

MANX FOOTPATHS CONSERVATION GROUP

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held 7pm on Thursday 27th May 2021

At The Fairway, Peel Golf Club, Peel

1. Welcome:

Chairman Ken Harding welcomed the 37 members present and called the meeting to order at 7.10pm

2. Apologies:

Nine apologies for absence were received: John Radcliffe, Caroline Wright, Dot Winrow, Angela Little, Jackie Ward, Christie Nuell, Tony Archibald, Joy Morris, Jane Gunn.

3. To receive the Minutes of the AGM held on 23rd July 2020 for approval:

Approval of the minutes held on 23rd July 2020, having been previously circulated, were proposed by David Leiserach, seconded by Jack Verity and were duly approved.

4. To receive the Chairman's Report: Ken Harding

Manx Footpaths Conservation Group AGM 2021 - Chairman's Report

Good evening and thank you all for attending tonight's Annual General Meeting of the Manx Footpaths Conservation Group.

The last year have been a challenging time for everyone as the global pandemic, Covid-19, has affected most of us in one way or another. But counting our blessings we have been fortunate that our relative freedom on the island has allowed us the pleasure of exploring the Manx Countryside on foot with our friends as a walking group. Walking has such a profoundly beneficial effect on our wellbeing and I hope you all have taken comfort in the opportunity to relax in a safe and friendly environment on many of our walks.

It's splendid to see the group's membership numbers have swelled this year. We have welcomed several new members and I hope that their association will be happy and enjoyable in the future.

The Committee have worked hard and with tremendous enthusiasm and efficiency throughout the last year. I would personally like to thank them all for their commitment to provide carefree walking to the membership. Their collective decision-making process on the implementation and easing of lockdown restrictions was always clear and decisive, and the care and attention to the safety and security of all our members a priority. I also thank Fiona Vaz for her continued work on keeping the new website up to date. We have received positive feedback from members regarding the ease of use of the website, especially the completion of risk assessments.

The formalities that accompany the delivery of our comprehensive walk programme continue to be assessed and wherever possible the Committee will mitigate and simplify requirements. I would like to thank Pat Mudie for her continued monitoring of the risk assessments and her work as Safety Officer and the leaders for their compliance in completing a risk assessment before each walk.

Lesley Parkington, our Secretary, continues to make sense of our ramblings at Committee meetings and works tirelessly on arranging functions and answering enquiries, thank you Lesley.

The group's finances are kept expertly in order by our treasurer Jack Verity, who keeps a steady and efficient hand on the purse strings, thanks go to him and to George Sharpe who has casts his expert eye over the accounts.

Maree Harper will be leaving her post of Membership Secretary at the AGM after many years of dedicated service. I will personally miss Maree's guidance and extensive knowledge and her passion for the successful running of the group. Thank you Maree on behalf of all the membership.

(Maree was presented with a bouquet and bottle of wine and the members gave her a very warm round of applause.)

The Committee continue to implement plans to increase the benefits of being a member. We encourage members to take up the opportunity to complete first aid courses and we are committed to keeping rolling out a programme of renewal courses when required. The Hill Skills courses were successful, and a variety of related topics and courses are being investigated to offer members over the coming year.

The Committee continue to engage with the relevant authorities on numerous different issues relating to the footpath network on the Island. David Leiserach continues to do sterling work by reporting issues that require attention and maintenance and as a committee we discuss and actively report on planning and other matters effecting footpaths.

This year sees the 50th anniversary of the Group and several events were planned throughout the year. Sadly, these and the walking holiday to Yorkshire in May has been cancelled but hopefully the Committee will look toward celebrating the anniversary, in some capacity later in the year.

Finally, I would like to thank all members personally for their camaraderie, good spirits and friendship throughout what has been a testing year. The group stands in an incredibly positive position as we look forward to the next fifty years.

Many Thanks – Ken Harding, Chair Manx Footpaths Conservation Group.

5. **To receive the Treasurer's Report:** Jack Verity

Jack stated that up to 31.12.20 we had incurred a loss of £2600. The new website was the main expense. In addition £1900 was spent on Health & Safety. Phil Kneen asked for clarification. Jack replied that £1300 being spent on Hills Skills Courses, 13 members @£100p.p., £600 on First Aid Courses, 2 sessions of 12 @ £300 per session. Phil also asked if we were covered by a grant for the Hills Skills Courses. Jack replied that we received a grant from the Lottery Trust which was shown in the previous year's accounts. Lesley Parkington explained that the grant was for £1500 but as two members dropped out of the course, we only spent £1300 and had to return the £200 to the Lottery Trust and account for the money spent which had been given for that specific reason. Peter Corkhill asked how many members had done both courses, Jack replied that thirteen members had taken part in the Hills Skills courses and Lesley said that 24 members had done the First Aid Courses. Lesley said that it is important that those book a First Aid course attend as we have to pay the full amount for each session. The increase in subscriptions should now cover any future expenditure. Lily books have now paid the royalties for our walking books.

Vanda Murray asked why no cost for stationery and was told there had been ample stocks and it was not needed. Peter Corkhill asked why we show £1639.50 as subscriptions as it has been a level £6. Maree Harper replied that some very old standing orders are still active. There were no further questions regarding the report. The Chairman thanked George Sharpe for his help and advice in putting the report together. The Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder to receive the accounts. Lesley Parkington proposed and Catriona Livingstone seconded.

6. **Membership Secretary's report:** Maree Harper

My report to end of year 2020: and my last...!

Membership was 306 memberships included 14 new memberships in that last quarter. This includes our Life Members, firstly, Sir David Wilson, who you may not know, he was a big light in the original Manx Conservation Council from which our Group came. Then our recent President, Duggie Newton and Peter Gunn, whole-term Committee Member. Two newbies to join the Life Memberships are Gill Percival, our stalwart Saturday walks leader ...And myself too!

You may identify the membership of 306 for the Group is the highest ever however this has fallen back since the change of the subscription to £10.00 starting this year. It seems that the need to change the bank details brought a decision for some members to cancel their subscription since that they no longer walked anyway. However, this current year has a healthy 220 membership. All these years and I am still uncomfortable speaking in public but I always feel we are friends especially when before computers & banking transfers when new members communicated through telephone calls which created an immediate fellowship. I have always enjoyed the role. I joined the Group & the Committee in June 1999 when the annual subscription was £4.00. I do know through all these years in this role as Membership Secretary, I know you well enough to say that as long as you have your walk lists you have no real concern for who keeps the Group functioning, but perhaps you do not know that you have the very best Committee in over 20 years. The Committee has evolved to what we have now ...where every Committee member is a specialist in their role. And committed to the Group. I have worked mostly with our Treasurer Jack, and Lesley as Secretary who have been a joy to work with. Thank you. Thank you all.

7. Data Protection Report: Maree Harper

Since the introduction of the Date Protection laws we have had very few breeches and none in recent times. A copy of the group's Privacy Policy is available.

8. Footpaths Officer's report: David Leiserach

As of five days ago there are five long term closures, I keep chasing DoI on these and am given poor reasons why they are still closed. I go to the Green Lane User Group (GLUG) meetings which are chaired by the DoI and the minister Tim Baker has asked the group to look at it's scope and extent of work and it is morphing into the Countryside Access Group (CAG) which will cover PRoW's as well as Green Lanes and Bridleways etc.. This is a work in progress. Thank you to those who report defects. In 2019 there were 129, in 2020 there were 219. We have upped the amount of reporting. I have walked the Raad ny Foillan and Millenium Way and reported many defects, some of which are being dealt with. This year to date we have reported 40 defects. We have a good relationship with DEFA and DoI and as defects are backed up with photos etc. they can't say no. So please continue to report defects to me. I have handed over the job of collating the walks schedules to Peter Corkish so would everyone please help Peter by answering the call for walk leaders and providing the information required.

9. To fix the annual subscription payable from 1st January 2022:

The Chairman suggested that the subscription should remain at £10 for the ensuing year. Debbie Broom proposed and Sue Harvey seconded the proposal.

10. To elect a President:

The Chairman reported that sadly our President, Bob Garrett had passed away during 2020. After discussion the Committee voted to offer the position to Mr. Brian Beattie. When asked Brian said that he would be happy to accept. He stated that he first joined the group in 2008 and has held various position within the club and walking is so important. He has walked the IoM all his life and has never failed to be inspired by it's beauty. He has enjoyed the companionship and workings of the club and has endeavoured to give everything he could during this time to the club. He will be happy to promote the club as much as he can. He would like to place on record his thanks to the Committee for their hard work. There was a unanimous show of hands in favour of Brian Beattie for President.

11. To Elect Committee:

Ken informed the members that there are a few changes this year.

Peter Gunn is standing for re-election. Janice McQuiggan and Diana Kouvel proposed and Pat Mudie and Jean Oldroyd seconded.

Gillian Smith was proposed by Lesley Parkington, seconded by James Parkington

Peter Corkish was proposed by Lesley Parkington seconded by Ken Harding.

All were duly elected. No other nominations were received.

12. Resolutions:

Pat Mudie asked to bring up a point regarding item 5. She queried why no item on the agenda to appoint an auditor for the coming year. Pat Mudie felt this had to be done as it was part of the Constitution. Pat Mudie advised that the Constitution states that 'The Group's Books of Account and supporting records shall be audited at the end of each financial year by the Auditor appointed at the preceding Annual General Meeting' and stated "By not having a professional auditor are we complying with our own Constitution?" Pat Mudie was advised that the Constitution is not a legal document, just a framework to work to. It is only a legal requirement to have an auditor if the groups finances are more than £20,000. Numerous members stated that this was discussed and in the minutes of the 2020 AGM, because it was agreed at the 2020 AGM that we no longer required an Auditor as long as the accounts were independently verified. As the accounts have been verified by George Sharpe, the Committee did not think it was necessary to include this item. It was suggested by Geoff Clague that the Constitution be amended in 2022 to provide clarity. It was proposed that the accounts for 2021 will be prepared by Jack Verity and verified by George Sharpe. Anne Roberts proposed and Belinda Pilling seconded the motion. No other resolutions were received.

13. To vote for name change:

The chairman stated that during the 2020 AGM one of our members, Fiona Vaz, put forward the question that would the group consider a name change. The basis of the proposal was that the word 'Conservation' could be misleading to potential new members and the group does not undertake conservation work as it did in the past. Various views were put forward and the Committee agreed to put forward possible options with one option being 'No Change to Current Name'. Only one suggestion was received from members so other names were discussed and voted upon by the Committee. The list that members have been asked to vote on is:

1. No change to current name
2. Isle of Man Walking Group (committed to preserving Manx footpaths)
3. Manx Walking Group
4. Manx Footpaths Group

All members received the minutes of the AGM with the notification of the proposal for name change and have also received the voting slip for this AGM and 45 members have returned their vote by email or post. Those present were asked, if they wished, to vote clearly on one of the voting slips, but only if they have not already voted.

Votes for 1. No Change to current name – 5 email votes, 10 postal votes, 4 AGM votes = 19
Votes for 2. Isle of Man Walking Group -- 5 email votes, 9 postal votes, 9 AGM votes = 23
Votes for 3. Manx Walking Group -- 0 email votes, 1 postal vote, 2 AGM votes = 3
Votes for 4. Manx Footpaths Group -- 10 email votes, 6 postal votes, 2 AGM votes = 18
Total membership votes 63

The Constitution states that: 'for an amendment to the Constitution this must be done at an AGM or EGM of the membership present and that any amendment must carry a two thirds majority of the voting members'. A two thirds majority for any one name has not been reached so there will be no name change. Sue Harvey felt that as 44 members voted to change the name compared to 19 votes for no change, that was a two-thirds majority. Ken reiterated that there is no clear majority for a particular name so the status quo will remain. He advised that if anyone wished to take this forward in the future they should contact the Committee.

Ken thanked everyone for their input and for attending and invited them to enjoy the buffet.

Lesley Parkington thanked Ken for his hard, productive and creative work for the group and everyone agreed with an enthusiastic round of applause.

14. Meeting closed at 8.10pm

