

**DRAFT Minutes of LDWA London Group 2022 Annual General Meeting  
18.00 for 18:30 Wednesday 16th February 2022**

At the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Sq., London, W1K 1DB

**Present in person:** Ali Pretty, Gavin Fuller, Colin Saunders, John Elrick, Gail Elrick, Lonica Vanclay, Ken Fancett, Chris Blackwell, Paul Lawrence, Gordon Parker, Christopher Hedley, Dave Williams, Ron Williamson, Deborah Evans, Kemi Yusuph, Anita Bryan, Paul Tilley, John Davies, Marie Heracleous, Minna Graeber, Susanne Waldschmidt, Jeff Golland, Barry Arnold, Peter Aylmer, George Johns, Samera Putris, Monica Sasso.

**Present via zoom connection:** Jean O'Reilly, Marcus Duyzend, Julian Sharp, Peter Colley.

**Apologies:** Roderick Smith, Godfrey O'Callaghan, Douglas Robinson.

Monica Sasso, on behalf of the University Women's Club (the only Women's Club in London and founded over a century ago) welcomed us to the venue and was thanked for facilitating our use of the library for our meeting.

1. **Minutes and Matters Arising from 2020 AGM** – these were approved and matters arising are dealt with under other agenda items.
2. **Treasurer's Report.** Kemi presented the report and accounts previously circulated. There had been little movement in or out over this period. We had, as agreed at the 2020 AGM made a donation of £2,500 and a contribution of £253.10 out of the proceeds of the two challenge events - in both cases to the NEC IT fund. The balance in the account at the end of the current period is £2669 up from £2416 reported at the previous AGM.

Kemi also wants to thank Pete Colley for all the support he has continued to give her after handing over as Treasurer including agreeing to remain as second signatory whilst we try to work around Lloyds Bank stricter criteria for changing signatories.

The meeting ratified the accounts and Ron Williamson was thanked for his role as independent auditor.

3. **Secretary's report.** It was noted that the membership numbers had changed very little. Such change as there was, had been upwards.

After outlining the reasons for dispensing with the 2021 AGM she described the activities over and above our usual social and challenge walks. One such took place on 12th September 2020. This celebrated the 25th anniversary of our founding. Colin Saunders masterminded it and he also organized last year's walk to the Founders' Tree which took place on 9th October. Thank you Colin and thank you to the walk leaders who helped enable these events and also the walks to the summer social we held last year.

Looking to the future, we need more walk leaders and are devising a programme of support for those starting in this role. She made a plea for everyone to consider becoming a leader or recruiting friends to this role.

4. **Walk Secretary's Report.** (see document previously circulated) The start of lockdown, only weeks after the 2020 AGM, resulted in an enormous number of walks being cancelled. Against this difficult background it was surprising to see just how many walks we had been able to run and the large number of members who had taken part. This would have been impossible without the dedicated help of our walk leaders, many of whom were present at this AGM.

She reported that we have stopped advertising in Strider. An entry in Strider meant that we had to organise our programme a long time ahead. We can now arrange events on a much more flexible and spontaneous basis which is more attractive to walk leaders. The number of members taking part has not been affected. She reinforced the request for more people willing to lead to come forward.

She very much wanted to thank all our existing walk leaders who have kept the club going through an incredibly difficult period. Ron Williamson, Jerome Ripp and Gavin Fuller have, in particular, put an

awful lot into this. Ron's tarmac walkers series has been extremely popular. There are a lot of requests now for evening walks as the days grow longer.

The meeting thanked Marie for her hard and resourceful work over her four years in this role.

**Capital Challenge Report.** Jean O'Reilly referred to her report and added her thanks to Gavin Fuller for recording a GPX of our 2022 route, which has allowed us to finalise the route. This year's Capital Challenge is now fully booked and Jean is working on the process of handing over the organisation of the event. She thanked the Club for the opportunity to run the event for the past 4 years and thanked Susanne Waldschmidt for her help and support. In their turn, those present thanked Jean for her excellent work over this period.

5. **Founders' Challenge Report.** Chris Blackwell spoke to his report and remarked that it had been a bit of a messy two years. He had taken over his present role only a month and half before lockdown. In 2020 the event had been cancelled and in 2021 he had run it as an anytime event. This year it feels right to run it as a live event and it will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

One big change is that the entry fee has gone up by £3 because the prices we are paying have gone up. In particular, the price charged us for the meal at end has increased by £1.50. We have applied national policy that non-members be charged 50% more. Their entry fee will now be £28. By the 1<sup>st</sup> week in March he will be requesting help from members to act as marshals. Most of the people he is now dealing with have changed since pre-pandemic so this is going to be a learning experience.

6. **Webmaster's Report.** Gavin referred to his report and told us that, since covid, visits to the website had plummeted. The walks programme had the greatest percentage of views (28%). More young people(18-24) are looking at the website. The percentage has risen from 2% -13% over the two years. From the point of view of geographics, the vast majority are from the UK but there are interestingly high stats from overseas. Columbians in 2021 were the 6<sup>th</sup> most frequent national group.

Membership of the Facebook page has been fairly static and posts and comments not so plentiful as 2 years ago.

The National Executive have initiated a walks data base. Every walk back to 2008 has had to be detailed with a walk report, and also a gpx file and photos if available. GPX files are quite often lacking. All this has motivated him to make a list of every walk we have run since we were founded. The tally as of January 22 stands at 1432 walks led by 131 different people and starting from no less than 453 different locations.

He told us that he had very much enjoyed the three years he has spent as webmaster and wanted to thank the walk leaders who have all been very helpful and prompt with their reports.

All present thanked Gavin for his sterling work.

**8a. Project 50.** Gavin went on to outline our contribution to this. He will run on Sat 18<sup>th</sup> June a 50 mile walk starting at sunrise and following the Thames Path. Intermediate joining and leaving points will be advertised. On the 19<sup>th</sup> he will lead a walk from Liverpool Street to Sloane Square which will take in 50 squares.

Peter Aylmer told us that we should note that the Essex Herts group are organising an 80 mile walk from Epping to Harwich. This will take place a couple weeks later than our events. They will carry with them a Harwich Beach of Dreams Flag.

**8b. Beach of Dreams.** Ali reminded us that this was a 500 mile walk from Lowestoft to Tilbury. It incorporated art and story tree work. It was run in collaboration with the LDWA and she was particularly grateful to Peter Aylmer who did a gpx mapping exercise. Colin Saunders was the ferry master who helped them negotiate 10 crossings. The ferry owners were very co-operative. Some put on extra crossings for them and one gave the participants a cruise along the River Colne. The river Crouch has no extant crossing. South Woodham Ferriers yacht club commodore rowed them over in two batches.

The journalist, Kevin Rushby, wrote a blog, and a film about Beach of Dreams was recently screened at the National Gallery.

Ali has been discussing extending the project to run all around the British and Irish coasts hopefully in May 2024. Martin Howe, also an LDWA member, has offered to map the estimated 10,000 miles involved.

**9. Report from Liaison Officer with other walking organisations.** Chris Hedley reported that, unsurprisingly, progress has been very slow.

There are two main forums. One is a collaboration with Ramblers, Living Streets, Inspiral, The Canals and Rivers Trust, CPRE, etc. This group is working on adding to the 7 existing Walk London routes. They hope to create 6 new routes. One is through Romford (there are very few walk routes here though there is good potential). Another is a walk linking the Great Eastern Parks; then a North London walk across 5 boroughs; a Forgotten Rivers' Walk; a Southern Rivers' Link Walk.

The second group is working with TfL who are creating 6 new routes for leisure walking. They have brought together local authorities and some of the previously mentioned groups. TfL has quite a large walking and cycling budget though this is under threat.

Chris is keen that eventually, every kilometre square of the London map will have a walking route running through some part of it.

The meeting thanked Chris for his work and his willingness to continue in this role.

Ali commented how important it was that LDWA was involved with these projects.

**10. Committee appointments.**

The majority of those retiring from the committee have already been mentioned. However, Ali's term as Chair has now also come to an end. She said how pleased she was to have had this opportunity and how proud she was of the way the committee had banded together to get us through 2 very difficult years. The Christmas quizzes that Gavin and Barry put together were yet another highlight. Apart from the published walk programme, members were also getting together in informal groups walking in their local areas.

She was very much thanked for her work.

Volunteers for Social Secretary were canvassed with no immediate result.

The nominations, were proposed and seconded as follows and all were approved by the meeting.

Post	Nomination	Proposer	Secunder
Chair	Gavin Fuller	Minna Graeber	Kemi Yusuph
Treasurer	Kemi Yusuph	Jean O'Reilly	Barry Arnold
Secretary	Minna Graeber	Deborah Evans	Chris Blackwell
Walks secretary	Jean O'Reilly	Chris Hedley	Gavin Fuller
Web-master	Deborah Evans	Gavin Fuller	Colin Saunders
Newsletter Editor	Barry Arnold	Minna Graeber	Gavin Fuller
Social Secretary			

**11. Other appointments**

Post	Nomination
Capital Challenge Organiser	Marie Heracleous
Founders Challenge Organiser	Chris Blackwell
Liaison Officer with other like-minded organisations	Chris Hedley

The appointment of Ron Williamson as independent auditor of the Association's accounts was also approved.

## **12. Any Other Business**

**Founders Tree.** Colin Saunders has a memorial plaque designed for this including QR codes. The number of the latter are still being discussed. It is now with Godfrey O'Callaghan who has good knowledge of how to do these things.

When the plaque has been installed, Colin will lead another walk up to the Founders Tree. John Newman of Peaslake has agreed to check on the tree.

**The 100 Challenge 2023.** Susanne Waldschmidt is having difficulty getting information about this and communicating with organisers. She wants to reserve a checkpoint to be manned by members from London LDWA (generally 12-15 individuals) and she also needs details of suitable nearby accommodation. We are one of the biggest groups and should be involved in this.

It was reported that there is often keen competition for the right to organise some of the checkpoints. This issue needs to be resolved via the National Executive.

Minna volunteered to write to the NEC. In subsequent discussions it was agreed that this approach should come from our new Chair, Gavin.

**Pete Aylmer observation.** When he was part of the committee, all the other members were mainly elderly white men. It is nice that now, sitting in the University Women's Club, we can see how much more diverse the committee is. It's not completely representative of London yet, but it's moving in the right direction.

**Lonica proposed a vote of thanks** from the members present to the committee.

**Meeting closed** at 19.45 and Gavin led those interested to a nearby pub where a table had been reserved.