

Minutes of the 4th Annual General Meeting
Of Herefordshire Walking
Monday, 18th October 2017 at 7.00pm
Castle Green Pavilion, Castle Green, Hereford

Present: Steve & Sue Dennis, Marika Kovacs, Nic Howes, John Wride, Teresa Nahajski, David Hawkins, Kay Brown, David Seeney, Paul Hayden, Martin & Anthea Hebblethwaite, John Winterfeld, Tony & Marion Cox, Ann & Roger Gosling, Rex & Rachel Hickley, Philip Bauer, Arthur Lee, Liz Hill & Lisa Richardson

Apologies: Bob Selmes, Richard Westlake, Roger Lowery, Chris Over, Norman & Anne Stanier, Les Lumsdon, Mike Ledlie, Ledbury Food Group

Arthur Lee welcomed all to the fourth AGM of Herefordshire Walking and read out the apologies. The agenda and supporting documents were in their packs for the formal part of the proceedings before moving on to the buffet and discussion of plans and ideas for next year's Walking Festival.

Minutes & Matters Arising: The minutes of the last AGM were accepted as being a true record of the proceedings and there were no matters arising **Proposed** by David Seeney & **seconded** by John Wride Carried unanimously

Chairman's Report:

The festival dates for next year are Saturday, 16th June to Sunday 24th June. This year's Festival had gone extremely well with excellent weather although it was a bit hot during the first 4 days. Thank you to the many people who made the running of the 2017 festival possible and successful; our sponsors Steve & Sue, Lisa who does the work & the small committee who meet regularly to co-ordinate all the efforts to make it happen. Many thanks to all the walk leaders & back-markers and those who buy tickets & participate on the walks. In particular, the group of Rambler volunteers who worked valiantly for many hours in the week prior to the festival, repairing stile cross-steps & installing stiles & hope this was appreciated by everyone during the walks.

He appealed to all walk leaders who plan to lead walks in the 2018 festival to return the walk routes & footpath reports as early as possible so that there is more time to resolve any issues rather than just before the festival.

He manned the emergency phone again & there was only one issue, when a walker on the Wye Valley Walk Day 1 suffered a bad bout of cramp & he took her from the bottom of Chase End Hill back to the Ross car park. He met 16 of the festival walks at some point & for the first 4 days carried chilled water to replenish the drinks bottles. It was good to chat to the walkers & gave him an opportunity to tweet on the walks.

He thanked every one for coming & invited them to enjoy the buffet later, before the discussion of ideas for the 2018 Festival.

Festival Report & Accounts

There were 42 walks this year, plus one repeated, so three down on last year. However, nine of those were fully booked and the distribution among the walks was excellent. The 20 miler which no-one booked last year, was full this year and brought in a younger profile. One short walk had no takers & three had very limited numbers so special thanks to the leaders who went regardless. Thank you also to Richard who ran a repeat of his walk & to Julian from Herefordshire Archaeology who stepped in at very short notice to cover a walk along Cefn Ridge. Homme House sold out very quickly again so walks that include a historic house / garden / site not normally open to the public seem to go very well. Two of the parish footpath officers put in walks this year.

Relating the number of Feedback forms to walkers it was a good return. From the forms, a third were from first-timers and 18 of the first-timers last year booked again in 2017. People remembered the brochure & the email newsletters. From the booking database, the total number of walkers from outside the county is just under half but the outstanding feature is the number of people who walk alone in the festival and almost all of them from outside the county. We really are the 'Friendly Festival'. One walker had walked each of the nine days & those walking 6, 7, & 8 were up but the majority did either one or two walks during the festival. The food got rave reviews all round.

The brochures were delivered through the Central Hereford Library distribution system and to tourist information centres. Neighbouring city TICs were very helpful but the libraries were reluctant. Advertising on Sunshine Radio was dropped but the advertisement in the Country Walking 'Festival' edition plus their website worked well bringing in the younger demographic. We had a stand in the Old Market but the best news is that there is now an official Hereford TIC in the Butter Market under the guidance of Liz Hill, our publicity guru, and there will be Tourist Information Points city-wide – an ideal spot to sell tickets during the festival.

The income & expenditure to date had been circulated. The total cost of £4,830 was £100 less than last year but the net income was some £450 less reflecting the lower number of walkers but particularly the cost of the Wye Valley Walk transport, as only one of those walks sold enough tickets to cover the coach cost. Adoption of the accounts was **proposed** by David Seeney & **seconded** by John Wride, carried unanimously.

Election of Committee & Officers

No-one coming forward for the Chairmanship or other officers or to join the committee, the existing members were elected en bloc, unanimously, as follows:

Chair: Arthur Lee
Secretary/Treasurer: Lisa Richardson
Committee Members
Publicity: Liz Hill
Sponsors: Steve & Sue Dennis

Any Other Business:

- *Ideas for future funding* when the current sponsorship ends were discussed. There had been no European Funding readily available for tourism initiatives but now that the Herefordshire Destination Plan is in place this could improve. The form for Leader funding was in hand and, although Leader could not fund the entire festival, application could be made for peripherals such as upgrading the website and on-line payment system, which had suffered problems this year. Tony Cox mentioned that there was no need to use Pay Pal and would advise of alternative systems.

- Nic Howes & Steve Dennis had discussed the idea of a book of walks with funded production so that income from sales would be largely profit to go towards financing future Festivals. With so many walking routes from all the festival years & given the value of tourism to the rural economy, help from Jesse Norman in obtaining grants (eg from DEFRA) might be possible.

- a book of bus walks ("T'early Walks" – ask Les Lumsdon, the expert)

Future sponsors suggested included

- Logaston Press, although they do have their own Herefordshire walks book
- Tesco Community Grant
- Community Trust Funds
- Business sponsors who would cover individual areas, such as printing or postage

Maps: The subject of map routes being made available to walkers was discussed in detail. It was generally agreed that showing the route to walkers at the start of each walk would be helpful.

Rachel Hickley thanked the committee for all their hard work in running the festival and to Steve & Sue Dennis for their sponsorship, without which none of this would be happening.. Echoed unanimously.

Date of Next Meeting: to be held within five weeks of 30th September 2018, exact date to be advised.

2018 Long Distance Walks suggested:

- Vaughan's Way and Loop Walks
- Monnow Valley Walk
- Herefordshire Trail (7 sections as bus walks)
- Three Castles Walk
- Drover's Roads in Herefordshire
- Arrow Valley Walk
- Ley Lines of Herefordshire
- Three Choirs Walk
- Three Castles Walk

Country Houses: Kentchurch Court, Burton Court, Dewsall Court, Garnons Estate

Gardens: Hergest Croft & Laskett

Other: Bat walk in the City – James Bissett / Dragon Walk or Ghost Walk / Urban Wildlife, Wildlife Trust