun 26 June, near Wimborne and around Poole harbour.

Information on how members can register their interest in joining this challenge will be provided by Anne Brown and/or Tracey Lang in due course.

15. Feedback from the local group representatives' weekend 2021

Deirdre Flegg and Mike Childs had attended this weekend in Howarth on behalf of the group.

Deirdre said the weekend had been enjoyable but also hard work, with 25 groups represented and 7 NEC members present.

In her feedback Deirdre said some **common themes** had emerged which included:

- Recovering from the effects of Covid restrictions
- Concern about what is seen as increasing bureaucracy
- Pressures for local group officers: what is mandatory and what guidance?
- Praise for NEC work during pandemic - working hard to interpret government guidance as it was published

- Enthusiasm for 'getting going' again
- Social walks recovering
- Challenge events returning

Deirdre encouraged members to have a look at the **toolkit** on the LDWA website and made the following points:

- It is gradually being populated with many documents and hyperlinks.
- It contains helpful advice for officers and members over a huge range of topics.
- Its downside is that it may be too detailed and the distinction between 'must' and 'could' is unclear.

Moving on to "**Project 50**", the LDWA's plan for the 50-year anniversary in 2022, Deirdre said that it includes:

- A special Strider, January 2022.
- A long distance walking festival in the autumn, to include family walks.
- A mass walk on the weekend of the longest day.
- A LDWA Cookery book, for which Deirdre will send, on behalf of the group, her recipe for vegetable and bean stew.
- Local group plans.

Deirdre then went on to describe the **policy and developmental work** which was taking place. This includes:

- Whether the LDWA should become a charity. This had been considered by a sub-committee, who concluded it was not in the organisation's interest to go for charitable status, partly because it would mean that local groups would lose their autonomy.
- The new website/IT is being worked on by a subgroup, with the intension of replacing parts in a modular way. This should cost less than originally predicted.
- A financial reserves policy for the future security of the LDWA.
- A review of the NEC by themselves.
- A review of local group officers by the NEC with regard to their roles/induction, covering what is essential and what is best practice.
- Consideration of inclusion and diversity, in particular examining how to remove obstacles which might stop people joining the LDWA. This included the following pilot projects/existing actions:
 - o Softening the welcome, before and on walks.
 - o Trying slower walks/shorter walks/different days/themed walks.
 - o Using WhatsApp and Meet Up - the NEC is funding a couple of groups to do a pilot of Meet UP.
 - o Organising joint walks with other groups.
 - o Putting on social events.
 - o Planning walks starting and finishing with public transport.

Deirdre then went on to describe the **issues to be tackled**, which include:

- The long term viability and sustainability of local groups.

- Improving communication between NEC and between local groups, without increasing the quantity of emails. Julie Cribb is planning to reinstate the newsletter.

Finally Deirdre covered the **questions and requests** which had come up. These included:

- Zoom training on how to add gpx files to the social walks data base.
- A person being sought for using social media on behalf of the LDWA, as Mike Jones is leaving Twitter.
- Photos and write ups of Project 50 events to be sent to Strider
- History walks, involving a group interested in history travelling to different parts of the country, to join local groups on walks with a historical interest.

Chris Pitt thanked Deirdre and Mike for going to the weekend on behalf of the group.

16. Recognition of contributions and achievements

Chris Pitt then thanked members of the group as follows:

- Colin Utting for many years of examining the accounts and once again for organising the group trip to Wales.
- Robert Powell, Martin Callow and Anne Brown, who were leaving the committee, for their hard work and commitment to the group.
- Deidre Flegg for organising the AGM venue and catering.

The Walk Leader of the Year award was given to Rachel Christopher for leading ten walks throughout the year. Anne Brown said she would make sure the award, an enamel mug, would be delivered to Rachel.

Action: Anne Brown

Martin Callow then thanked Chris Pitt for being Dorset Group Chair, for an extended time, and leading the group through a very difficult period. He emphasised that Chris had also lead on the organisation of many challenge events and would be a hard act to follow.

17. Dates of 2022 committee meetings & AGM

It was agreed these are to be decided by the new committee. Pat Clifton agreed to email committee members to set up a first online meeting.

Action: Pat Clifton

18. AOB

Chris Pitt said that the attack on the LDWA website had been reported to the Information Commissioner and advised members to change their passwords, if they used the same one for the LDWA site and any other(s).

Anne Brown then showed the members present some examples of the clothing, branded with the new Dorset Group Logo, which is available to order. She explained how to order items through the link on the website.

Appendix 1: Membership Figures for 2020 - 2021 (usually included in the secretary's report)

At the time of the AGM 2021 the number of primary members of the group was 247 and there were 459 associate members, making a total of 706.

The number of primary members had remained constant for the second year running, but there had been a turnover, with 35 joining and 35 leaving since the previous AGM. The number of associate members had increased by 18, with 113 joining and 95 leaving over the same time period.

There are now 147 members on the Dorset Group Email List, an increase of 16 over the year.