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Registered Charity Number 289678

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Dry Stone Walling Association
held on Saturday 12 March 2022 at the Westmorland County Showground and via Zoom

Present: Mr P Clayton (Chairman), Mrs T Blackwell, Mr B Hartley (z), Mr P Isherwood, Miss P Kirkup, Mr A Loudon (z), Mr J Taylor and 21 members.

In Attendance: Mrs L Clarkson (Treasurer), Miss A Shaw (Office Administrator)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and brief introductions were made.

AGM22.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Cavendish, Mr S Atkinson, Mr G Hicks, Mr B Jones, Mr C Noble, Ms L Noble, Mr W Noble, Mr T Wragg and Ms E Yates.

AGM22.2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2021

That the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6 March 2021 be adopted was proposed by R Stockall and seconded by J Taylor. There were no amendments and there was a returned vote of 23 in favour, with 1 against. The minutes were therefore agreed and signed.

A total of 26 voting papers had been returned although one was invalid for want of a "mark". **Thanks were** recorded to Mrs Patricia Bell, Former EU Election Observer, for acting as Returning Officer for the voting forms.

AGM22.3 Annual Report

That the Annual Report for 2020/2021 as presented by the Chairman be adopted was proposed by J Taylor and seconded by T Blackwell.

A summary of activity by the Association for the period from 1 September 202 – 31 August 2021 was given by the Chairman. The Association is very pleased to learn that HRH The Prince of Wales has agreed to continue in the role of Patron for a further five year term and we are also pleased that Lord Cavendish continues as our President.

Like most organisations, DSWA has had to adapt to the ongoing presence of Covid-19 in our lives but it has been encouraging to see that courses have taken place in a safe way both at a branch and national level. Demand for training continues to be high and we are looking ahead to the first courses of this current year.

The Trustee Board has adapted to changes in terms of now being able to offer attendance at its meetings electronically as well as in person and it is hoped that this might encourage members who are not geographically close to Crooklands to consider putting themselves forward as trustees in the future. We would welcome new ideas and those with specific skill sets to help continue move the Association forward. A number of small working groups has also been established, which meet at different times to the main Trustee Board meetings to help keep things moving and ensure the Association continues to meet its charitable objectives and is operating under best practice guidance.

There has been a slight increase in membership numbers for the period covered by this report, which is encouraging and it is pleasing to see that some people who have attended a training course have gone on to become members.

The Association continues to be a player in the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership project and is responsible for coordinating training in both dry stone walling and hedgelaying for the duration of the project, for which DSWA is reimbursed through the grant programme.

DSWA has been successful in securing funding from the **Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund for an** exciting new initiative in conjunction with the National Hedgelaying Society, to develop a Rural Skills Hub.

The project has now commenced and is offering training opportunities for young people wishing to learn the traditional skills of boundary maintenance as well as an educational programme of events and activities. The project runs for an initial period of 18 months from November 2021.

Branches continue to play an important role in promoting the craft of dry stone walling and there have been several events and displays open to the public over the year.

The report was approved and adopted by a majority vote of 24 in favour with 1 against.

AGM22.4

Accounts

That the inspected accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021 as presented by the Treasurer be adopted was proposed by B Hartley and seconded by P Clayton.

The effects of the pandemic continued to disrupt the delivery of DSWA charitable activities until well into the Spring of 2021 when the Association was finally able to return to training and qualification activities. During 2020 DSWA was fortunate to benefit from a grant of £38,600 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund which financed the purchase of necessary PPE and equipment, enabling branches to return to training delivery under Covid protocols. The grant was also used towards overhead costs during this period thereby negating any loss due to the pandemic.

The return to the delivery of training and qualifications saw an upsurge in demand with places on training courses and test days filling quickly, both at Branch and National level. Many of the enquiries from the previous year were accommodated by ensuring that sufficient courses were held to meet demand. The Association introduced a pilot Internal Quality Assurance scheme for Examiners which is proving successful. The Trustee Board has continued to hold regular meetings throughout the year. Trustees have minimised expenditure by embracing technology and reducing travel costs.

The Association utilised the Government Furlough scheme, up until May 2021, to contribute to the wages of one member of staff who was required to stay at home under the NHS shielding guidelines. A modest grant towards overheads from the Local Authority was also received.

Project activities resumed in Spring 2021 and The Prince's Countryside Fund Stepping Stones Project was able to meet its target of providing training and qualifications to young people and the majority of grant funding has now been expended. DSWA holds restricted funds relating to training activity for the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership which saw the Association involved in the delivery of beginner courses, Initial qualifications, a walling week and a video.

An successful application was made to the Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund to establish a Rural Skills Hub in partnership with the National Hedgelaying Society. An advance payment of £49,500 i.e. 50% of the grant funding has been received into restricted funds.

Thankfully Branches were able to return to training delivery in Spring 2021 and despite restricted branch activity in the past year, the amount of money held by the branches has increased to over £155,000 from £137,000. Branches are advised to hold sufficient funds to cover their expenditure for one year. There is an **opportunity for branches to support the association financially in it's ambitions. Suggestions for ways that surplus funds can be re-purposed to support core activities is being circulated to Branches.**

Financial recording systems have been reviewed and the Trustees receive detailed quarterly financial analysis to ensure fiscal propriety. A review of merchandise sales is also being undertaken.

Financial statement

Overall, the charity's income increased from £197,346 in 2020 to £279,716 in 2021, however most of that increase was due to restricted funds received for specific projects. Expenditure decreased from £180,552 in 2020 to £169,543. Restricted funds of £27,464 from the National Lottery Emergency Fund were allocated towards overhead costs thereby covering expenditure that would have been met from the reduced income in 2020. The combination of these variances meant that the charity funds increased by £110,173 in the year of which £48,020 related to restricted funds. Reserves of £70,000 have been maintained.

Unrestricted funds show that net income on charitable activities exceeded expenditure by £13,586. A further £27,464 was transferred from Restricted funds and £2,230 from branch transfers resulting in a net movement in funds of £43,280. Branch income exceeded expenditure by £21,103 thereby increasing Branch funds to £155,876.

Net assets of £ 498,155 comprise Branch Funds of £155,876, Restricted funds (projects) of £102,311 and Unrestricted funds of £239,968 including tangible assets of £17,421, stocks of £ 17,775 and £70,000 held in reserves.

There were no questions about the accounts, which were approved by a majority vote of 24 in favour, with 1 against.

AGM22.5 Election of Trustees

There were three nominations for the election of Trustees although one member had withdrawn due to personal circumstances. There was no vote necessary and Pamela Kirkup and Jack Taylor were elected to the Trustee Board. Thanks were extended to retiring trustees Gordon Hicks, Cuthbert Noble, Ray Stockall and Trevor Wragg for all their hard work during their terms of office.

AGM22.6 Appointment of Independent Inspector/Auditor for the Annual Accounts

That Stables, Thompson & Briscoe, Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors be thanked for their services and be re-appointed for 2022/2023 was proposed by B Hartley and seconded by P Clayton. Unopposed, no vote necessary.

AGM22.7 To Ratify Amendment to DSWA Rules

A minor amendment to the DSWA Rules had been made with regards to branch funds transferred annually in respect of training course income. The wording for Section G, end of third paragraph was amended as follows:

"..... The Designated Branch funds exclude an amount collected from beginner training courses, which should be remitted to DSWA central accounts on an annual basis when requested."

AGM22.8 Any Other Business

There was nothing to report and the formal meeting was therefore closed.

Thanks were extended to R Stockall by Dorset and South West England branches for his support over the years.

The Rural Skills Hub is keen to hear from branches/members if anyone is able to offer a six-month placement for young people keen to learn dry stone walling and/or hedgelaying. Anyone seeking further information should contact Carrie House on info@ruralskillshub.org.uk. A part of this project, branches were also encouraged to consider offering "Experience Days" to groups that might not ordinarily get involved with countryside skills. Again, contact Carrie House for more details or if able to help.

There was a general feeling that the remote meeting was useful in bringing members together from far and wide but issues with sound had caused some difficulties to participants, which would be looked into.

Hundred Club

The first draw was made as follows:

March 2022

2% D Haddrell (93)

1% C Waite (33) and S Mitchell (76)

Half Yearly

4% A Campbell (121)

Signed

Date