

AGM
Sunday 17th
November 2024



North Kessock Community Hub 2.15-4pm

Members Present

Graham Smith (GS), Lorna Sproates (LS), Alison Collins(AC), Pete Mitchell (PM), Bea Jefferson(BJ), John Henderson (JH), Roger Boston (RB), Jan Adamson (JA), Rikky Beck (RB), Ros Wright (RW), Debbie Halliday (DH) , Samantha Richard(SR), Tom Summerscales (TS), Philip Jones(PJ), Shelagh Walker(SW)

Apologies

Sally Kendall, Graeme Cummings, Jenni Coelho, Julie Cribb, Karen Meikle, Jane Bregazzi.

Graham Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting

Approval of the minutes of the AGM from Sunday 24th September 2023 as an accurate record.

The minutes from last years AGM were accepted as a true record.

Proposed: RB and *seconded* :JH

Chair's Report

WELL, there's only one place to start the Chairman's Report – that unforgettable weekend of May 25th–27th, when our group hosted the Speyside 100.

It was the culmination of three years of very hard work and a few setbacks. With hindsight (what a wonderful thing that is) some things could maybe have been done differently – but we delivered the LDWA's flagship event, hundreds of members of the LDWA family came up here to either take part or to help, and the walkers loved the route and the hospitality and friendship they received.

So many people from our group did their bit, working through the night (and in many cases, two nights) and everyone can be proud of what they did, and what we as a group achieved. I have to mention Julie who, as I said in the report I wrote for Strider about the event, was calmness and unflappability personified as the whole thing took shape and then it took over, as Hundreds tend to do. And John did such a wonderful job with planning, replanning and checking the route. As I say, the walkers loved it,

and that was mainly down to John.

So the Speyside 100 was obviously the highlight of our year, but there have been so many other great things happening in our group this year – which have made me immensely proud to be chairman.

We've had Bea being one of the first walkers home on the Speyside 100 marshals' walk – I did one of Bea's training walks with her, and I could see she had such resolve and determination to complete what I think was her second Hundred, and I had no doubt she would do it. And Tom, who was actually a sweeper on the event, ended up walking the entire route – and completing, I believe, his first Hundred. Fantastic.

We've probably had more social walks than ever before this year, and Pete is doing a brilliant job getting us such a wide variety of walks. We've got cafe canters, mountain traverses, coastal walks, parts of National Trails, linear walks, midweek walks, and we're successfully pioneering WASP walks (walking at a slower pace) to tie in with Pete's stride-outs – so there really is something for everyone. What's more, the walks are from all over our huge area.

For me, the most enjoyable walk was our Highland Coast to Coast on July 7th, when four members achieved their Personal Bests in terms distance walked in a day – 36 miles. More in a minute.

We've had the navigation course and the first aid course, both organised by Alison and which were both highly successful – such important, and very, very useful, ways to use part of the Martyn Greaves Fund.

We've had our third, highly successful, joint weekend with our friends in Heart of Scotland Group, down in Aberfeldy. It's our turn to host them next year.

Another highlight for me was the Golspie 3 Peaks Challenge in June, when (I think) 12 members of the group entered and we were all booked in by Karen as 'Team LDWA'. Apart from taking part in a very well organised and fun event, it was an excellent way to promote the LDWA and our group.

And it has been great to see new members like Jo, Karen, Jane and Shelagh getting involved with the group and contributing. That's how we evolve and how we continue to thrive. And, believe me, we are thriving.

We now have 118 Primary members, a year ago we had 107 and the year before that we had 90. So we're clearly doing something right.

We're actually the youngest group in the LDWA, and next year is our 10th anniversary. We're looking at various ways of celebrating our 10th birthday, including repeating our first ever walk – so if anyone here has any suggestions for how we can mark our anniversary, please let a committee member know.

The main way to mark our 10th birthday will be another challenge event we're putting on – in fact, we're putting on two challenge events next year: the Highland Coast to Coast, on June 28, and the Laich o'Moray 50 in the autumn.

I'm very keen on challenge events, which are a fundamental, and hugely important, part of the LDWA. There **are** challenge events in the north of Scotland but there are few LDWA ones, so that is something I'm keen for our group to address. I believe the Highland Coast to Coast will help build on what we achieved with the Speyside 100, in terms of boosting the profile of our group up here in the north, and in helping to get the LDWA established in Scotland generally.

So ... our group has had a fantastic year, and it looks like we're going to have another fantastic year next year. As chair, I would just like to thank all of you for helping to make our group what it is – which is one of the most successful groups in the LDWA. I'd also like to thank the committee for being such wonderful people to work with and for their support to me as chairman.

Treasurer's Report

LS presented the accounts. Which are looking very healthy.

PM asked if the bus income-expenditure was balancing out and it roughly is.

North of Scotland LDWA Statement up until 31.09.2024 can be found in a separate document.

Social Walks Report

PM reported that we have had 40 walks this year. We need to encourage more walk leaders. Especially women. PM had filled out a draft social walks programme with 26 dates. Still looking for a walk for Feb 15th/16th. There will be some navigation walks to practice the skills learnt on the Navigation course in the programme.

BJ suggested a 'buddy up' system for walk leaders wanting to come forward.

SR asked if there was a minimum length for a walk, to which the answer was no.

We need to encourage walk leaders to use public transport. And it was decided that WASP (Walking at a Slower Pace) walks are useful.

Coast to Coast Challenge walk 2025

This 36 mile challenge from Ullapool to Ardgay will take place on June 28th. The organising group are JC, GS and KM. There is information about the challenge in the next Strider. The checkpoints will be Knockdampth, Schoolhouse MBA bothies and somewhere in Croik. We will give the MBA a donation for using the bothies. 2 x coaches 53 seater have been booked and there is also a mini bus that can be used. There will be 120 places. The cost is £35 for LDWA members and £45 for GS reported that JC will be the main contact for the CtC Challenge event. Entries will open on 01.01.2025 on SiEntries. GS has been in touch with the estates and has been given permission to use 4x4 vehicles. Jane Bregazzi may be able to help out with a 4x4 vehicle. KM has booked 2x

53 seat coaches at £450 each. GS has done a draft route description which will need checking.

We will be asking for volunteers in the new year. Rachel Mitchell has done a logo.

PM asked about how the river crossing was going to be managed. GS said that there will be two marshals there with walking poles, and consideration would be given to having a rope safety line or a harness with a carabiner, with a 4x4 close by. PM suggested using the Scotia medical group and COTAG, with GS replying that JC had contacted the latter anyway.

JH asked how long the bus journey would take.. approx 2 hours so walkers will leave at 06.45 for a 9am start.

TS asked about food, catering is going to be done by the Catering Cribbs (Julie and her daughters) plus Jo Cowie, and maybe others; Julie will be organising the catering.

Laich O'Moray Challenge walk 2025

PM is organising this challenge event in October 2025, the date to be decided by the tides. PM felt it was important to have a qualifying event in Scotland for the 100. PM would like it to have minimal support as the route goes through many villages and towns. So a slimmed down version of the challenge event is being proposed, checking with the NEC that it fulfils the requirements. JC has suggested it be reversed, but this would require a new route description.

On June 21st 2025 PM is going to do a 50 mile Ghost to Coast walk...piggybacking the Dava Way Ghost Train walk starting at Grantown at 10pm and walking through the night and carrying on to Elgin along the coast.

The Constitution

GS reported that we are required to adopt a new constitution that should be presented at the AGM. This was accepted. There had been some minor changes, BJ had suggested that accounts are 'scrutinised' rather than 'audited' and this change was made. Payment arrangements now need dual authorisation, but not in the bank account, LS keeps an email trail where permissions to pay are given by both GS and LS.

North of Scotland Merchandise

JC has organised merchandise through PECO. A selection of clothing with our logo on in 3 different colours. In the December newsletter there will be a link to purchase this merchandise;

T-shirt £16

Polo Shirt £18.50

Hoddie £25

Beanies £12

Buff £15

post and packing £5.95

Election of Committee Officers and other committee members

GS is leaving the area in February. He would like to remain on the committee (not in the capacity of chair) until the Coast to Coast Challenge is done.

Pete Mitchell was proposed by AC and seconded by RB to be Chair, which he accepted.

Ideally Pete would like someone to take over the social walk programme, we shall look at this at a committee meeting.

Secretary- proposed by RB seconded by LS

Treasurer -proposed by AC seconded by GS

Ros Wright volunteered to be on the committee , proposed by GS seconded by LS

All others remaining on the committee... proposed by RB seconded by PM.

Open Forum for views from members

PM discussed the recent incident on the Larig Ghru, when there was a Mountain Rescue call out when one of the walkers, who had given every indication that she was fit and well at the start, appeared unwell, with her pace slowing considerably. GS reported the he had filled in an LDWA Accident and Incident form after the incident, and he felt that the principal

lesson was that, on any walk but particularly a challenging one like that, if a group becomes split up, then those groups must stay together. He made this point on the form. GS and SW (who was also involved in the mountain rescue call out) told the meeting that what had happened could not have been foreseen: the incident happened and it was dealt with, with everyone getting back safely. These points were accepted at the meeting.

GS had put out emails before the walk with Kit lists etc.

PM and BJ suggested that where walks are in remote locations with no road access there should be more formal risk assessments. The committee could identify these walks that are potentially more hazardous... then asking walkers if they are feeling fit enough, kit list, taking a shelter etc.

SR suggested that the Lairig Ghru walk be done at a time of year with more daylight.

RB and SR said they felt it would be useful to have realistic expectations of walking speed for potential participants.

LS suggested a donation to the Mountain Rescue.. It was decided to donate £100.

TS said that he enjoyed linear walks using public transport.

All participants were then offered a Speyside 100 badge.

AC then thanked GS for all the enthusiasm that he had given to our group, and for being a wonderful Chair.

The meeting closed at 4pm.