
Minutes of the DSWA Trustee Board meeting held
on Saturday 11 December 2021 at the Westmorland County Showground & via Zoom

Present: P Clayton (Chairman), B Hartley, G Hicks, P Isherwood (Z), A Loudon (Z), L Noble (Z), R Stockall (Z), J Taylor and E Yates (Z= attended via Zoom)

In Attendance: Mrs L Clarkson (Treasurer) & Ms A Shaw

Apologies: Lord Cavendish, T Blackwell and T Wragg

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| TB21.53 | <p><u>Opening Remarks</u> The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting, whether in person or via Zoom.</p> | ACTION BY |
| TB21.54 | <p><u>To confirm minutes of previous Trustee Board meeting – 2 October 2021</u> TB21.49b – Pinnacle Awards: Clarification was given that S Adcock would continue to hold the role of Pinnacle Award Coordinator but new applications for the scheme would also be forwarded to the Craft Skills Group, which would liaise with the coordinator to help manage the timing of processing applications.</p> <p>TB21.50c – Training Levy: A number of branches had been in contact, expressing concern about the proposed change in training levy, which had not been discussed directly with branches. Clarification was given as follows. At the Zoom meeting held with branches in September, a wide difference in prices charged for training courses had become apparent. The lowest price was for a one-day course at £40 and the highest price for a two-day course was £115. At the subsequent Trustee Board meeting, the training subsidy was discussed and it was proposed that a percentage levy rather than a fixed sum would provide a fairer system. A 10% levy was proposed and seconded.</p> <p>With no further amendments, the minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record of the meeting.</p> | B HARTLEY |
| TB21.55 TB21.55a | <p><u>Matters Arising not otherwise on the Agenda</u> Response from Charity Commission regarding membership included within a training course fee: This query had been raised by the Trustees via email. The Charity Commission confirmed that this is still not regarded as best practice and would also impact on the collection of gift aid for subscriptions. The Trustee Board was satisfied that the current procedure of not including membership as part of a training course should continue. It was noted that the retention of members was higher when they joined having done a course rather than automatically being enrolled as part of a course.</p> | |
| TB21.56 | <p><u>Correspondence</u> Nothing that would not be covered within agenda items.</p> | |
| TB21.57 TB21.57a | <p><u>Financial Matters</u> DSWA Financial Year End Figures: The year end figures had been circulated and had been previously scrutinised by the Finance Group. The final balance appears to show a healthy figure but this includes grant money for the Rural Skills Hub, which was issued in advance of the project starting, as well as funds received from the Emergency Grant fund in relation to support during the pandemic. A Reserve fund of £70,000 is also included. Future planning should not be based on the finances of this most unusual of years and DSWA should ensure that income from memberships and training is reviewed on a regular basis.</p> <p>An issue that had been raised by the accountants was the fact that all monies are held within one bank, and consideration should be given to this and the amounts of money covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (currently £85,000). Following a short discussion, it was agreed that this situation would be looked at and a proposal brought back to the next meeting.</p> <p>There were no queries to the year end accounts, which were agreed and signed as an accurate record.</p> | FINANCE GROUP P CLAYTON |

Unrelated to the accounts but raised at the meeting was the need for a business credit card. This has arisen in light of work being done for the on-line booking system for training courses, which needs to be paid for by credit card in order to avoid excess charges for invoices. Following a brief discussion, it was proposed by B Hartley, seconded by E Yates and unanimously agreed to pursue this as a matter of urgency. A Shaw was asked to contact HSBC initially and report back.

A SHAW

TB21.57b Management Accounts: Copies of the current financial figures had been circulated. These are broken down into a profit & loss account, merchandising, CCS & Training. The meeting was reminded that the figures on the quarterly accounts look different to the full Charity Commission accounts as they do not include creditors, debtors, fixed assets and depreciation. It was noted that most subscriptions are received during the second quarter of the year and this money is then spent during the remaining quarters and there is little room for complacency.

A document had been circulated ahead of the meeting, looking at possibilities of reducing the pressure currently involved in preparing the quarterly and year end figures. It is important that the Trustees have accurate and up to date figures at the meetings but also to work within a realistic framework. Following discussions, it was suggested that the year end accounts could be signed off via Zoom or similar, outwith a Trustee Board meeting, prior to mid-December. A change to meeting dates would help with the September and December quarterly figures and it was therefore proposed by B Hartley, seconded by J Taylor and unanimously agreed that meeting dates for 2022 would be on either the second or third Saturdays as follows:

Saturday 12 March, Saturday 11 June, Saturday 17 September and Saturday 17 December.

ALL

Grateful thanks were recorded to L Clarkson for all the work she had put in to preparing and explaining the annual year end accounts as well as the quarterly figures, which offered a clear and **concise summary of the Association's finances.**

TB21.57c Possible Sponsorship Ideas: Despite the challenges of the pandemic, it was noted that branch funds have increased quite considerably. A discussion took place on possible opportunities for branches to support the Association financially in its ambitions. A draft list of ideas was drawn up and would be circulated with the minutes. This subject would also be included in a future Zoom meeting with branches.

J TAYLOR/
A SHAW

TB21.57d Trading Arm: (TB21.40d refers) This query had been raised with the accountants and circulated ahead of the meeting. It was noted that the costs of establishing a trading arm outweighed possible benefits and the matter would not be pursued.

TB21.58 Durham Legacy Update
Further communication had taken place with regards the project outlined with the Stockton & Darlington Railway although matters had not moved forward in any significant way. Following a lively discussion, the following points were noted.

- Whilst the branch would be responsible for managing the project, there will still be some input from DSWA in terms of establishing a framework within which to work, including financial and quality control.
- There is quite a lot of site clearance and preparatory work to be done before any wall building can take place and it was expected that the railway should look to source funding for this work, which was not appropriate to be paid for out of the legacy money.
- It is anticipated that much of the walling work will be carried out by professional wallers and, as such, will need to be submitted for tender to local wallers.
- Some of the training aspects of the work would be undertaken by the branch and it might be that some of the preparatory work needed on site could be carried out by branch volunteers.

In conclusion, it was agreed that P Clayton would reply to the railway company, in respect of an email sent on 19 October and would copy Paul Foster, P Isherwood, A Loudon and DSWA office in on future correspondence.

P CLAYTON

TB21.59 Branch Updates from Trustees
Brief updates were given and included the following points.

- Some concerns had been raised by branches about the lack of communication/consultation between Trustee and branches. This was despite all branches being invited to a Zoom meeting at the end of September when less than half of branches participated. It is hoped that this could be addressed via the future Zoom meetings being planned between branches and Trustees and discussed later in the meeting.
- There is a need to try and encourage members to get involved and to tap into/utilise expertise within the membership, even for short term projects or specific pieces of work.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions have taken place with the Cotswolds Conservation Board, which is keen to help revitalise the Cotswold Branch, which was encouraging. Links with the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust have been established with the Central and South East Scotland branches, via Lantra Scotland, about possible training opportunities for volunteers and staff. Lancashire Branch has received numerous enquiries for course participants from the Mid-Lancs area and P Clayton agreed to get in touch with the branch to see if it needed support in organising courses in its own area. | P CLAYTON |
| TB21.60 | <u>Governance Issues</u> | |
| TB21.60a | Trustee Liability: This item would be carried forward to the next meeting. | E YATES |
| TB21.60b | Nomination of Trustees: Three nominations had been received by the closing date so there would be no need for a vote but it would still allow additional members to be co-opted to the Trustee Board if necessary. | |
| | A suggestion was made that the new Trustees should perhaps be allocated to working groups, depending on their skills set. | E YATES |
| | Thanks were recorded to R Stockall, T Wragg and G Hicks for the work they have all put in as trustees as they were not standing again. A letter of thanks was read out by E Yates on behalf of T Wragg. G Hicks and R Stockall both expressed their enjoyment of the time as trustees and wished the Association well for the future. R Stockall also recorded his thanks to A Shaw for the help she had offered him during his time as Chairman. | |
| TB21.60c | AGM: Scheduled for 12th March 2022, commencing at 10.30am, with Trustee Board meeting afterwards. Members wishing to attend the AGM will be sent a Zoom/Teams invite in due course. | A SHAW |
| TB21.60d | Amendment to DSWA Rules in respect of Training Levy: The amount of the branch course training levy is included in the DSWA Rules so will need to be amended in light of earlier discussions. | P CLAYTON/ A SHAW |
| TB21.61 | <u>Staffing</u> In response to a letter from A Shaw asking to reduce her hours to four days a week from 1 January 2022, it was noted that this request has been agreed. DSWA has also secured the services of a local HR company to help work through these changes and to offer assistance with an assessment of the overall needs and requirements of the Association going forwards. | A SHAW |
| TB21.62 | <u>DSWA 5-Year Plan/Business Plan</u> Ongoing. | P CLAYTON/ R STOCKALL |
| TB21.63 | <u>DSWA Working Groups</u> | |
| TB21.63a | Policies: Work has been carried out to try and ensure DSWA has a policy for items where legislation exists, based on guidance from NCVO and templates that are available for use. It was agreed that a list of policies should be uploaded to SharePoint and circulated with the minutes. | E YATES/ A SHAW |
| | Thanks were recorded to R Stockall and W Manning for their help, which was much appreciated by E Yates. | |
| | This project has also highlighted the work that is done by Trustees, and volunteers, outside of the formal Trustee Board meetings. A suggestion was made that a short article should be included in the next Waller & Dyker or newsletter, encouraging members with specialist skills to consider offering help on an ad hoc basis. This would be followed up. | P CLAYTON |
| | It was agreed that an updated list of the working groups should be sent out with the minutes. | J TAYLOR/ A SHAW |
| TB21.64 | <u>Membership</u> | |
| TB21.64a | Current Membership Figures: Current membership figures were as follows: a total of 1128 current members, including 853 open, 232 professional, 17 corporate and 22 junior/student/unemployed. | |
| TB21.65 | <u>Craft Skills Group</u> It was noted that the IQA programme will be rolled out at the Examiner Standardisation course taking place over the weekend of 8-10 April next year. | |
| | An update of the CCS booklet is underway with a re-print being planned for the New Year. | |

A recent test in Derbyshire had to be cancelled due to localised snow storms, which highlighted why tests are not usually carried out beyond the end of October. In future, all tests will be held between March and October.

Updated guidance on running test days had been sent out in September and it was agreed that written confirmation should be obtained from the recipients acknowledging their receipt and understanding/acceptance of the content.

A SHAW

In response to a query from Cumbria Branch regarding qualifications held by people who are perhaps not still walling to that prescribed standard, it was noted that if there is a formal complaint about workmanship, this should be submitted in writing to the office in the first instance and will be forwarded to the Craft Skills Group for consideration, as per the complaints procedure outlined in the CCS booklet. There is no requirement for DSWA membership in order to take any of the accredited qualifications.

TB21.66 Training & Education Update

A report was circulated, highlighting the success of courses held this year. Dates for the four-day courses have now been finalised and will be uploaded to the website in January. A new on-line booking system has been created to streamline bookings and payments, which was welcomed.

The Prince's Countryside Fund Stepping Stones project has now been completed and exceeded the original target of trainees but was within the budget. A small underspend on the project has been approved for use on unspecified training purposes within the Association.

The new Rural Skills Hub website has been launched, www.ruralskillshub.org.uk and offers advice on how to get involved with the project, which is being run in conjunction with the National Hedgelaying Society. DSWA branches will be encouraged to add a link to this site from their own branch websites.

A SHAW

TB21.67 Coordinator Reports

TB21.67a

International: A suggestion had been received from B Jones about the possibility of DSWA hosting the International Congress in 2025. Following a short discussion, it was agreed that details of what was required should be obtained and whether there is a closing date for expressions of interest. It was further agreed to include this in the next Zoom meeting with branches to see if any of them were interested in taking the lead with this idea.

A SHAW

J TAYLOR

TB21.67b

Pinnacle Awards: An application had been submitted for a project at the RHS Harlow Carr Gardens near Harrogate. The project had been inspected and recommendations returned. The Pinnacle Award Coordinator and the applicants would be informed of the decision which was reached following a short discussion.

P CLAYTON

TB21.68 Any Other Business

TB21.68a

Scout Activity Badge: A suggestion had been received for DSWA to consider working with the Scouting Association to offer a **"Dry Stone Waller Activity" badge, which would fit within an existing suite of badges.** During the discussions the following points were noted.

- It would be very difficult for young people to achieve the Level 1 qualification.
- Frequent teaching of groups would require DBS checks for instructors although one-off teaching is not subject to the same requirements.
- Safeguarding and insurance issues would also need to be addressed.

In conclusion, it was suggested that South West England branch be contacted to see if it would be willing to run with this idea, which could be done as a pilot project. R Stockall agreed to contact the branch and C Stephens, who had submitted the idea, and report back.

R STOCKALL

TB21.68b

Scotland Liaison Group Meeting Minutes: These had been circulated for information. It was noted that the group is an informal gathering of members in Scotland to discuss common aims and ideas. Members of the West of Scotland also attend and it was agreed that contact would be made to see whether there is scope for this group to become a branch of DSWA.

B HARTLEY

TB21.68c

Zoom Meeting with Branches and Trustees: Following the inaugural meeting of this kind in September, there had been general agreement from participants that it was useful and should be repeated. To that end, Thursday 10 February was put forward as the next date. An email will be sent to all members advising of the meeting and a request that branches nominate one person to attend on its behalf.

J TAYLOR/
A SHAW

TB21.68d Newsletter: A short discussion took place about future format of the electronic Newsletter and it was suggested that the membership could be contacted to see if anyone has the necessary skills to help out. It was also agreed to contact The Stone Trust for advice on the electronic newsletter it produces as well asking the current printers for costs of producing a pdf format. The copy date for the next issue is 1 March, which would be sent out to members towards the end of that month/early April so details need to be sorted out by the end of February.

P CLAYTON
A SHAW
J TAYLOR

TB21.68e Office Closure for Christmas: The office will close at 5pm on Wednesday 22 December and will re-open at 9am on Tuesday 4 January. The website will carry this information and advice about last orders for books, etc in time for Christmas.

A SHAW

TB21.69 Hundred Club
Draws for the Hundred Club were made as follows:

A SHAW

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| November 2021 | 2% B Koo (2) | 1% J Shaw (104) and H Robinson (169) |
| December 2021 | 2% D Haddrell (140) | 1% J Grant (59) and A-M Willmott (70) |
| January 2022 | 2% D Cope (33) | 1% B Klinger (24) and Derbyshire Branch (10) |
| February 2022 | 2% K Shaw (99) | 1% J McLeod (64) and G Hunter (170) |

TB21.70 Date of Next Meeting
The next meeting will take place on Saturday 12 March 2022 at 11.30am at the Westmorland County Showground or by Zoom. Please note change of time as meeting follows AGM taking place at 10.30am

ALL

Agenda items and papers (excluding financials) should be sent to the office by Friday 18 February at the latest.

Meeting dates for 2022:

Saturday 12 March, 11.30am Please note change of time to follow AGM at 10.30am
Saturday 11 June, 10am
Saturday 17 September, 10am
Saturday 17 December, 10am.

SignedP Clayton.....

Date12 March 2022.....

A Shaw/21 December 2021

ref: dswa/tbmtg/dec21mins