

Minutes of LDWA London Group 2023 Annual General Meeting

18:37 Wednesday 22nd February 2023

At the Crown Court Church of Scotland, Russell Street, London, WC2B 5EZ

Present in person: Gavin Fuller (Chair), Kemi Yusuph (Treasurer), Jean O'Reilly (Walks secretary), Barry Arnold (Newsletter editor), Marie Heracleous (Capital Challenger organiser), Chris Blackwell (Founders Challenge organiser), Peter Aylmer, Pete Buffham, Pete Colley, Gail Elrick, John Elrick, Ken Fancett, Joy Godsell, Jeff Golland, Christine Ketteringham, Keith Lane, Ken Main, Godfrey O'Callaghan, Gordon Parker, Cathy Phillips, Stephen Radley, Douglas Robinson, Jim Robinson, Colin Saunders, Paul Tilley, Lonica Vanclay, Susanne Waldschmidt, Dave Williams, Ron Williamson

Apologies: Nigel Barraclough, Elaine Battson, Marcus Duyzend, Deborah Evans, Steve Garnsey, Joyce Glasser, Minna Graeber, Christopher Hedley, Paul Lawrence, Janet Lovel, John Pestle, Roderick Smith.

The Chair opened the meeting by thanking those who had come to the meeting.

1. **Minutes and Matters Arising from 2022 AGM.**

One small amendment needed to be made under A.O.B. This done, the Chair proposed that the minutes be approved and this was seconded by Cathy Phillips and passed nem con. Matters arising are dealt with under other agenda items.

2. **Treasurer's Report.**

Kemi presented the report and accounts previously circulated. The finances of the group were healthy with £5,814.40 held in the bank at the end of 2022, up from £2,669 at the end of 2021. With both challenge events back as 'in person' events the year had been busier as a result, and both events had made a healthy profit, some of which had been donated to the National IT Fund.

Ken Fancett raised a query over the pricing of the Founders Challenge given the size of the profit made. The Chair explained that this was due to the unique circumstances surrounding the event, which would be elucidated upon in the report on the event later in the evening.

Ken also asked whether the Group had any fixed assets as there were none mentioned in the accounts. Pete Colley said what minimal assets there were had been written off several years previously. The Chair said that the group currently held nothing else and that any branded merchandise needed to be ordered direct from the supplier not through the group.

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

3. **Secretary's Report.**

The Chair read this in Minna's illness-enforced absence.

Membership had increased in 2022 with 519 Primary and 645 Associate members at the end of the year, up 14 and 61 respectively. 100 people had become primary members and 171 associate members over the year, offset by 86 people no longer being a primary member and 110 an associate member. The attrition of primary members was notably lower than in 2021.

As well as the usual programme the group had contributed to the Big 50 weekend, with Gavin Fuller having led a 50 mile Thames walk on the Saturday and a 50 (in the end 51) London Squares walk on the Sunday, which had been well attended and enjoyed by those who took part. The Founders Tree had received a new plaque with a QR code linking to a page on the website giving more interest about the group's history. Colin Saunders and Godfrey O'Callaghan had led a walk to the tree once this plaque had been installed.

Although group activities had been rebuilt reasonably successfully post-Covid we would welcome members coming forward if they had a walk they could lead or any ideas concerning other forms of social event that the group could partake in.

4. Walk Secretary's Report.

Jean expanded on the document previously circulated and gave statistics as to the walks the group had put on in 2022 compared with the previous three years. Despite rail strikes impacting attendance on a number of occasions the group had put on 80 walks in 2022, all of which had been advertised through the website, newsletter and occasionally the Facebook page rather than Strider, as the much more flexible and spontaneous basis this had resulted in had proved to work well, with an average of 11 people per walk over the year.

There had been 19 walk leaders over the year, with four new people coming forward to lead, which was welcome. Gavin Fuller, Peter Aylmer, Jerome Ripp and Ron Williamson had all led 10 or more walks and were particularly thanked.

As always, more volunteers to plan and lead walks would be welcomed.

Pete Colley proposed that the AGM formally agree that the group should no longer use Strider to advertise walks and keep the current system going forward. This was seconded by Pete Buffham and passed with one dissension.

The Chair thanked Jean for all her work in putting on a programme which meant London was second only to The Irregulars in 2022 in the number of social walks across the LDWA's groups. The meeting heartily agreed.

5. Founders' Challenge Report.

Chris Blackwell spoke to his report and detailed the challenges there had been in staging the event, particularly concerning the catering and the rail strike staged on the day of the event. Slow take-up of entries meant that he had had to seek alternative catering arrangements as the usual caterers would not cater for less than 140 people, and it looked extremely unlikely this number would be achieved. A much cheaper option had been improvised which had led to a higher potential profit than envisaged, which gave flexibility when the announcement of a rail strike impacted on both the ability of people to travel to the event and the ability of marshals to attend and provision the checkpoints; in the end he'd needed to call upon friends to address the shortfall in the latter. Those unable to take part were offered a £10 refund and 15 pulled out. Those taking part were offered a £5 refund due to the reduced provisions, but 33 participants declined to accept the refund, thus adding further to the profit made.

The Chair noted that he had taken part in the event and the issues encountered had not impacted on the event, with it working well for those who took part. Chris deserved all the praise he had received afterwards for getting the event staged.

6. Capital Challenge Report.

Marie paid tribute to Jean for her work on the 2022 event, details of which could be found in the previously circulated report. As for 2023, the event had sold out and had a healthy waiting list. Susanne Waldschmidt had recce'd the walk and produced a draft walk description. All but one checkpoint had been confirmed as had Lambeth council's permission to cross its parks and common, but clearance from the Royal Parks was still awaiting. The finances were looking healthy.

Ideally a further five volunteers to marshal the event were needed. The date of the marshals' walk now coincided with a rail strike, and Marie would canvass the marshals as to whether to go ahead anyway or move it to an alternative date.

The event would now start 15 minutes earlier than planned due to football matches being played in the city.

Douglas Robinson enquired as to how many routes there were now and how it was decided

which one would be staged. Marie replied that there were now three routes, and it was decided to run route 2 this year as it had never been staged as an in-person event. Marie was thanked for her work on the event.

7. **Webmaster's Report.**

The Chair referred to the report in Deborah's absence and noted that visits to the website were up in 2022, with the breakdowns as to visits being pretty similar to 2021, with walks and challenge events the most visited pages. Visits from mobile phones were, for the first time, the most frequent method of access. Membership of the Facebook page had risen by 14 in 2022 but activity was pretty similar to 2021.

Deborah was grateful to the walk leaders for mostly having provided everything required to populate the website. The Chair noted that London was regarded as one of the model groups in this regard with GPX files being something the NEC was particularly keen on having on the site. Ideally all items for the website should be sent to Deborah herself for inclusion.

Formatting of Barry's Blather was still an issue with little prospect of a resolution.

Deborah intended to refresh the home page over the next year; with nearly 1,000 photos uploaded in 2022 she had plenty of choice.

The Chair thanked Deborah in absentia for her work on keeping the website running smoothly.

8. **Committee Appointments.**

The following nominations had been received for the coming year.

Post	Nomination	Proposer	Seconder
Chair	Gavin Fuller	Minna Graeber	Kemi Yusuph
Treasurer	Jim Robinson	Gavin Fuller	Jean O'Reilly
Secretary			
Walks secretary	Jean O'Reilly	Marie Heracleous	Chris Blackwell
Web-master	Deborah Evans	Barry Arnold	Gavin Fuller
Newsletter Editor	Barry Arnold	Minna Graeber	Kemi Yusuph
Social Secretary			

All these were approved by acclamation in the hall.

As regards Secretary, Minna's term of office had expired but no-one had been proposed or seconded to replace her. The Chair noted that it was less than ideal for two of the group's officers to have the post fall vacant at the same time – given the posts were for a maximum of three years it would be preferable for one post to fall vacant each year. In that light it was suggested that Minna should continue for an extra year so that each of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer would henceforth fall vacant at a different time. The Chair noted that Minna had shown willing to continue if necessary and it was agreed that she be elected for a further year by acclamation.

9. **Other Appointments.**

Post	Nomination
Capital Challenge Organiser	Marie Heracleous
Founders Challenge Organiser	Chris Blackwell
Liaison Officer with other like-minded organisations	
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Capital Challenge Organiser	Marie Heracleous
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There had been no formal nomination for Liaison Officer received. Stephen Radley put himself forward for the role, and was elected by acclamation. Colin Saunders and Jeff Golland both said they could give him advice and assistance.

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

11. **Any Other Business.**

The 100 Challenge 2023. Susanne Waldschmidt was co-ordinating the group's assistance at headquarters – so far eight members would be helping out but ideally she would like 15 and put out an appeal for more volunteers. There would be a Friday night meal at a certain establishment in Solihull and a walk on the Saturday as part of the weekend.

Beach of Dreams 2025. Peter Aylmer informed the meeting that, as a follow-up to Ali Pretty's Beach of Dreams event in 2021, there were plans for one in 2025 comprising every inhabited island in the British Isles. The LDWA was involved with this project, with himself, Colin Saunders and Gavin Fuller all assisting in scoping out the planned walks. Any help in receiving the coast would be welcomed – Gavin observed that despite appearances you didn't need to be a past or present chair of the group to be involved.

The Vanguard Way Association: Colin Saunders informed the meeting that this had been set up in 2022 to take over management of the route. There was LDWA London involvement with himself as chair and Gavin as secretary. Membership was only £7pa if people were interested and he would be delighted to tell people more about it.

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

Meeting closed at 19.51 and Gavin led those interested to a nearby pub where a table had been reserved.