



LONG DISTANCE

LDWA

WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting 17th March 2024

Mercure Hotel Norwich



Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12th March 2023

Proposer: Bill Milbourne, Seconder: Julie Cribb

3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4. To receive the accounts for the year ended 30 September 2023 and the reports of the Directors and Accountants.

5 To receive reports as follows:

a. Chair

b. General Secretary

c. Membership

d. Publicity

e. IT and internet

e. Long Distance Paths

f. Strider Editor

g. Environment,

h. Local Groups

i. Hundreds

j Challenge Events and Social Walks

6. To note the result of the 2024 NEC election

a. Treasurer

b Local Groups Officers

c Environment Officers

d Volunteer Coordinator

7. To appoint Accountants for the financial year 202/24, and to authorise the Committee to fix their remuneration. Proposer: John Elrick, Seconder: Bill Milbourne

8. To authorise the Committee to determine honoraria payments in accordance with past practice. Proposer: John Elrick, Seconder: Julie Cribb

End of formal business

Open forum and discussion.

To include any matters which the membership would wish the Committee to consider during the forthcoming year.

Written questions may be submitted at any time up to 9 am on 17th March

Other matters may be raised at the meeting but the National Executive Committee may be unable to answer some questions without obtaining further information.

Invitees and attendees of this meeting should be aware that the minutes of the meeting will be published on the LDWA website and will be available to view by the public.

Bill Milbourne, General Secretary, on behalf of the National Executive Committee

**Long Distance Walkers Association
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
At The Abbots Well Hotel Chester
12th March 2023**

1. APOLOGIES

Barabara Blatchford, Chris Burrell, Gillian Aitken, Bev Darcy, Laura Turner, Cyril Williams, Tony Willey, Isobel Falconer, Naomi Cribb

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6th March 2022.

Copies of these were circulated at the meeting

Proposed by Julie Cribb seconded by Bill Milbourne that these be accepted as a true record of the meeting

Approved with no votes against

3. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS AND THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Paul Lawrence (London) asked what was the policy for investing reserves in the light of the increase in interest rates
John Elrick (Treasurer) responded that the money was still in various Bank Accounts but that the situation was under review

David Gosling (South Manchester) asked about disbursements from the Martin Greaves Fund. There was discussion from the floor about projects that had been funded by Local Groups and previous funding of projects from the National Budget, Richard Denby (Bristol and Wast) mentioned replacing stiles with kissing gates and other improvements to footpaths

John Elrick (Treasurer) responded that members should not feel restrained about putting proposals forward but any proposal should have a proper business plan with costings and benefits

Simon Pickering (South Wales) asked about the fall in revenue from sales of merchandise

Tim Glenn (Merchandise Officer) advised that the fall was only £400 and this was largely due to the change from selling from stock to having items sent out direct to the purchaser by the suppliers, Peco Ltd, with a consequent reduction in profit margins. The Covid pandemic had also still been having an effect on sales at the end of 2021

Norman Corrin (BBN) Proposed and Hazel Bound (Cornwall and Devon) Seconded The Report was Accepted without opposition

4. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE NEC REVIEW COMMISSION

Julie Cribb (Chair) gave a brief history of the work of the Commission and the current state of the review. The conclusions of the Commission are currently being considered by the NEC with a number of alternative structures being discussed in the light of the reports recommendations

There were no comments from the Floor

5. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE STRIDER CONSULTATION

Gordon Stone (Strider Representative on the NEC) reported that the Consultation had produced an excellent response from readers. 13% of members had replied. The consensus was that members felt that there was not a lot wrong with the magazine. Most still wanted to receive a paper copy although an online version was useful for referring to back numbers. The magazine will continue to evolve in the future with some old favourites coming back along with some new ideas but a paper version will be the dominant focus as some societies who have changed to online only find that members have stopped reading it

7. To Receive the Reports of Officer

Chair's Report

General Secretary Report

John Sparshatt (West Yorks) asked if The Secretary was happy with the hotel that the new agency had arranged
Bill Milbourne (Secretary) responded that he was disappointed with the hotel, particularly the catering and the arrangements for the meeting as they did not come up to the standard expected from the prestige brand of The Accor Hotel chain

LOCAL GROUPS REPORT

LONG DISTANCE PATHS REPORTS

John Sparshatt (West Yorkshire) asked about progress in making the Coast to Coast Route into a National Trail

Iain Connell responded that there were still some issues with permissive paths but this should be completed by 2025

Iain also reported that England Coastal path was now 30% open with a further 30% being opened this year. The remainder should be fully open next year

Report of Challenge Events Coordinator

Report of 100s Coordinator

Report of Communications Officer

Environment, Data Protection and Risk Report

Ken Falconer (Heart of Scotland) commented on discussions with members having shown how few people knew how to find the policies and other legal information in the Toolkit. He felt we needed to improve presentation and accessibility

Guy Vowles (Wiltshire) commented that there did not seem to be any links between our long distance paths and the slow ways routes which were mostly routes between villages Stuart Bain responded that Slow Ways was founded by Dan Reed and was designed by triangulating between settlements rather than as a long distance route

John Widdowson (Dorset) remarked that he did not like Slow Ways routes

Susanne Waldschmidt (London) asked about logging into the site to create new routes rather than trying to amend existing ones Stuart Bain responded that it was possible to create new routes as well as amending existing ones on line

Strider Editor Report

Merchandise Report

The Reports were accepted

7. To note the results of the National Executive Committee Elections

IT and Internet Officer Richard May (Norfolk and Suffolk) Elected unopposed

Communications and Publicity Matt Parker (Surrey) Elected unopposed
(Following the resignation of the previous post-holder, Matt was co-opted into the role in September 2022)

Strider Editor Gordon Stone (East Lancashire) Elected unopposed
As the current Acting Strider Editor did not wish to be a member of the NEC, Gordon was Co-opted onto the NEC in September 2022 to represent the editorial team.
Gordon will be assisted by Kathy Rogers

Challenge Events Coordinator: Chris Burrell (West Yorkshire) was nominated for this role but he has withdrawn. He has agreed to do the administration for this role as well as Social Walks Coordinator reporting to the Vice-Chair pending the outcome of the NEC review

Environment Officer No Nominations were received for this post before the Closing Date. Andrew Cooney (Thames Valley) has been co-opted into the role for one year

Treasurer No Nominations were received for this post John Elrick has agreed to continue for up to 12 months

Local Groups Officer No nominations have been received for this post. Karen Pickersgill, Vice-chair has agreed to oversee this role pending the outcome of the NEC Review

8 To appoint Accountants for 2022/23, and to authorise the Committee to fix their remuneration.

Proposer: John Elrick, Seconder: Stuart Bain

John Elrick reported that the current accountants RfM Ulverston Ltd are providing a good service at reasonable cost but that this is under review to ensure that the Association is getting best value
The motion was approved

9. To authorise the Committee to determine honoraria payments in accordance with past practice.

Proposer: John Elrick, Seconder: Tim Glenn

John Sparshatt (West Yorkshire) noted that no honoraria were currently being paid and said that he thought that this was disgraceful as there were clearly funds available. He urged the Committee to ensure that an honorarium was offered to all members of the NEC where appropriate

Simon Pipe (Heart of England) Suggested that the Committee looked at the possibility of employing someone at a proper salary rather than just offering an honorarium.

Chris Brown (Staffs) remarked on the difference between a stipend and an honorarium (*a honoraria is an ex gratia payment without any obligation whereas a stipend has a contractual basis as payment for specific services or towards costs of education or research but is not regarded as a wage or salary*)

There was discussion about the reasons for offering an honorarium in the past, including compensating officers for loss of income and for an exceptional amount of work for a specific project

The motion was approved

End of Formal Business

OPEN FORUM

Abigail Elrick (London) commented on the ageing demograph of the LDWA and the delegates to the AGM in particular with no new people coming forward. She felt that the

NEC were not communicating well with the membership as a whole

Julie Cribb (Chair) asked how many people were attending the AGM for the first time. Six people raised their hands

She mentioned that Abigail was a past Chair and thanked her for all the work that she had done for the Association during her term of office

Susanne Waldschmidt (London) commented that attending the AGM was becoming more expensive every year

A number of groups said that they paid the costs for one or two members to attend the AGM

Steve Smith (High Peak) commented that only groups with at least one thriving Challenge walk could afford to do this. No element of the membership fee came to the Local Groups unlike the Ramblers, so there was no other source of funding.

Bill Milbourne (Secretary) responded that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find a reasonably priced venue with sufficient space to accommodate everyone. Chester had been chosen because previous venues in isolated establishments were difficult to access by public transport and there was no convenient option for cheaper accommodation in the area. Youth Hostels were cheaper but most did not have big enough meeting rooms and very few have enough beds

Some sort of on line meeting may solve some of the issues

David Morgan (South Wales) Remarked that the biggest attendance at an AGM was in 2021 when it was held on Zoom

Matt Parker (Communications) Said that at the moment the NEC were fighting a lot of fires. The IT project is a major factor in going forward and an updated system is the key to solving a lot of other issues for the next generation. We are concentrating too much on details and losing sight of the big picture. We should just sit back and enjoy the journey.

Julie Cribb (Chair) Closed the meeting

Colin Wormold Trophy

Aaron Hookway (Vermuyden) Lead Organiser of the 2022 Transp-Pennine Hundred handed the trophy to Michael Jones (Heart of England) Lead Organiser of the 2023 Elephant Bull and Bear Hundred

Aaron gave thanks to Jane Guest (Calderdale) and her husband for all the work she had done for the Trans-Pennine Hundred and presented her with a floral bouquet

2023 Volunteer Awards

INNOVATION AWARD

NICK HALFORD East Lancs Group Nominated by Julian White

Inspiration and Encouragement Award

CHRIS BROWN Staffordshire Nominated by Staffordshire Group Committee

GILL BUNKER BBN Nominated by BBN Committee

ROY TURNER Vermuyden Nominated by Kirsty Ellis

Eager Beaver Award

GRAHAM HADFIELD East Lancs Nominated by Jo Poskett

JANE GUEST Calderdale Nominated by Karen Nash

JUDITH FOX South Wales Nominated by South Wales Group

PATRICK FLEMING Wessex Nominated by Wessex Group

JOHN HENDERSON North of Scotland Nominated by North of Scotland Group

Report of Hon. Treasurer (to be read in conjunction with the 2022-2023 LDWA accounts)

The 2022-2023 LDWA accounts cover the year from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023. They were prepared by the Hon. Treasurer, John Elrick, and finalised by the LDWA's accountants, R F Miller and Co., Ulverston, Cumbria.

There was a Net Surplus for the year of £3,185 (£150,347 in 2021-2022) with Reserves finishing at £484,732 compared to £481,547 in the previous year. These areas are examined in more detail below.

- Turnover – The Turnover figure of £186,840 was substantially less than the previous year's (2021-2022) figure of £280,219. This arose not from any dramatic change in our activities but because the previous year's Turnover included our receipt of a £100,000 bequest from the Estate of Martyn Greaves Deceased which is now held in the Martyn Greaves Fund. Meanwhile, membership subscriptions remained the largest single element of Turnover at £161,614 (compared with the previous year's figure of £161,273). In addition, the NEC continued to receive donations to the IT Development Fund (see paragraph below for details) and merchandising sales increased as a result of the 'Food for Walking' booklet. Advertising income was down with Cotswold Outdoors deciding to end their regular adverts in 'Strider'.

- Administrative Expenses –
 - Insurance costs – The costs of annual insurance for third party liability and accident cover rose by £7,305. This was a result of extending accident cover first from walks leaders to members up to 75 years of age and, second, to all members irrespective of age. The new insurance policies for 2024-2025, to be issued in March 2024, will continue with these changes.
 - Publicity costs – NEC paid for a single design and print run of the "Food for Walking" booklet. This cost £5,628 for 750 copies. NEC also decided that the LDWA should hire pitches at national running shows in order to raise our profile at non-walking events.
 - National Committee (NEC) costs – Up by £19,477 due to face-to face NEC meetings extending over a weekend rather than one day, including an extra NEC meeting to cover the results of the NEC Review. This led to increased accommodation, travel and subsistence costs.
 - Membership costs – These increased due to a NEC payment to SI Entries of £5,647 (inc. VAT) to help meet their overheads during 2023. There were six months of the membership year still to go when SI Entries took over the administration of LDWA's membership fees. The NEC agreed to pro-rata their fees for the remaining six months (or half the total estimated fees). The fee invoiced was £4,705 + VAT.

Reserves of £484,732 are earmarked to five areas of priority, as follows:

- IT Development Fund (£141,434) - In 2019 the NEC set up the Fund to finance the redevelopment of the LDWA web site. The Fund increased by £2,266 in the year to finish at £141,434 at 30 September 2023. The funds received in 2022-2023 came from Local Groups and individual members. As at 30 September 2023 no money had been spent from the Fund, but initial work is expected to start in 2024

- Martyn Greaves Fund (£100,000) - The NEC decided to use Martyn's £100,000 bequest to create a Fund aimed at promoting and assisting Local Groups. The aims and criteria of the Fund were set out in 'Strider', August 2023. As at 30 September 2023 £9,396 had been granted to Local Groups for projects. The Fund also recently received a further £13,837 from the final realisation of the Estate.
- Operating Reserve Fund (£150,000) – This would provide a cushion against any large reductions in income or large increases in costs. These could potentially threaten our ability to meet financial obligations or to continue with services to our members. This reserve would be enough to cover about one year's operating expenses.
- Contingencies Fund (£50,000) - This would be available for immediate use to deal with the fallout from any unforeseen event which disrupted or threatened our activities. The NEC has earmarked £1,000 remaining unspent from the EBB100 for future tracker replacement in the event of loss or damage.
- Unassigned Funds (£43,298) - The reserves remaining which have not been allocated or committed elsewhere.

John Elrick

REGISTERED NUMBER: 03719756 (England and Wales)



REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS AND

**UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023
FOR**

THE LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION LIMITED

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

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THE LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION LIMITED

**COMPANY INFORMATION
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

DIRECTORS:

J R Cribb
J Elrick
S Dyer
K Pickersgill
I Connell
M Parker
G Stone
P Barnes
A Cooney
R May

SECRETARY:

D W Milbourne

REGISTERED OFFICE:

Doubletree Court
10A Cavendish Street
Ulverston
Cumbria
LA12 7AD

REGISTERED NUMBER:

03719756 (England and Wales)

ACCOUNTANTS:

R F Miller & Co
Double Tree Court
10A Cavendish St
Ulverston
Cumbria
LA12 7AD

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The directors present their report with the financial statements of the company for the year ended 30 September 2023.

DIRECTORS

The directors shown below have held office during the whole of the period from 1 October 2022 to the date of this report.

J R Cribb K Pickersgill

J Elrick I Connell

S Dyer

Other changes in directors holding office are as follows:

T Glenn - resigned 12 March 2023

G Stone - appointed 29 October 2022

S Bain - resigned 12 March 2023

P Barnes - appointed 12 June 2023

J M Warman - resigned 12 March 2023

A Cooney - appointed 12 March 2023

J M White - resigned 23 October 2022

R May - appointed 12 March 2023

M Parker - appointed 29 October 2022

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD:

D W Milbourne - Secretary

**INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

	Notes	2023	2022
		£	£
TURNOVER	3	186,840	280,219
Cost of sales		<u>58,049</u>	<u>61,396</u>
GROSS SURPLUS		128,791	218,823
Administrative expenses		<u>125,434</u>	<u>68,966</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS		3,357	149,857
Interest receivable and similar income		1,392	611
		<u>4,749</u>	<u>150,468</u>
Amounts written off investments		1,300	-
SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION		<u>3,449</u>	<u>150,468</u>
Tax on surplus		264	121
SURPLUS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR		<u><u>3,185</u></u>	<u><u>150,347</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements
LIMITED (REGISTERED NUMBER: 03719756)

BALANCE SHEET
30 SEPTEMBER 2023

		2023	2022
	Notes	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stocks		120	120
Debtors	6	18,685	17,908
Investments	7	170,000	171,135
Cash at bank		<u>339,010</u>	<u>335,985</u>
		527,815	525,148
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	8	<u>43,083</u>	<u>43,601</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>484,732</u>	<u>481,547</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>484,732</u>	<u>481,547</u>
RESERVES			
Income and expenditure account	9	<u>484,732</u>	<u>481,547</u>
		<u>484,732</u>	<u>481,547</u>

The company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 30 September 2023.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors and authorised for issue on 10 January 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

J Elrick - Director

J R Cribb - Director

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

1. STATUTORY INFORMATION

The Long Distance Walkers Association Limited is a private company, limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales. The company's registered number and registered office address can be found on the Company Information page.

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

BASIS OF PREPARING THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" including the provisions of Section 1A "Small Entities" and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

STOCKS

Stocks are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value, after making due allowance for obsolete and slow moving items.

Stocks and work in progress are stated at the lower of cost and estimated costs to complete and sell, after making due allowance for obsolete and slow moving items.

Cost is calculated using the first-in, first-out method and includes all purchase, transport, and handling costs in bringing stocks to their present location and condition.

Estimated selling price less costs to complete and sell is based on the estimated selling price of the goods less any estimated completion or selling costs likely to be incurred on the sale.

3. TURNOVER

Turnover is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable net of VAT and trade discounts. The policies adopted for the recognition of turnover are as follows:

Sale of goods

Turnover from the sale of merchandise is recognised when significant risks and rewards of ownership of the goods have transferred to the buyer, the amount of turnover can be measured reliably, it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the company and the costs incurred or to be incurred in respect of the transaction can be measured reliably.

Rendering of services

When the outcome of a transaction can be estimated reliably, turnover from memberships is recognised by reference to the stage of completion at the balance sheet date. Stage of completion is measured by reference to subscription dates.

Where the outcome cannot be measured reliably, turnover is recognised only to the extent of the expenses recognised that are recoverable.

Interest receivable Interest income is recognised using the effective interest method.

4. EMPLOYEES AND DIRECTORS

The average number of employees during the year was NIL (2022 – 2023)

5. COMPANY STATUS

The company is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each member is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.

6.	DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	2023	2022	£	£	
	Other debtors				7,800	5,500
	Prepayments and accrued income				<u>10,885</u>	<u>12,408</u>
					<u>18,685</u>	<u>17,908</u>
7.	CURRENT ASSET INVESTMENTS	2023	2022	£	£	
	Unlisted investments				<u>170,000</u>	<u>171,135</u>
8.	CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	2023	2022	£	£	
	Corporation tax				264	121
	Accruals and deferred income				<u>42,819</u>	<u>43,480</u>
					<u>43,083</u>	<u>43,601</u>
9.	RESERVES					£
	At 1 October 2022					481,547
	Surplus for the year					<u>3,185</u>
	At 30 September 2023					<u>484,732</u>

In 2019 the National Executive Committee formed an IT Development Fund to finance the redevelopment of the LDWA web site. At 1 September 2022 the Fund comprised £139,168 and at 30 September 2023 the Fund comprised £141,434 an increase of £2,266. The money raised has come from the following sources: two legacies, donations from Local Groups and individual members, 100 miles events from 2021 onwards and NEC expenses not used for virtual NEC meetings during COVID.

As at 30 September 2023 no funds had been spent. In 2022 and 2023 the NEC received £113,837 from the Estate of Martyn Greaves Deceased. The NEC set up a Martyn Greaves Fund with the aim of using this money to benefit the activities of Local Groups. The aims and criteria of the Fund were set out in 'Strider', August 2023. At 30 September 2023 £9,396 had been spent.

A sum of £1,000 remaining unspent from the 2023 EBB 100 was ring fenced for future tracker replacement in the event of loss and damage. The initial focus will be to use it on future 100s but the money can be more widely used on Challenge Events.

10. HONORARIA

In this period of the accounts Julia Warman received a £3,000 honoraria payment for her four years' term as Membership Secretary, including the transfer of the LDWA membership system to SI Entries Ltd.

Reports of Officers 2024

Report Of Chair

I plan to use my report to this year's AGM to report on progress against the 2020-2025 Business Plan and LDWA Development Objectives, being 3 years through the 5 year plan. References to the Business Plan appear in [] throughout my report.

The Business Plan focussed on 3 key areas: Sustainability, Volunteers and Volunteering, and Strategic Development. Within these three key areas there were 16 distinct objectives, which gave focus for the activities of the various portfolio holders on the National Executive Committee. As the introduction to that plan identified – it was a bold plan incorporating many challenges.

The overall objective for the NEC has always been to future proof the long-term sustainable success of the LDWA and to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking.

Sustainability – Key Area 1

Members of the NEC all have dual responsibilities; one as Directors of the Association with duties and responsibilities as set out in the Companies Act, and the other as portfolio leads on the NEC, more of which you will read about in the following reports. The former role is an important element of the work of the NEC, especially so in an increasingly litigious age, as this entails getting the appropriate policies, practices and procedures in place to ensure the Association remains compliant and financially sustainable within an increasing array of legislation, which is there first and foremost to protect our members.

This is not glamorous or exciting but it is an essential part of the work for the NEC, falling largely within the portfolios of the General Secretary, the Treasurer and the IT Officer, though all Directors have a corporate responsibility.

Turning to the second part of our overall objective – furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking. The activities [1a-1d] within this section largely fall within the specific portfolios of other members of the NEC, progress against which are outlined below. The focus of this section however is to raise awareness of the LDWA, which is something we all strive to do across all of our roles, and to strengthen, develop and improve our core activities in order to encourage retention of existing members and to attract new joiners. Some of these actions are short term and business as usual, though others [1e-1h] will have longer term outcomes as various means of communication try to reach new demographics and sectors of the general public.

Volunteers and Volunteering – Key Area 2

Our overall objective within this section is to recruit, retain, reward and develop volunteers within the LDWA in order to recognise the value of individual members and their contribution to the Association. This includes supporting those who volunteer at a local level as members and officers of Local Group Committees, more of which will be highlighted in the Local Group Officer's report [2b]

One of the first things I completed as Chair was to get agreement on a Volunteer Strategy and Action Plan [2a], developed to attract, welcome, communicate with, support, develop, acknowledge, recognise and reward members who volunteer. A role description was also created for someone to support the NEC in implementing the Action Plan. As I write I am hopeful that we might have finally attracted someone to this role from the 2024 AGM and also have the beginnings of a small team to support them in this role.

Strategic Development – Key Area 3

The overall objective is to identify and deliver initiatives for the benefit of the LDWA.

The major development in this area is the replacement of the current website and business system. This was thrown into sharp focus with the increasing unreliability of the current system together with a Cyber-attack, which thankfully did not affect any of our members' personal information

It had proved impossible to fill the role of IT Officer for some years and various members of the NEC had sought to oversee this area alongside their primary roles. As Chair I took responsibility for the IT portfolio for several months to try and move the project forward. The two-pronged attack was to try and stabilise the existing system, to which end we contracted with a third party to support our excellent in-house IT team, whilst simultaneously seeking to protect our members personal and financial information.

After much discussion and research we agreed to transition our membership management system to an external provider, one for which it was their core business and for which they had a good track record and all of the appropriate security and insurances in place. It was also important that the supplier had a good existing relationship with the Association and understood our business.

Thanks to much work put in by a small team, including the outgoing Membership Secretary, who continued to work on the project until the transition was complete, the handover to SiEntries was completed in July 2023, almost seamlessly, not only ensuring the safety and security of our members' personal and financial data, but enabling us to progress to the next stages of replacing the IT system - more of this in the IT Officer's report [3a].

An update on the development budget required to fund the IT work is outlined in the accounts presented by the Treasurer [3b].

Challenges facing the NEC

Some of the challenges facing each NEC include a change of personnel at every AGM where up to one-third of members step down, as well as mid-term resignations, and at times no-one comes forward to fill those gaps. Some roles are

extremely difficult to fill for a number of reasons, either being very specific, or more generally as NEC roles have become increasingly challenging and demanding. Lately we have also found that although some individuals are very happy to take on specific areas of activity, they are less willing to take on the additional responsibility of joining the NEC. Therefore, it was important to progress the NEC Review during the year to address some of these challenges.

The NEC Review [3c]

The process was that the Terms of Reference were agreed, an independent Review Panel was formed that undertook a review of current roles and practices and considered relevant documentation. They then conducted interviews with people both on and off the NEC and carried out an analysis of these responses. Finally, they presented a report of their conclusions and recommendations.

The high-level summary is as follows:

1. There appear to be three distinct roles carried out by the NEC
 - a. To formulate the strategy of the LDWA
 - b. To oversee the running of the LDWA in line with the strategy
 - c. To carry out the day-to-day administration of the LDWA
2. At present the workload appears to be so great that the considerable time spent on LDWA affairs by members of the NEC tends, of necessity, to prioritise (c) at the expense of (a) and (b)
3. We suggest looking at ways to separate the administrative function from the strategic issues, which might involve paying for some services
4. We recommend a smaller NEC looking at strategy, and a larger volunteer base dealing with administration
5. We recommend regular consultation with members, so that they feel involved in the strategic decisions being made – even if they don't always agree with them

As an NEC we discussed these findings and in stages addressed each of them. These were:

- Holding a series of meetings to agree NEC roles and a structure that would deliver the Business Plan and priorities
- Reviewing the NEC Role Descriptions in the light of changing requirements
- Carrying out a review of volunteers and volunteer roles that would support the NEC structure
- Discussions to agree appropriate means of consulting with members across the various sections of the Association.

In addition, to address the workload issues identified in the review, a workshop was held to develop an updated action plan to deliver the agreed priorities from the Business Plan.

As I write this there are two outstanding actions which we hope to complete prior to this AGM. One is the comprehensive review of the volunteer and support structure that undertakes much of the operational and administrative activity which underpins the smooth running of the Association. The other is identifying a formal consultation process that is inclusive across our membership.

There is still work to be done and members of the NEC cannot do it alone. We already have a wonderful team of people working with us in support of our objectives across all of the portfolios, but we would always welcome others. We have tried to break down some of these opportunities into 'bite-size' actions that can be carried out as small one-off projects or that require a much smaller time-commitment to encourage more people to come forward. These roles would also suit a wide variety of skills and expertise. So, if you think you have something you could offer in support of the Business Plan or the wider work of the Association we would be delighted to hear from you.

And finally, I would like to thank my colleagues on the NEC for their sterling work during this last year and for facing up to some difficult decisions that will set the framework for progress in the future.

Julie Cribb

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Report of Vice-Chair

The LDWA's current Business Plan was developed in 2020 with the aim of managing and preserving the long-term future of the Association. It sets out actions which must be delivered across 3 areas to ensure our continued success. These areas include, developing and improving our core activities (social walks, challenge events and the Long-Distance Paths database), recruiting and developing volunteers and, finally, delivering projects which are important for the LDWA to operate effectively (establishing a replacement website, introducing changes to the NEC structure and roles to ensure it is capable of delivering the Business Plan). On the basis that the

5-year Business Plan is ambitious and wide ranging, and in order to provide the NEC with a clear focus for the year, we agreed a number of priorities from within the Plan at the start of 2023. The challenges we currently face as an Association informed our choice of priorities.

An inevitable result of the pandemic was a decline in volunteering across the UK and this trend has continued during 2023. Ensuring we have sufficient volunteers, at both the local group and national level, is one of the main challenges we face and was a priority for the NEC during 2023. A further priority was to ensure the NEC comprises the roles the Association requires to deliver the Business Plan. Given the importance of recruiting, developing and recognising volunteers, a new NEC position, Volunteer Support Officer, was created and advertised. As well as promoting volunteer opportunities across the LDWA, this role is responsible for managing any training required by our volunteers and helping ensure they feel valued. In addition, the NEC established the volunteer roles required at the national level to help ensure

the LDWA delivers its priorities and these opportunities are being advertised, on an ongoing basis, via Strider, social media and our newsletter.

Our membership levels have made a good recovery following the pandemic and have increased by 21% since 2021. Over 50% of our members are in the 50-70 age range and the majority of our new members fit within this age profile. A further challenge for the LDWA is to attract a younger demographic to ensure we continue to grow and one of the priorities for 2023 has been to ensure our marketing and publicity activities appeal to a younger generation. These plans will be further developed in 2024. In addition to recruiting younger members, it is important to have a membership base which more closely matches society in general and which is more diverse than it is currently. Whilst we have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, we have, unfortunately, made limited inroads in this area due to a lack of volunteers to support this important work.

Over the past 51 years the local groups, and their members, have been instrumental in the success of the LDWA and are often described as the driving force behind the association. We currently have 42 local groups and 2 special interest groups (History Group and the Pubs and Beer Group). Support to the local groups has been one of the priorities during 2023 – in particular providing them with relevant data to enable them to better understand what's going well in the group and where they might have issues. Poppy Whiteside, our Data Analyst, has worked hard during the year to produce a simple, visual summary of the information the local groups have requested. A further priority in this area was to introduce more dedicated support for the local groups and Heather Giles stepped forward to address ways of enhancing communication between local groups. Heather was instrumental in organising the very successful 2023 Local Groups Weekend in Dorset.

Outsourcing membership administration to SiEntries was a key priority last year and formed part of the overall project to replace our current website. The transfer of the service happened successfully in April 2023 thanks to a lot of hard work on the part of Julia Warman (our previous Membership Secretary) and Mark Hawker and his team at SiEntries. One important benefit of this change is that our members' personal data is much safer and better protected. By reducing the amount of administration, our current Membership Secretary, Norman Corrin, has been able to concentrate on providing more proactive support to members.

Hopefully, the above provides a high-level insight into the LDWA's priorities during 2023 and the progress that's been made. The following NEC Officer reports will provide further detail.

We are very grateful to our volunteers who work in support of the LDWA and the local groups – thank you to all of you! As I come to the end of my first year in the Vice Chair role, I would like to say a special thanks to Chris Burrell (Social Walks & Challenge Events Coordinator), Heather Giles (Local Groups' Weekend Coordinator/ Meeting Administrator), Norman Corrin (Membership Secretary), Poppy Whiteside (Data Analyst) and Tim Glenn (Merchandise Officer). I'd also like to say a special thank you to Sara Down who is always incredibly helpful and supportive. It's been a pleasure to work with you all during 2023 - your support has been invaluable.

Karen Pickersgill
Vice Chair

Report of General Secretary

I am now halfway through my term of office and during this time it has been heartening to see how the Association has emerged from the doldrums of Covid and is going from strength to strength.

This year we have continued our programme of interacting with Local Groups with visits to Thames Valley, Yorkshire Coast, and Beds Bucks and Northants and I would like to thank those groups for their hospitality

Once again we have experienced a healthy growth in numbers but this is presenting its own challenges in that it is becoming more difficult for a small group of volunteer officers to effectively manage the organisation.

We have solved part of this by contracting out the membership system and as I reported last year, we continue to look for ways to farm out administration.

Despite this, the NEC workload continues to grow so in 2023 we have revisited Key Area 3 of the Business Plan with a view to expanding the Volunteer Strategy both to provide support for NEC roles and to look at ways in which we can give more support to Local Groups

As part of this we have created a new NEC post as Volunteer Coordinator and we hope to fill this at the AGM. We have also made some changes to the Local Groups Model Constitution so that those groups who wish to do so can involve Associate Members more in the running of the group

As we grow, however, we will become increasingly involved in more complex legal issues involving things like Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity and protection of Vulnerable Adults and Children. Although we do have robust policies in place covering these areas, some of these issues are outside our competence and we may have to seek outside advice more frequently. Another one of the Volunteer roles that has been identified is to coordinate training for local groups in these and other areas to make sure that Group Officers and Members are protected

So it is back to you, the Members. Unless there is an increase in volunteers at both local and national level, we may have to buy in more administrative functions in the future as the workload becomes too much for the existing teams

Bill Milbourne
General Secretary

Report Of Long Distance Paths

By the end of 2023 the LDPs Team - myself, Julie Brownhill, Paul Lawrence and Peter Grayson - have added to the database another 39 'main' paths of length 15 miles or more. With shorter 'index' paths, that brings the total number of available LDPs to 1479, covering more than 82,630 miles of named UK routes. Between us we have again addressed issues with or amendments to a hundred or more LDPs of varying length. The number of reported path problems has increased significantly, perhaps following the COVID hiatus (more on reporting LDP issues below). Another significant post-COVID effect may be the large number of new and updated guidebooks.

Two major features which have continued through 2023 have been the impact of HS2 on LDPs between Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire, and the opening of several new sections of the England Coast Path (ECP). With the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham, the task of tracking its progress (bar a short length into Staffordshire) will diminish. While less than half of the ECP's developmental 'stretches' have been declared either open or 'approved in whole', by the end of 2023 only a handful remain at the first stages. A *possible* scenario is for most of the ECP to be open by the end of 2025. If so, it may coincide with the opening of Wainwright's Coast to Coast as a National Trail.

More will be revealed during 2024 on the addition of the Coast to Coast to the National Trails Register, and the proposed creation of a combined Register for the England and Wales Coast Paths. In the meantime, people who wish to be added to the Registers should record their completions of the Coast to Coast, Wales Coast Path (WCP), and the parts of the ECP that they've done. As with the current National Trails Register, all claims can be retrospective. National Trails Recorder Heather Ingram - see her 2024 report below - is aware of the proposals for the ECP+WCP Register, but since at present that's how they remain, please address any questions regarding the new Register to me at ldp@ldwa.org.uk.

In 2023 there has been renewed work on the routes of two of the three European E-paths (E-routes) - the E2, E8 and E9 - which have sections in the UK. John Pucknell has taken a lead on research and renewed proposals for the E2 in Northern Ireland and Eire, Scotland and the Scottish Borders. I have agreed with the European Ramblers Association that with the opening of the ECP, the main route of the E9 (to be the world's longest coastal path) will be taken fully along the south coast of England rather than partially inland. UK development of the E-paths has taken a back seat in recent years, and this is a welcome return to their original conception.

Thanks once more to the many people who have reported path problems that they've encountered during 2023. So far as is possible these are featured in Strider, the relevant LDP Path Pages, and, usually nearer the time of reporting, Facebook Group site 'The LDWA and Long-Distance Paths'. But partly because of the 'here today, gone today' nature of social media, it's clear that they can still go unseen. The best way to report LDP problems is via the Change Report Form in the Toolkit at ldwa.org.uk/library/toolkit.php#LDP. It helps enormously if you can include Grid References and photos, both of which can now be done on smartphones.

Finally, it's encouraging to hear that some of the LDPs which we've added in the last couple of years are being walked. But it's not as easy as it should be to find new LDPs, nor to identify the ones which run through or between particular locations. Such improvements are for the new website; in the meantime you can ask for help at ldp@ldwa.org.uk. Less fun for us is wrestling with our old and sometimes uncooperative database management system. But the LDPs database still remains the world's finest online resource of walks information: accept no imitations, and please don't advertise them!

Iain Connell
LDPs Officer.

National Trail Walkers Register Report

Register changes January – December 2023

In 2023, 43 people have gained entry to the National Trails Register: 22 at Bronze, 10 at Silver, 8 at Gold and 3 at Diamond. Of these 43 people, 39 (90.7%) people requested certificates.

We now have 561 people on our Register, 294 (52.4%) at Bronze, 133 (23.7%) at Silver, 57 (10.2%) at Gold and 77 (13.7%) at Diamond. Of these 183 (32.6%) are female, 100 (34%) at Bronze, 42 (31.5%) at Silver, 18 (31.5%) at Gold and 23(29.8%) at Diamond. In addition, since the beginning of the register, there are 110 walkers who have already achieved either Bronze, Silver, Gold or Diamond on the Register and have repeated some of the national trails multiple times. Peter Coxhead has repeated all the trails at least once, walking some more than once and the Cotswold Way 6 times. Arthur Metcalfe has completed the South West Coastal Path 24 times and Brian Layton has completed the Ridgeway 12 times.

Marvelous achievement, well done to you all.

Collectively the trail walkers have walked over **828,119** miles on the National Trails alone.

This year's Diamonds

Peter Cowlyn completed his first trail in 1996 and claimed his Diamond award after completing the Great Glen Way in April 2023.

Matthew Westcott started in 2013 with the North Downs Way and finished his Diamond with the Speyside Way in August 2023.

Joy Jenkyns has written about her achievements in the November edition of Strider. She started in 2003 with the Thames Path and completed with the Great Glen Way in September 2023.

Heather Ingram National Trails Register Recorder

Hillwalkers' Register Report

As I write this report on 3 December 2023, it has been a slightly quieter year regarding claims (47 to date), but there may well be a last minute flurry leading over Christmas like last year.

I am delighted to report we managed to get the technology sorted out on the website so that the new Lake District Synges Register (2E) is now up and running. So far we have 9 claims including the first which dates back to 2009 – can anyone improve on that! There are a lot of people now working on this hill list so I am sure more claims will follow over the next year or two.

Other notable claims this year include Stephen Stobie's claim for register 5b – the Donald Dewey hills (500+ metres in Southern Scotland) and Mark Trengove's early new year completion of 5a the Deweys (500+ metres in England and Wales). Indeed the Deweys saw more activity this year than in the last few, with Alan and Kathy Duval completing them in March and I know of at least two further claims not far away. Members are reminded they can send in their progress reports on these registers any time they like and I will include these in the annual review.

And finally, this report would not be complete without reference to Stephen Moore's amazing (or mad – you choose) completion of his sixtieth round of Wainwrights. I was delighted to be invited to join Stephen for his final hill, Latrigg and for a lovely meal afterwards to celebrate. A really nice day and you will perhaps have read the report in the December Strider. (I'm not at all convinced that we won't get a claim for round 61 although Stephen tells me no!).

There are other hill lists we would like to introduce once the new IT project for the new website gets underway, and both Nicky and Iain Connell have been invited to be on the steering group, so we will be able to perhaps influence what happens. Other lists would include Dartmoor Trigs and hills over 400+ Metres in England and Wales – so crack on with your climbing and we will be ready for you!

Nicky Wood

Hillwalkers' Register Recorder

Report of 100 Coordinator

2023 was the third year of my role as 100s co-ordinator and for the third time the weekend of the 100 dawned warm and dry. Entrants on the EBB100 set off in glorious sunshine that basically continued for the next 48 hours. (Unfortunately, the walkers on the marshals' event had a rather cooler, wetter, muddier and more slippery experience!). The route showcased a selection of the iconic sights of the rural and urban West Midlands, from picture perfect villages to the Old and New Cathedrals in the centre of Coventry, with a bit of HS2 thrown in! There were many smiling finishers and as usual, tales of determination and resilience. Len Fallick completed his 41st 100 while a pleasing number of newcomers completed their first.

There are now mementos for 20, 30 and 40 completions as well as the individual certificates and badges. The glass coasters for the 30 award have been paid for by the Martyn Greaves bequest. Martyn showed a lengthy commitment to the 100 being the 2nd person to complete 30 100s (there are now 19) and 40 100s (a very select group of 3) so I hope he will think this was a worthy use of the fund.

There have been some changes to qualifying events. The NEC has agreed that completion of one of the two 100s before the beginning of the usual eighteen month long qualifying period will now count. However, a couple of qualifiers have disappeared from the list for varying reasons and others have appeared – please check the list specifically for the 100 you are interested in entering.

The 2024 100 will take place in the Spey valley – the most northerly 100 yet so I am not guaranteeing the weather but on a clear night there will be only very limited hours of darkness. The event had a rather bumpy ride over last summer, but the committee have worked hard to get it back on track and look forward to welcoming entrants in May.

Planning for The Flower of Suffolk 100 is well under way and promises visits to several well-known sights including Sutton Hoo and the Scallop Shell on Aldeburgh beach. Following on are the Hunnypot 100 (Kent) in 2026 and the Jurassic 100 (Cornwall and Devon) in 2027.

Our 100 has a unique ethos and amazing atmosphere, being put on by members for members. I am incredibly grateful to those who give up some, or all, of the two May bank holiday weekends, and those on the committee who live with the 100 for several years, in order to help others fulfil their ambitions. I look forward to meeting up with entrants and marshals alike at Boat of Garten.

Environment Officer Report

CO2 Footprint

The Carbon footprint of our organisation and our activities are dominated by travel to and from our events. Typically 90-95% of greenhouse gas emissions for a given event will come from transport.

This is one of the most intractable factors given patchy public transport services – the patchiness often in inverse proportion to the desirability of the location for outdoor pursuits.

I have asked event owners to consider wherever possible starting and ending walks near public transport locations and these will be highlighted in Strider.

Plastic Pollution

This is an enormous scourge with unimaginably-vast quantities finding its way to the oceans and from there into the food chain, devastating wildlife in the process.

I have reviewed our events with a decent sample size and I was pleased to find that walkers are asked to bring their own reusable cups, cutlery and plates so I feel we are doing the right thing on that front.

I have met with Melanie Rees of 'The Green Centre' in Brighton to find out how plastic is recycled and the results were eye-opening. In short, clear plastic bottles (PET 1) have a market value and can be recycled up to 4 times. Pretty much every other form of plastic breaks down too quickly, contains dyes or other pollutants and will be incinerated.

So I would urge our members to think carefully about their use of plastics choose alternative packaging wherever possible!

Trail Erosion

We have limits on event sizes in place to limit the wear on the trails. As a requirement of our insurance, a recce should be taken before staging an event or social and this is a chance to check the level of erosion of the trail and re-route to allow worn sections to recover.

Planning

There have been a smattering of requests for support with planning applications where the correspondent is concerned about impact on trail access and I have responded to those.

External Organisations

European Ramblers Association (ERA)

The LDWA are paid-up members of this association but, as I understand it, have not been active participants.

I took part in the inaugural meeting for the 'Sustainable Hiking Project' which is aiming to promote the environmental sustainability of hiking across Europe and create a 'Green Trail Certification System'.

Green Runners

This group is run by Damian Hall, an elite Ultrarunner and encourages members to sign up to pledges based upon how they travel, what kit they use, what they eat and how active they are in speaking up.

I've had a long conversation with Damian and we have shared ideas. One of these is a simple certification/rating system to measure the environmental impact of an individual event. This is something the ERA is working on too and we will take on board applicable and workable elements for our own events

Better Planning Coalition

This organisation is formed of a diverse group of member organisations from climate, heritage, housing, nature and transport sectors and it aims are to ensure central and local government planning policy has nature, climate and people at its heart.

The organisation is in transition as the initial aims of influencing the Government's 'Levelling up and Regeneration Bill', the funding for the coalition from the European Climate Foundation (ECF) and the chair of the coalition have all either happened, expired or changed.

The group is consulting with its constituent members, including the LDWA, about future aims and there is a discussion document in circulation concerning objectives for 2024.

Andrew Cooney

COMMUNICATIONS, VISIBILITY AND ENGAGEMENT REPORT

The LDWA's 2023/24 Communications strategy has been aimed at increasing visibility and engaging our membership and the wider walking and ultra-distance communities.

Despite facing challenges, including budget constraints and technological limitations, we have identified opportunities to amplify our presence, both online and in the public sphere.

Mental and physical wellbeing, diversity and the environmental implications of long-distance walking are at the heart of all projects.

THE TEAM

- Communications Officer: Matt Parker
- Media & Content: Simon Pipe, David Morgan, Andy Todd, Sarah Littlewood, Emily Dongray
- Social Media Moderation: Nic Arb, Chelle Armour, Michael Jones

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC APPROACH

Our primary objective is to elevate the LDWA's profile and engage with both current members and potential new audiences. To achieve this, we've implemented a content marketing strategy focused on quality over quantity, creating original, relevant, and informative content optimized for search engine visibility.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED INCLUDE:

- A dated website with user-unfriendly content management systems.
- Difficulty in recruiting skilled volunteers for key communication roles.
- A stretched and under-resourced team leading to unfinished projects.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND INITIATIVES

- BBC Exposure: Secured a spot on BBC regional news, bringing significant early visibility.
- Editorial Newsletters: Transitioned to a more editorial style, garnering predominantly positive feedback.
- Outreach and Events: Successfully participated in four outdoor shows, including the National Running Show and National Outdoor Expo.
- Content Development: Creating an external-facing blog to showcase LDWA's expertise and diversity.

Key Challenges

- Resource Constraints: Encountered difficulties with an ageing website and limitations in our email infrastructure.
- Interpersonal Dynamics: Instances of conflicts within the NEC and with Local Groups, which affected morale and efficiency.
- Recruitment: Faced challenges in recruiting volunteers with the necessary skills and interest.
- Technology Gaps: Struggled with using personal tech for projects and navigating inefficiencies in our processes.
- Support for Projects: Encountered hesitancy and lack of support for new initiatives within the leadership team.

Member survey feedback

"At the Long Distance Walkers Association, we are committed to fostering a vibrant community of walking enthusiasts who share a passion for adventure. Our mission is to provide an inclusive, supportive environment that encourages people of all backgrounds to explore and enjoy the physical, mental, and social benefits of long-distance walking. We strive to offer a variety of activities that cater to walkers of all abilities, from those venturing beyond their comfort zone to seasoned trekkers, ensuring that every step taken is a step towards personal growth and collective adventure. By nurturing a space that values camaraderie, environmental stewardship, and the joys of walking, LDWA aims to be the cornerstone for all who seek to tread further — together."

Keyword Mission Statement from survey feedback.

1. Mission Statement Need: A substantial number of respondents (393) believe LDWA needs a mission statement, while 262 respondents are unsure (Maybe), and 205 believe it's not necessary. There are a few non-standard responses, including opinions on keeping the current mission statement if it exists and avoiding corporate jargon.
2. Membership Duration: The membership duration varies widely, with the most significant numbers falling in the 60-69 age bracket, indicating a possibly older membership demographic. This age distribution is followed by the 50-59 and 70-79 brackets, with fewer members in the younger age ranges.
3. Challenge Events Participation: The participation in challenge events is diverse, with the highest number of respondents (207) participating in more than five events, while 187 respondents have not participated in any. A notable number of members have participated in over 20 events.
4. Local Group Usage: Local group engagement varies, with the largest group of respondents (308) using their local group 'Rarely' and 234 'Never' using it. However, there is a significant portion (219) that use it 'Regularly'.
5. Age Distribution: The majority of respondents are in the 60-69 age range, which is the most significant single group, indicating an older membership base.
6. Gender Identity: The overwhelming majority of respondents (811) indicate their gender identity aligns with their sex at birth, with a small number preferring not to say or indicating otherwise.
7. Qualitative Responses: There are 392 non-null responses related to what the mission statement could or should include. These responses need to be reviewed individually to identify themes, but this indicates a high level of member engagement on this topic.

KEY THEMES:

- Age Demographics: The LDWA has a membership base with a significant proportion of older members.
- Engagement Levels: There is a mixed level of engagement in challenge events and local groups.
- Mission Statement: There is a strong interest in the mission statement, which may reflect members' desire for a clear direction and purpose.
- Diverse Opinions: The membership has diverse opinions on the necessity of a mission statement.

CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

- Engaging Younger Members: The age distribution suggests a potential challenge in attracting and engaging younger members.

- Local Group Involvement: With many members rarely or never using their local group, there may be opportunities to increase local engagement.

Reflections and Future Directions

The past year has seen its share of progress and challenges.

The team’s vision for the next 12 months includes:

- Develop a robust communications team that is digital-first, audience-centric and agile.
- Improve website messaging and content with a campaign-minded approach.
- Continue to create 'evergreen' content that establishes LDWA as a definitive source of long-distance walking knowledge.
- Enhance our social media output with engaging content reflective of our objectives.

We are optimistic about the future. Our focus will be on building a more supportive, collaborative environment and ensuring that our initiatives have the backing they need to thrive.

JOIN THE TEAM

SKILLS WE'RE LOOKING FOR:

social media management | event management | project management | public relations | partnerships | content creation | video/photo | podcasts | graphic design | data analytics | writing | editing | organisation | SEO | html | storytelling | research | analysis | strategic planning | writing | WordPress development | adaptability

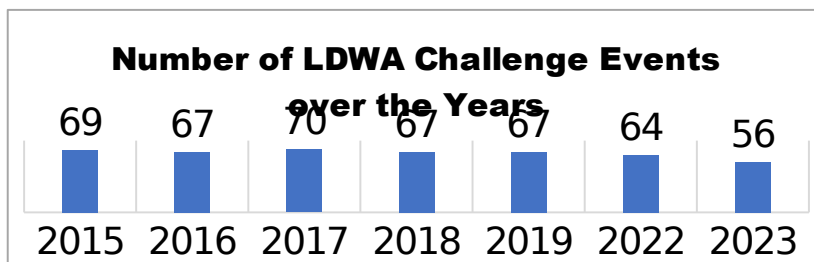
Matt Parker

Challenge Events Report

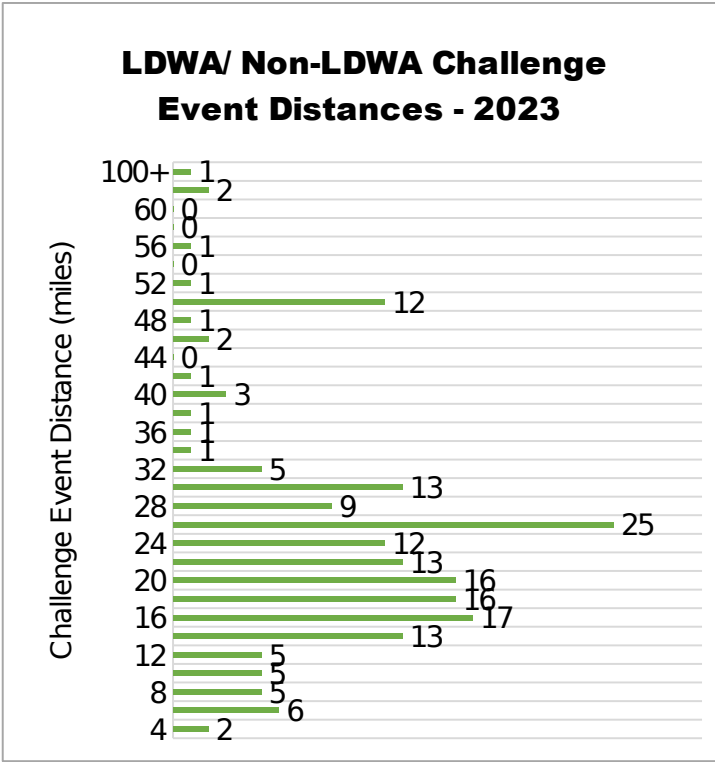
The future success of the LDWA relies on us strengthening, developing and improving our core activities – one of these core activities being challenge events. Increasing the number of LDWA challenge events is one of the targets set out in our Business Plan.

Every year, the local groups can be relied upon to organise and run a challenging, enjoyable and varied programme of events and, in doing so, are instrumental in retaining and attracting new members to the Association. Our events are well known for their spectacular scenery, the friendly welcome and excellent refreshments at checkpoints and the sense of achievement participants feel on completing the route. In some cases, strong and lasting friendships are formed between members who meet up and walk together on one of our events. Challenge events also provide a welcome opportunity for the wider membership of a local group to come together as volunteers - marshalling, sweeping, checkpointing, cooking, driving etc. They also bring together members of other, neighbouring, groups as everyone pulls together to deliver a great day for those taking part.

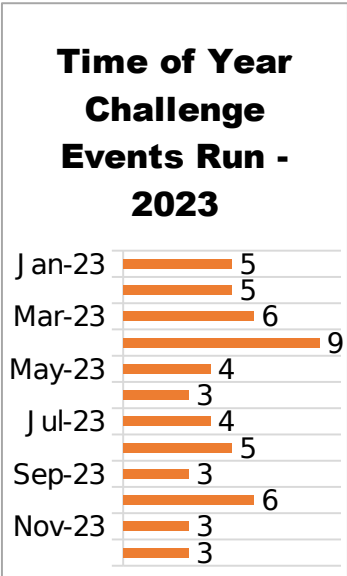
The chart below highlights that, up until the pandemic, the number of LDWA events in our programme remained more or less consistent. 2022 saw a positive recovery in the number of events but 2023 has seen a dip. According to the local groups, a lack of volunteers to support events is the main reason why the overall number has reduced. However, on the positive side, at least 4 new events are being added to the 2024 programme – the Calderdale Crawl (Calderdale), the Signpost Challenge (South Manchester), the Cracoe Cracker (West Yorkshire) and Cymoedd Sir Fynwy 50 (South Wales). We continue to work with other non-LDWA event organisers and 2023 saw us advertise 45 of their events on our website and in Strider.



In terms of distance, our events range from 4 mile through to 100 miles, with 26 mile being the most common distance (see chart below). In the interests of being more inclusive, some groups offer the option of a shorter distance (between 4 and 10 miles) as part to a longer challenge to encourage wider involvement



You will see from the chart below that in 2023, and in all years, LDWA events took place throughout the year with April being the month where the highest number of events are run. Overall, slightly more events took place during the first 6 months of the year. When we include non-LDWA events, September becomes the month where the highest number of events take place.



Martyn Greaves left a generous bequest to the LDWA last year and a fund was set up in his memory to support projects and initiatives aimed at raising the profile of, and helping future proof, the LDWA and the local groups. Martyn was a long-standing member of the Association and was passionate about challenge events. It's therefore very appropriate that 2 of our local groups applied for and received funding to enable them to organise and run new events.

Finally, the Challenge Event Guideline document was reviewed and updated during 2023 and can be found in the Challenge Events section of the Toolkit which is on our website.

As I reach the end of my first year in the Challenge Events Coordinator role, I'd like to thank the local groups, in particular the Events Coordinators, for their support and for ensuring we had an interesting and challenging programme of events during 2023. Thank you also to Poppy Whiteside for taking my excel spreadsheets and turning them into the charts above!

Chris Burrell
Challenge Events Coordinator

Membership Secretary Report

My predecessor Julia's final paragraph in her final report as Membership Secretary mentioned that her successor had not yet been found. Well here I am and to quote Elton John "I'm still standing"

The decision was accepted pretty quickly by the NEC and a fortnight later on the LDWA stand at the Outdoor Expo at NEC Birmingham Matt Parker said to me "Congratulations.....or Commiserations!"

In Julia's final report she paid tribute to her wonderful husband Ralph. Well I'd like to thank her for her patience and ongoing support and bearing with me on several phone calls whilst she explained what had to be done and when. She's a very hard act to follow.

I'd also like to thank her wonderful husband Ralph as well for introducing me to the vagaries of Quadient Franking machines and again putting up with hearing the same question I'd probably asked previously

I mentioned to her that being a Membership Secretary is like being at the Hotel California. You can check out but you never leave. That description could also apply to any other former or current member of the NEC. I'd also like to thank the Vice Chair Karen Pickersgill for her continuing help in Membership matters. I would have struggled without her. She provided a great deal of assistance and insight during our discussions with Mark Hawker of SiEntries about members who don't have access to email. More of this later

But enough of the Oscar style speech and onto the nitty gritty. At the time of writing some figures (11th December, Arsenal have lost and we're top). 10594 members were transferred to SiEntries in April from the old LDWA system. The analysis of new members by gender and their preference for Strider is as below

New Members joined until 30/09/2023	Male	Female	Non Binary	Paper Striders	Online Striders
898	495	399	4	598	300
New Members from 01/10/2023					
691	361	328	2	455	236

84 have cancelled but that does not include those who opted to lapse at the end of the year. These figures will be updated later

I've had it considerably easier than any of my predecessors but even so it seems that I am still putting in 2-3 hours a day. Some of this was caused by tidying up addresses in the distribution list for the August 2023 Strider, lots of members joining on the 1st October (70!) and quite a few cancellations in November and December

A mystery that has still not been resolved was 12 LDWA groups not receiving their extra copies of August 2023 Strider nor did 11 of the 12 Affiliated groups. This resulted in replacement packs being posted along with lots of phone calls to Affiliate contacts to find out if they'd received their latest Striders

Neil Smy whose company has printed Strider for many years has given me a lot of assistance and explanations of the Royal Mail postage system whilst also having to deal with family health issues

Changes that have been made with switching over to SiEntries include all new members from 53356 onwards now receive an automated welcoming email. This replaces the previous step of a welcoming letter. For new members who opted to receive an Online Strider this reduces postage and gives them instant access to our lovely journal.

The technical support from SiEntries provided by Mark Hawker and his team (Martin Stone, Jack Eyre and Emma Winter) has been excellent. I'm sure it's been as much a learning curve for them as it has for me. With every transition to a new system there are bound to be teething problems and some have arisen which were not anticipated but these have been quickly resolved. They are also very proficient at producing reports quickly. My drama does not become their crisis! Fingers crossed that at the time of the AGM the renewal process for 2024 went smoothly. I'm sure you will have contacted SiEntries or me if it didn't!

I've had several queries from members asking about things such as changing Primary and Associate Groups, Gift membership and changing memberships from Individuals to Family and vice versa. It's not as straightforward as under the LDWA system but with assistance from SiEntries some professional looking User Guides have been produced and placed on the LDWA website for anyone to use. Failing that you know where I am

At the time of switching to SiEntries members were asked to provide an email address for their Direct Debit to continue. This caused upset amongst members who did not have an email address nor were comfortable with the online world. However they had been members for a long time, and had contributed much to the LDWA.

After some discussion with Karen Pickersgill and Mark Hawker we decided that for these members we would contact them by letter and ask them if possible to set up some kind of online facility so that they could remain part of the LDWA community

However if they were reluctant to do so we would still be happy to accept payment by cheque.

Letters were sent out to 295 members who were DD payers without an email address and 56 Cheque or Card payers without an email address. This was enough to prompt some (11 at 9th December) to cancel their membership and some to pay by card or by cheque.

Thanks to Julia and Ralph for stuffing the letters into envelopes for this exercise.

Initially when taking over the role to be honest I felt overwhelmed. But with a lot of assistance and some effort I've managed to get to grips with it...I think!

Norman Corrin

Merchandise Officer Report

Since relinquishing NEC and challenge event coordination duties last March I have in essence had more time to spend on the LDWA's merchandise, but to be honest, in practice, the momentum of those duties in many ways worked not

necessarily better, but certainly just as well, in the cause and effect of running the operation. It is also fair to say that due to previous time constraints in conjunction with those duties the methodology of looking after the operation had already been honed to a tight and efficient formula and that, obviously, has not been altered, because as they say, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' and fortunately it ain't!

More time and space have kindly been given over to promoting the merchandise through Strider and Matt's heartfelt and regular newsletters to the membership. In particular, the LDWA's star product of 2022/23, Food for Walking, has benefitted enormously from the extra publicity, reflected in both the sales and diminishing stock figures. Julie was responsible for the book up to October 2023, after which the stock was transferred to me, giving her more time within the role of Chair; the book now also comes under the general merchandise umbrella. I shall not be able to match Julie's prolific sales during the publication's first year, but will continue the good work by sending out orders to those who request the item, which is both a great read and practical aid to enjoyable and diverse eating.

Sales have not been spectacular this year, but there have been high points and, of course, every item sold gives both pleasure to an individual (we trust) and helps to promote the association through the logo and those four all-important letters, which, once observed, are easily researched, and enlightened upon. Naturally, more sales would be wonderful, but in these hard times the LDWA is extremely grateful for any interest and acquisitions from both members and non-members alike. Our main supplier, Peco Limited, based in Leeds, continues to service our needs as well as ever, whilst Michael Headley, fellow LDWA and IT team member, keeps a close and highly efficient eye on the shop's administrative requirements. Official figures for 2023 are incorporated in the LDWA Treasurer's report.

The most popular purchases in 2023, apart from Food for Walking, were some of the bigger items, such as softshell, fleece, especially microfleece, and as ever, polo shirts and sweatshirts. There was also an unexpected autumnal flurry of rugby shirts, both in men's and women's sizes, which was curious, and maybe came about through the rugby world championships, which took place in France throughout September and October. Donations, through the LDWA shop, have for the second consecutive year increased and the NEC is extremely grateful to everyone who has been so kind, generous and helpful.

AGM sales in 2023 were reasonable and it is hoped that a stall, as usual, will be set up at the 2024 AGM. In between, some merchandise items, including the cookbook, of course, were available at the annual local groups weekend, for 2023 located in Dorchester, and hosted by Dorset LDWA. Although sales were limited, due to small quantities and lack of sizes, some follow-up sales in the shop did materialise shortly after and, as ever, the promotion would do merchandise and the LDWA in general no harm. Further promotional initiatives are planned for 2024, along with some new products. Thank you very much indeed, for another year.

Tim Glenn

Local Groups Officer Report

Having been co-opted to the role in the summer of 2023 after a successful handover by Karen Pickersgill I have hit the ground running with a number of new initiatives and events.

Summary

Successes:

- Increased communication between local groups
- The LGW was hugely successful and informative
- Membership has increased
- New local group implemented
- Establishment of a national training officer role to develop training for new social walk leaders

Areas of concern

- Ongoing concern over recruitment of younger members as the membership is aging
- Concerns over reduction in the number of social walks
- Some concerns about the training of new walk leaders and existing social walks to ensure walks are safe and meet statutory requirements

Increased Communication between Local Groups:

A WhatsApp group was set up between the Local Groups in order to aid communication between the groups themselves. This is proving to be a forum for discussion and sharing of ideas.

I sent my first newsletter in October, which will be sent out bi-monthly in order to facilitate further communication between the NEC and the Local Groups. I requested ideas for discussion at the Local Groups Weekend (LGW) in addition to other areas. The second newsletter was issued at the end of November following the successful Local Groups Weekend.

Local Groups Weekend (LGW)

The LGW was held in a conference centre in Dorset this year and feedback from delegates proved the weekend to be highly successful. A new format was adopted following feedback from previous years' delegates who stated that they would like more time to network. The new format was appreciated unanimously, along with the venue. The workshops included:

- Discussion regarding what should go onto the new website
- Discussion relating to how to improve access to social walks
- Discussion regarding how the Martyn Greaves fund should be utilised
- Discussion relating to the purpose or 'mission' of the LDWA in order to enable it to thrive

Outcomes from each of the workshops were taken to the NEC for further discussion and decision making.

New groups:

There are currently 42 local groups. The role of the LGO is to communicate with local groups and enable local groups to thrive. As such, The Cleveland Groups has been re-established as a new group with a new committee and social walks schedule.

Training:

Ensuring the safety of all our members who take part in LDWA social walks is a top priority and we have developed guidelines for our walk leaders to help them with their responsibilities in this area. The legal environment, as well as our insurer's requirements, change from time to time and it's important that the information and advice we provide to our walk leaders is up to date and relevant. We are currently undertaking a review of our Social Walk Guidelines in the context of the requirements we need to meet, as well as recognised good practice. We are providing the opportunity for Local Group Officers to participate in this review and the updated guidelines will be available in due course. Following this, we plan to offer training to any new or existing walk leaders, on a voluntary basis.

National Data relating to Local Groups

2022	2023
513 GPX files uploaded	353 GPX files uploaded
1500 social walks	1184 social walks
64 challenge events	58 challenge events
1085 registers uploaded	838 registers uploaded

There has been a decrease of 21% in social walks between 2022 and 2023. There has been a decrease of 30% in GPX files uploaded between 2022 and 2023. There has been a decrease of 23% in walk registers uploaded. Only 72% in 2022 and 71% of walks registers have been uploaded. Only 31% of social walks have the GPX files uploaded. Only 10 local groups have uploaded 100% of their walk registers and only 2 local groups have uploaded 100% of their GPX files. 19 LGs have not uploaded any GPX files at all.

It is unknown how many people attend social walks, but attempts to collect this data are being carried out, which involves manual counting of walk registers.

It is essential to improve the figures of walks registers uploaded to 100% across the board as this is related to health and safety and is an insurance risk. GPX files are a useful database for others to walk and to enable walk leaders to have a ready-made walks to recce.

Current Primary Member Ages as a % of the total membership:

Under 19 = 1.5%	40-49 = 10.9%	70-79 = 14.0%
20-29 = 1.3%	50-59 = 26.1%	80 – 90 = 2.0%
30-39 = 3.8%	60-69 = 27.1%	90+ = 0.1%

Primary Age Not Set = 13.2%

The age profile of membership shows that over 50% of members are over 60 years old. For the longevity of the organisation, younger recruitments should continue to be sought.

The number of social walks was reduced in 2021 due to covid restrictions which remained in place. They picked up on 2022. However, the number of social walks across most local group has decreased over the last 12 months, with some local groups not meeting their minimum requirement of 12.

Looking Forward

The next steps will be:

- to identify success factors in those LGs which are thriving and those which are struggling
- pair up strong LGs with weaker LGs to enable struggling groups to begin to grow
- identify where social walks take place to identify barriers to attending the walks
- identify the numbers of people who attend social walks
- upskill walk leaders to facilitate more social walks taking place, through providing a training and mentoring programme across LGs
- encourage LGs to widen the net to recruit younger members – set up a plan of action to enable LGs to recruit younger members

Pearl Barnes:

