

**Draft Minutes of the 51st Annual General Meeting of the Essex & Herts LDWA held on Sunday 22nd February 2026 at
Writtle Village Hall**

To be approved at the 2027 Annual General Meeting.

Present: Kirsteen Newell, Tracy Cottis, Sue Gooch, Lizzie Bridge, Elaine Oddie, Maggie Stevenson, Richard Haynes, Ginny Powell, Steve Wills, Liz Wills, Chris Parrott, Linda Fordham, Graham Baker, Jean Bowers, Bill Bowers, Heidi Miller, Fiona Gosling, David Stevenson, Laurie Cahill-Smith, Des Bass, Peter Aylmer, Fiona Sutherland, Jackie Burnett

1.Apologies: Gill Struthers, Rob Struthers, Jane Skinner, Peter Tremain, Dennis Jacobs, Gill Newman, Nigel Schofield, Brian Martin, Judith Jolly, Lorraine Evans, Imogen White

2.Approval of the Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting and Matters Arising: The meeting agreed that the Minutes of the previous AGM were a true record. The Minutes were proposed for acceptance by Richard Haynes and seconded by Lizzie Bridge and formally approved. There were no Matters Arising.

3.Officers' reports

All reports had been made available on the website to members before the meeting and only brief summaries were given at the meeting.

(i) Chair's report (see Appendix 1 for full report)

Kirsteen Newell gave a photo presentation of the year which she acknowledged as an amazing 50th year. She formally thanked the committee for their support recognising Jackie Burnett's work on our social media and organisation of marshals, Ginny Powell for her welcome to new members, Maggie Stevenson for managing our finances and leading walks, Elaine Oddie for her support on all things financial, PACER and her role on the national LDWA, Lizzie Bridge for her brilliant work as Walks Secretary, leading walks and the many fun activities associated with these, Richard for his route development and reliable sweeping, Peter Tremain for planning fantastic walks showcasing different routes and Sue Gooch and Tracy Cottis for their work behind the scenes and their support at events. She also gave a big thank you to all marshals, checkpoint managers and walk leaders and all those who had walked with us in the last year. Jackie Burnett thanked Kirsteen for her leadership and all she had done this year and Elaine Oddie thanked Kirsteen for the Volunteer thank you walk and tea she had hosted.

(ii) Secretary and Membership Secretary report (see Appendix 1 for full report)

Tracy Cottis reflected on the shared Secretary role and thanked Jackie Burnett for her patient support to our queries in our first year in the role. She noted that as at 20th February we had a total of 1,125 members made up of 648 Primary members and 477 Associate Members which was slightly up from last year, as whilst we'd had some losses of long standing members, we have continued to attract new members and she gave thanks to Ginny for the welcome emails she sent. Four committee meetings and a Special meeting to discuss the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) application had been held during the year. Email updates had been sent to members twice monthly and our website continues to be a great resource for our activities with content added and managed fantastically by Jackie Burnett. As at 20th February we had 516 members in our Facebook group and 53 members in our WhatsApp chat group. We have been part of the Local Group calls and Tracy and Elaine attended the Local Groups weekend in 2025 as forums for sharing best practice and helping shape future LDWA direction.

(iii) Walk Secretary's report (see Appendix 1 for full report)

Lizzie Bridge noted that Kirsteen's photo montage was a great summary of all the great walks we had had this past year and encouraged all attendees to read her report, drawing their attention to the Word picture she had created of all the places we had visited. She reflected on last year's neck warmer competition which had attracted great entries and said it had been hard to single out winners. The competition will be repeated this year with new categories: "Best E&H cosy neckwear photo taken within the county of Essex", Best E&H cosy network photo taken within the county of Hertfordshire" and "Most intrepid sporting activity undertaken whilst wearing your E&H cosy neckwear." She flagged that there were quite a lot of spaces in the calendar of walks and thanked those who gave up their time to lead walks and urged new and existing leaders to come forward. She noted that going forward, walk leaders doing a recce or leading a walk, would be able to claim for mileage and parking costs as a thank you. She also flagged updated "Dogs on Walks" guidelines.

Steve Wills suggested we possibly look at joining other groups for walks in their areas as there had been a recent Thaxted walk arranged by London LDWA in our area and a joint London / Essex & Herts walk in our area is planned in July. Tracy Cottis queried what a good length walk was as she knew of a possible 28 mile one. It was suggested that this could be good option for a Bank Holiday weekend.

(iv) Treasurer's report and Accounts Approval (for the full Financial Statement for the year ending December 2025 see Appendix 2)

Maggie Stevenson reported a healthy bank balance with all events we had held creating good surpluses and noted that the Flower of Suffolk 100 allowance for marshals' expenses had covered all our claims.

She reminded the meeting that for our 50th anniversary year a decision had been made to set aside a £5,000 budget and use a legacy reserve and monies from the Martin Greaves fund for events to mark the milestone and our events had kept within these parameters. She advised that we had received a donation from Ramblers Holidays of £230 for members booking holidays through them and noted there were now small charges made by the bank.

The Financial Statement was proposed for acceptance by Jackie Burnett and seconded by Lizzie Bridge.

4. Election of Officers and Committee: The following nominations for Officers and Members were received prior to the AGM. As there were no other nominations they were duly elected.

Position	Nominee	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Kirsteen Newell	Sue Gooch	Laurie Cahill-Smith
Secretary	Tracy Cottis	Lizzie Bridge	Jackie Burnett
Secretary	Sue Gooch	Steve Wills	Linda Fordham
Walks Secretary	Lizzie Bridge	Linda Fordham	Sue Gooch
Treasurer	Maggie Stevenson	Tracy Cottis	Laurie Cahill-Smith
Member	Jackie Burnett	Sue Gooch	Steve Wills
Member	Richard Haynes	Jackie Burnett	Tracy Cottis
Member	Elaine Oddie	Kirsteen Newell	Jackie Burnett
Member	Ginny Powell	Tracy Cottis	Linda Fordham
Member	Peter Tremain	Laurie Cahill-Smith	Sue Gooch

Kirsteen gave thanks to Jane Skinner, who had not stood for re-election this year, for all she had done and wished her well in her new venture in Wales. She shared a message from Jane who acknowledged the enthusiasm, breath taking efficiency, and harmony shown by the Committee, volunteer leaders and marshals and the wonderful framework of events we had, which she had enjoyed being part of.

5. Appointment of Financial Examiner: Richard Rose was thanked for auditing our accounts for the last year. He has confirmed he is happy to stand for another year and was proposed by Ginny Powell and seconded by Richard Haynes.

6. Donations: The following donations were proposed by Heidi Miller and seconded by Linda Fordham and agreed by the Meeting.

Organisation	Amount
Essex & Herts Air Ambulance	£300
Finish Line	£75
Herts Hobble / Hertfordshire Way gate	£500
Kent & Sussex Air Ambulance	£100

7. Challenge Event Reports and updates (see Appendix 3 for full reports)

(a) 2025 -206

(i) Herts Hobble 15th June 2025 (Richard Haynes)

There were 190 entries with 156 starting on the day – 92 on the 26 mile route and 64 on the 18 mile route - from Baldock scout hut, using the nearby Tesco Car Park for parking. There were no retirements. One Checkpoint was used by both routes and was used twice for the longer route and water stops were used at the halfway stages of each leg. There were a lot of positive comments about the range of refreshments and the great team of marshals but it would have been useful to have a few more volunteers.

(ii) Golden 50 26th July 2025 (Peter Tremain)

Peter's report was summarised by Kirsteen. The Celebration 50 mile event had a figure of eight route covering 25 miles in each county and 178 walkers & runners started from the Manuden Village Community Centre HQ. There were 160 finishers

on a day where temperatures reached the low 20s with high humidity, but the weather was much kinder than the marshals had experienced on their walk. There were six checkpoints, all adorned with Essex & Herts 50th celebration bunting, and a team of 28 volunteers, plus a team from BBN and a local resident, offered drinks, sandwiches, snacks, a meal and early breakfast. The support and refreshments received very positive feedback, with comments that it was a lovely way to celebrate our 50th anniversary.

(iii) Blackwater Marathon 25th October 2025 (Jean and Bill Bowers)

Jean noted that this was the longest standing Essex & Herts event and it's 25th year was marked with a complimentary mug for all entrants. Heybridge Rugby club was used again as the HQ as it offers great parking and there were 3 checkpoints. Of 167 entries, 145 started on the day – 109 on the 26 mile walk and 36 on the 18 mile route – and there were no retirements. There were compliments about the hospitality and many of the marshal's team had been part of the event since its start helped this year by some new additions. Jean and Bill are regretfully stepping back from co-ordinating events but hope that someone will come forward to lead future Blackwater events.

(b) 2026 -2027

(i) Stansted Stagger 5th January 2026 (Peter Tremain)

Kirsteen shared highlights from Peter's report noting that 171 people started from St Johns Church Hall in Stansted Mountfichet. There were 2 checkpoints and a roadside drinks stop on the final leg. The welcome and support given by all the marshals and the array of food prepared was magnificent and the event received much positive feedback. It will be the 25th Stansted Stagger in 2027.

(ii) Herts Hobble 21st June 2026 (Richard Haynes)

The HQ will again be at Baldock and the format will be the same as last year but with a slight change of route to keep it fresh. Two halls have been booked and volunteers are sought. The marshals walk will be on 7th June.

(iii) Essex Walker 25th October 2026 (Mike Wheatley)

Mike has devised 26 and 18 mile routes with Blackmore Village Hall as the HQ. Two other village halls will be checkpoints and these are booked. The marshals walk is planned for 13th September.

8. Social Walks Programme 2026 – 2027

Lizzie noted that there were spaces in the programme and sought suggestions / offers to lead walks.

9. Future 100s:

(a) Hunnypot 100 23rd – 25th May 2026

Essex & Herts are running the checkpoint at Cowden Memorial Hall at 30.6 miles and are also running a kit check for the Hunnypot 100. There are sufficient volunteers for the kit check but we currently only have 6 volunteers for the checkpoint and more are needed and Kirsteen reminded the meeting that those volunteering would be able to claim mileage costs. (The Hunnypot 100 team provide for £500 of marshals' / kit checkers expenses and Essex & Herts will cover any shortfall). Tracy Cottis is planning a recce of the checkpoint hall in a couple of weeks.

b. The Jurassic Coast 100 2027

We have been approached to run a checkpoint at this event and have provisionally agreed.

Future 100 events are planned in the Peak District in 2028, in the Cotswold and Malvern Hills in 2029 and in the Lake District in 2030.

10. Volunteer request for challenge events

Kirsteen circulated a spreadsheet of the challenge events and encouraged those who were able to sign up to help.

11. Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) update and change to the Essex & Herts Constitution document

Kirsteen noted the activity that had taken place this year seeking to obtain Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status which would mean that any surpluses we registered would go to the club, without HMRC involvement. A General Meeting in December 2025 had agreed the necessary changes to our Constitution but the HMRC subsequently advised that we needed to show 50% of our Primary members are actively participating in walking activities regularly and when we had conducted a poll, less than 50% of members responded, although there was a large yes majority from those who did. She has requested a call with HMRC, rather than pursuing the matter through correspondence.

12. 2026 suggestions, aspirations & ambitions for Essex and Herts. What could we do more of or try?

Members were asked for any thoughts and the idea of joint group walks was mentioned again.

13. Any Other Business

Elaine Oddie reminded the meeting of the forthcoming National AGM on 15th March and referenced the recent email which had been sent seeking peoples' on line votes for NEC Officer posts and for proxy votes at the AGM if people were unable to attend, where resolutions included support for the accounts and an increase in membership costs from 2027. She encouraged everyone to vote. Elaine noted that the October 2026 NEC meeting will be held in Essex on the day before our Essex Walker challenge event and hoped this would mean that NEC members would take part.

Kirsteen advised that Volunteer Awards were being made at the National AGM and an Eager Beaver Award had been made to one of our marshals who had asked that this reflect the dedication, reliability and positivity of all our volunteer marshals and Kirsteen thanked all who had volunteered this year.

14. Date and venue of 2027 AGM

Kirsteen proposed that the 2027 AGM be held on 28th February 2027 at Writtle Village Hall.

Kirsteen closed the meeting reflecting again on the 50th celebrations and noting that Essex & Herts continues to thrive due to the miles walked together and the friendship, resilience and shared community. She gave thanks to Maggie, Richard and Jackie for their recce and leadership of the walk, which was to follow the meeting, using a route devised by Peter Tremain.