Thames Valley LDWA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: Sunday 26th January, 2025, 14.30

Lane End Village Hall

Agenda: As published (summarized as headings below)

Attendees: S. Ahmed, L. Ashwell, A. Beck (committee), G. Bullock, G. Croucher (outgoing Walks Secretary) , H. Davies, R. Doole, M. Downes, A. Eaude, S. Easingwood-Wilson (Treasurer), J. Esslemont, A. Howell (committee), L. Ledger, D. Macgregor (Secretary), S. Mee, A. Richards, S. Richards, L. Smith, J. Sheen.

Agenda Item 1 (Appointment of Deputy Chair for duration of meeting) : As the previous Chair was absent, it was necessary to appoint a Deputy Chair to run the meeting, who would immediately relinquish the post at the end of the meeting. G. Croucher was proposed by D. Macgregor and seconded by H. Davies.

Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2):

P. Wheeler, A. Attard, G. Scott, J. Ginty, C. Symons

Agenda Item 3 : To approve the minutes of the 2024 AGM

The minutes of last years meeting were approved . Approval was proposed by A. Beck and seconded by H. Davies.

Agenda Items 4-9 : To receive the annual report of the committee and statement of accounts

A report of the committee for 2024 had previously been made available online to members and was also handed out at the meeting (attached for NEC version of these minutes). The Deputy Chair offered the opportunity to officers and others to update their written reports.

Chair: No report submitted

Secretary : Commented that it had been another year of decline on most metrics for the group., In particular the Committee had now become too small and was struggling to reach a quorum. If the committee could not be expanded at this meeting, decision making would become very difficult and some events might not take place. Current plans were however to run the Church Teas, the Marlow Donkey challenge walk and the Christmas party in the same formats, the last of these engaging the same caterer. All of these had been successes in 2024, though with a reduction in numbers attending, excepting the Marlow Donkey, which was increased to 150. Planning a large event for our 50th anniversary in 2026 needed to start soon but would be dependant on new committee members being identified to scope out the event.

A. Howell questioned whether anyone had attended the LDWA National AGM. A. Beck said he had but it had been more useful in his other IT roles than it had been for our group. H. Davies was congratulated on his completion of the Scottish 100.

Treasurer : Policy continues of roughly balancing the books on an annual basis using Marlow Donkey proceeds to subsidise benefits for the members such as the Church Teas and Xmas Party. There is however plenty of money to subsidise a large loss in 2026 if we hold a large celebratory event for our 50th anniversary. L. Ledger, who is stepping down as Auditor of the accounts in view of longevity in post, was thanked for her years of service. There were no questions on the accounts.

Social Walks: G. Croucher commented that there had been a further decline in both the number of leaders and of walks being held. A. Howell wondered if we needed to apply more pressure, as in some Ramblers groups, where some members are assigned walks. This was not thought likely to succeed, perhaps we need more carrots than sticks. D. Macgregor initiated a lively discussion on the problems of low turnout on some walks on occasions when another walk, usually of a shorter length, and often on a day of bad weather, was been held. There was no consensus reached on any policy in this discussion, as clearly some members were only interested in the shorter (c. 15ml) walks and others in the longer (c. 20ml ones). Two members (L. Ashwell, M. Downes) suggested that we should experiment with alternating longer and shorter walks on consecutive weekends, but this was opposed by some. The following pertinent comments were noted:

- A ‘long distance’ walk should be circa 20 miles according to the NEC so walks of this length should continue to be the priority (R. Doole, M. Downes).
- Pace is the issue more than the length (S. Mee).
- If there is no shorter walk, longer walk attendances do increase, at least on some occasions (H. Davies).
- Many members however no longer can do 20 miles (A. Howell). The shorter walks are therefore catering more for older members : the few new members we are getting often come in on the longer walks.
- We may have become too fixed on 15 miles and 20 miles, and some walks should be at distances between these, perhaps to encourage members to step up (L. Ashwell).
- Wednesday walks had effectively died due to lack of leaders .
- We currently get so few offers of walks at less than a months notice, that frankly we have to take what we get (D. Macgregor, G. Croucher). This makes any coordination, e.g. having 2 walks from the same start point (the original intention) very difficult.
- R. Doole, who is currently leading the majority of the longer walks, said he was unconcerned about low turnouts, on the occasions when these occurred.
- The frequency of the shorter walks may well decrease this year due to the loss of some key leaders, so there may be less simultaneous walks anyway (D. Macgregor).

The last three of these points would support a continuation of the status quo, as proposed by S. Mee, though we need to continue to monitor the situation.

A vote of thanks for G. Crouchers 10 years of service as Walks Secretary was proposed by J. Esslemont and seconded by G. Bullock , and a token of appreciation was presented.

Agenda Item 7: Election of Officers –Deputy Chair

No nominations were received before the meeting for the vacant Chair post. After some discussion over the responsibilities involved, S. Ahmed said she was willing to be Chair. This was enthusiastically endorsed by all present, with her being formally proposed by J. Esslemont and seconded by S. Richards.

The remaining two office bearers were willing to remain in post, so the formal position is :

	Nomination	Proposed by	Seconded by
Chair	Shahina Ahmed	J. Esslemont	S. Richards
Secretary	Duncan Macgregor	L. Ashwell	G. Bullock
Treasurer	Sarah Easingwood-Wilson	D. Macgregor	G. Bullock

The meeting voted unanimously in favour of the nominations.

Agenda Item 7: Elections of committee members – Deputy Chair

D. Macgregor repeated that we would like to fill some of the vacant Committee slots (up to 7 can be taken) and we were particularly looking to form a group of Committee members to scope out a 50th anniversary celebration of the group in 2026. Several members offered to join the Committee for this purpose, while the three existing members were willing to remain in post, with Andrew Beck taking on arguably the most important roles of all of Walks Secretary and Website. The meeting voted unanimously in favour of the following nominations.

	Nomination	Proposed by	Seconded by
Committee (Walks Sec/Website)	Andrew Beck	G. Croucher	D. Macgregor
Committee	Alison Attard	a/a	a/a
Committee (Logistics)	Anushka Howell	a/a	a/a
Committee	Linda Ashwell	a/a	a/a
Committee	Anne Richards	a/a	a/a

Subsequent to the closure of the meeting, Sheila Richards also offered to help with the 50th anniversary arrangements. Her status vis a vis the committee will be arranged at a later date.

Agenda Item 8: Appointment of independent examiner:

		Proposed by	Seconded by
Nomination:	Ron Doole	D. Macgregor	G. Croucher

Agenda Items 9 and 10 : Open Discussion/

- It was felt that the open discussion had already been held over the issue of long/short walks
- There were no further motions or further business raised

The meeting closed at 15.30