

Founders' Challenge Report

2020

Over the course of the Spring and Summer 2020, despite the fact that we were in lockdown, I hoped that we would be able to put on the Founders' Challenge. This was the first year that I was in charge of the event and I made all necessary enquiries and plans in order to maintain this possibility despite the increasingly difficult situation we faced. The NEC was deliberating whether we might be able to walk together and to run challenge events. I left the decision over the Founders' Challenge to the last possible moment but, in the end, I had to recommend to the committee that we should not run it that year and the committee was unanimous in backing me in this sad but necessary decision.

2021

We all hoped that the event would be staged as usual in 2021. As you know, our optimism was misplaced. Difficult situations, however, have a way of throwing up innovative solutions. The suggestion was floated to the committee that we run both the Capital Challenge and the Founders' Challenge as anytime events. Other LDWA branches had tried this and it had proved a success. The pattern is that entrants, having paid the fee, are sent the route description (this was the new route established in 2019). They did the walk at a time of their choosing. Having completed the walk they could register this fact and receive a certificate. We had the idea that we could market the two walks as a package – The Town and Country Challenges. Those who completed both received a certificate stating this fact. I attach a picture of the two certificates I designed and issued to participants. There was the additional advantage that the walk could be taken at a different time of year from normal and many were delighted with the different look of the familiar countryside at a different season.

The event ran from the 3rd July to 3rd October 2021 as a anytime event. 11 people completed the 30 mile route and 4 completed the 19 mile route, a total of 15. A further 17 signed up but didn't record a time on the site. Most entries were from London, Surrey, Kent and Sussex and surrounding groups, with one person travelling from Merseyside. After charges the event made £122.80 to be divided up in accordance to the committee decision.

Looking back now, the anytime event was unconventional, but served the situation and given the current reduction in uptake in challenge events, that decision gave us a positive outcome. Nine joint Town and Country certificates were issued and from what I saw, it helped attract people to the Founders' Challenge.

2022

Looking forward to October 2022, I am currently planning it as an in person event as close to normal as possible. Keep an eye on Sientries and the London LDWA site as next year rolls on.

The Future of the Founders' Challenge

This year we will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Founders' Challenge and obviously, both myself and the rest of the committee attach importance to this significant anniversary of an event that helped build our branch of the LDWA. We also note, however, that, because it takes place in Surrey rather than London, this event presents certain logistical difficulties. Perhaps this is an appropriate moment for reflection on the future.

Chris Blackwell
Co-ordinator