

# MANX FOOTPATHS CONSERVATION GROUP

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at 7pm on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

At the Fairway, Peel Golf Club, Peel

### 1. Welcome:

Chairman Ken Harding welcomed the 26 members present and called the meeting to order at 7.10pm.

### 2. Apologies:

Fifteen apologies were received: Alistair Lothian, Tracey Soanes, Theresa Anderson, Phil Keen, David Grimshaw, Jane Tatchell, Mark & Moira Pendleton, Janice McQuiggan, Dot Winrow, Elaine Spaine, Jack Verity, George Sharpe, Lesley Cherriman, Manuel Mansilla

### 3. To receive the Minutes of the AGM held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021 for approval:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021, having been previously circulated, were proposed by Sue Harvey, seconded by Denise Eckersley and were duly approved.

### 4. To receive the Chairman's report: Ken Harding

Chairman's AGM Report 2022

'Sadly, this will be my last Chairman's report but I definitely feel a sense of achievement in the progression of the group over the last 3 years. Manx Footpath Conservation Group members have adapted brilliantly and, with the hard work of the committee, I feel that the group are fully prepared to move forwards with confidence.

The last year in particular has highlighted the positivity within the group with the introduction of online payments, improved functions on our website, continuation of our First Aid courses, navigation training, record numbers of new members (in comparison to previous years), social media representation, introduction of walking holidays for all members, integration of new walks to appeal to a potential new audience and of course the continued success of all our walks on a weekly basis.

Well done to everyone involved, but especially the hard work and enthusiasm of the committee. Lesley continues to work tirelessly with the day to day running of the group and always with a smile considering all the re-arrangements and cancellations over the previous year! David works with the various government departments to resolve maintenance and defects reported by our members. This year we have also had meetings with MHKs, giving evidence and writing reports for the forthcoming Tynwald Select Committee on the Island Footpath Maintenance; a great effort by David and thank you. Jack is steering the finances with continuous efficiency, including negotiating a new book deal and staying an extra year on the committee to keep continuity and stability within the committee, thank you Jack. The group's Safety Officer Pat is stepping down from her role and I thank Pat for her work in keeping the risk assessments in order. Gill has hit the ground running as the Membership Secretary and it's a behind the scenes and time consuming role. Gill has tried to contact those members for whom we don't have up to date contact details, as you can imagine a difficult task! Thanks Gill. Peter Corkish has taken over the mantle of collating the walk lists, also a time consuming and stressful job but done with expert detail and enthusiasm – great work Peter. Thanks to the other members of the committee over my time as chair.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the walk leaders, your continued thought and dedication to provide interesting and enjoyable walks for everyone is what really makes this group so unique and successful. Finally on behalf of myself and the committee thanks to the members who have been so patient whilst the committee made thoughtful decisions about when to resume after Covid restrictions and for all your positivity.

The Manx Footpaths Conservation Group is the Island's largest walking group with a programme that has a little something for everyone and this is the foundation that has made it successful for the last 50+ years. The group has needed to adapt at times and that is what has been happening over the last 3 years but now is an exciting time to be a member with reintroduction of walking holidays, social events, potential new walks, and a solid foundation for the infrastructure of the group, So I would encourage members to get involved and join the committee and help make the next 50 years of the Manx Footpath Conservation Group even more enjoyable.

Cheers Ken' ☺

5. **To receive Treasurer's Report:** Produced by Jack Verity and questions answered by Ken Harding in Jack's absence.

Copies of the club's accounts were previously circulated and extra copies provided at the meeting. KH asked for any questions.

Debbie Broome asked if the committee had any plans to spend some of the £14,000 of club funds.

Ken stated that reason the funds have accumulated over the years is because in previous years the club has paid for capital projects such as contributing to footpaths repairs and maintenance. Over the past 5-8 years the different government departments have been reluctant to accept our projects due to liability. The club have previously offered to pay for a stile on Slieu Whallian. An offer to the Wildlife Trust to pay for a bridge over the river in Glen Dhoo was previously rejected but we will approach them again.

Ken has recently been advised that the departments are beginning to change their ideas on this and at the last committee meeting it was agreed that we should now approach government with our ideas for improvement of footpaths.

We have recently used funds to improve the infrastructure of the club with a new website, first aid courses etc..

We have already approached DEFA with regard to adopting a Trig point and are awaiting their reply. Any projects undertaken by the club will have a plaque stating our involvement.

Lesley Parkington felt that there is currently more pressure on the government to be seen to be pro-active in footpaths maintenance, therefore they are becoming more amenable to accepting help and taking the situation more seriously.

Brian Beattie said that there has been an issue with government for many years but is hopeful that the new MHK Sarah Maltby is going to continue to push for improvement of footpaths. Brian felt that the coastal footpath, the Raad ny Foillan, is the Island's blue ribbon footpath and visitors come specifically to walk it. He suggested that the club could pay for a bridge over the Lhen Trench at Cronk y Bing as it is impassible when the tide is in.

Ken stated that the MFCG will now be included in a new stakeholder group regarding walking on the IoM which will give us representation regarding issues with footpaths.

Ken asked for ideas from the members for future projects to be considered.

There were no further questions.

6. **To Receive the Accounts:**

The Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder to receive the accounts. Debbie Broome proposed and Gill Percival seconded.

The Accounts were duly received.

7. **To Appoint an Auditor or Independent Financial Examiner for 2022:**

George Sharpe is happy to be the Independent Financial Examiner for 2022. Brian Beattie proposed and Sue Harvey seconded George's appointment.

8. **To receive Membership Secretary's Report:** Gill Smith

'At the end of 2021, the Group's membership totalled 272, 20 of whom joined in the final 3 months of the year which is very good considering that is October, November and December. Already in 2022 there have been 18 new members, so the Group continues to attract walkers from across the island. After updating the records, membership as at 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 stands at 261 after removing all those from whom no annual subscription has been received for 2022. It has been difficult to update everyone's contact details as long term member's addresses may not now be relevant.

I have also made a considerable effort to persuade members to give email addresses where possible as it is extremely expensive these days to send out information by post. Previously there were fifty members requiring paperwork by post but I have now got that down to just fourteen without an email address. Another very successful project this year has been to have the application process automated through our website which simply requires a press of a button on our 'Join Us' page to become a member. The process of payment is also simplified in this way and removes the need for payment by cheque which involves a cost to the club for every one processed by the bank. Most members now pay by bank transfers or standing order'.

Gill thanked Ken, Lesley and the committee for their help in getting to grips with the role of membership secretary during the past year.

**9. To receive Data Protection Officer's Report:** Gill Smith

To my knowledge there was one data breach in the time that I have been Data Protection Officer for the Group.

On 26th November 2021, an email was sent to 95 members without the recipients being 'blind copied', so email addresses were visible to all 95 people. An identical email was also sent 'blind' on the same day, to a further 125 members. (Emails can only be sent to a maximum of 200 recipients, hence the need to split the membership into 2 parts for the purposes of sending out a mass mailing.)

One member affected by the data breach contacted me about the oversight.

I informed the Group Chairman and Secretary of the data breach immediately, and reported it to the Committee at the next committee meeting. No further action was taken.

**10. To receive Safety Officer's Report:** Ken Harding in the absence of a Safety Officer.

The Risk Assessments can now be done very easily online and are automatically stored onto our website. We are receiving Risk Assessments for 95-100% of our walks and these are a requirement for insurance cover.

Ken said a special thank you to Pat Mudie for all her efforts during her time on the committee.

**11. To receive Footpath Officer's Report:** David Leiserach

'First of all, new, updated IoM maps have been produced. The weatherproof Outdoor Leisure map costs £15.95 for the pack of two. The updated paper maps are also now available. Please now refer to the copy of my report on each table.

The following are long term PRow closures:

PRow 159 – Baldhoon Glen across the Laxey River

PRow 268 – Ballahick Farm Lane

PRow 329 – Majestic coast to Onchan Head this is now only closed Monday to Friday so is available at weekends.

PRow 352 – Arbory Road to Castle Rushen High School Playing Fields

PRow 423 – Scout Glen from Athol Bridge to Grenaby

PRow 632 – Riverbank Road to Gardeners Lane, Ramsey

If there is an **official** closure please do **not** use a PRow.

**GLUG / CAG**

I used to attend meetings of the Green Lane User Group (GLUG) which is chaired by the Department of Infrastructure. I was impressed by the collective desire to prevent damage to the Green Lanes and improve them wherever possible. In Autumn 2020 the Minister for Infrastructure requested that GLUG looked at its scope and terms of reference. GLUG has now morphed into the Countryside Access Group (CAG) to give guidance to DoI when they manage PRows, footpaths, bridleways, and access to the countryside. There have not been enough meetings for me to comment on whether this idea will work.

**Tynwald - Select Committee on Footpaths, Bridleways and Green Lanes**

On 5 July 2021 David (Butch) BATTERY placed a petition of grievance before Tynwald stating that "The public footpaths, bridleways & green lanes on the Island are important and well used, and that many sections of the network of Public Rights of Way are poorly maintained, badly signposted and in many places dangerous and

impassable. He requested that Tynwald set up a single Government agency with sole responsibility for all the Islands public rights of way.

Following the election of a new Tynwald on 23rd September 2021, Mrs Sarah Maltby MHK raised the matter in Tynwald and a Select Committee on Footpaths, Bridleways and Green Lanes was set up.

The Select Committee called for evidence, and I was asked by your Committee to draft a submission. The submission was created, agreed, and then submitted to the Select Committee before the closing date of 21 December 2021.

On 7 February DoI, DEFA and DFE gave evidence. DoI specifically stated that over the period 2010 to 2020 their maintenance budget had been cut by 90%! No wonder they are slow in maintaining footpaths. Subsequently I was asked by the Select Committee to attend Tynwald on 28 February 2022 to give additional verbal evidence. We await the results of their deliberations. The view of your committee was that we did not want a 'new' single government agency with sole responsible for all the island's Prow's. DoI are responsible for most of them and it is unlikely that anything will happen in a budgetary way this year as the budget for 2022 has already been set.

PRoW defects: Thank you for all the reports of defects I receive. In 2019 the number of defect reported was 129, \*2020 – 219, 2021 – 124, and so far this year – 30.

\* The high total number of defects in 2020 was because MFCG carried out detailed surveys of Millennium Way and Raad Ny Foillan.

If you see a defect, please let me know – but I can only report it **IF** you supply an exact location and a picture! I am currently trying to find out if DoI prefer the location to be specified in Northings / Eastings, or Grid Reference or What3Words.

#### **The Ramblers Association**

The Ramblers Association is for INDIVIDUAL people. Please look at their website and see if you would like to join, or to go on one of their organised walking holidays.

If you go on one of their holidays, please say that you are from MFCG and the club gets a small amount of money for each person that goes.

#### **PRoW minor maintenance**

If you use a PRoW regularly, you will know when the vegetation needs trimming back. If you can do small jobs on a short length of PRoW this really helps over the whole network. I know that many of the Walk Leaders carry out this sort of maintenance when they are doing a recce. If you want to do the same, please do so.

I have seven projects relating to PRoW's ongoing at the moment and DoI would like MFCG to assess all PRoW's on the Island. Thank you'.

Sue Harvey asked as if footpaths shown on the new version of the maps are correct and have any been missed off. David replied that he has been advising DoI of any discrepancies found. The new Government PRoW officer already has a list of 200 paths which show discrepancies on the maps. Ken Stated that there was some improvement with the maps such as larger areas of ramblage and permissive paths are now shown.

Denise Eckersley asked if we could have a list of defects already reported so as not to bombard David with repeat defects. David said this is not necessary as DoI take a considerable time to fix problems.

#### **12. To fix Annual Subscription payable from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023**

The committee propose that the annual subscription remains at £10. Gill Smith Proposed and David Leiserach seconded the proposal.

#### **13. To Elect Executive Committee:**

Ken stated that himself and Pat Mudie are standing down from the committee this year and David Leiserach is standing for re-election.

Lesley Parkington proposed David for re-election and Jim Parkington seconded. All those present agreed. Brian Beattie is happy to continue as President. Brian was proposed by Gill Percival, seconded by Sue Harvey. Alistair Lothian has agreed to stand for the position of Chairman and was proposed by Di Turner, seconded by Denise Eckersley. All those present agreed.

Paul de Weerd has agreed to stand as Safety Officer and was proposed by Lesley Parkington, seconded by Jim Parkington. All those present agreed.

Lesley Parkington stated that both Alistair and Paul will be very good representatives of the club.

All other positions on the committee were proposed by Sue Harvey, seconded by Paul de Weerd and voted en bloc by a unanimous show of hands.

#### **14. Resolutions:**

Ken Harding advised that the following Resolution has been submitted by the committee.

‘This resolution proposal by the Manx Footpaths Conservation Group Executive Committee is to update and amend the 2011 Constitution at the 2022 Annual General Meeting. The main reasons for the amendments are to include the positions required by our Insurers and GDPR of Safety Officer and Data Protection Officer respectively. Also included is the addition of an Independent Financial Examiner (throughout) which allows the group to not require the services of an Auditor for our Yearly Accounts’.

Full details and explanation of this resolution were sent to all members on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022.

Ken asked if there were any questions regarding the Constitution.

Barbara Gibson referred to item 6 of the Constitution and asked in the club is wound up would any remaining funds stay on Island. Ken replied that that decision would be made by the membership at that time.

Ken asked for a proposer and seconder for the resolution. John Radcliffe proposed and Lesley Parkington seconded.

The resolution to amend the 2011 Constitution was agreed and passed by the meeting.

Before closing the meeting, Ken said a few words.

‘When I started as Chairman three years ago the club had had a few difficulties. The group has come on in leaps and bounds during that time which is due to the members adapting and being open to new ideas. The fellowship and enjoyment of walking on the IoM is what makes this group so good and will continue to do so for the next 50 years’.

So thank you everyone for coming’

Brian Beattie said that he has been a member for many years and the last three years Ken has taken on the role of Chairman and has done a great job. It is not an easy job. Brian placed on record a vote of thanks to all the committee who have worked the last three years to promote walking on the IoM and the Manx Footpaths Conservation Group. This was agreed with an enthusiastic round of applause.

Brian also told those present that money was raised through a quiz at our belated 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lunch in January for the ‘President’s Charity. £100 was donated to Sight Matters, IoM.

David Leiserach thanked Ken Harding on behalf of the MFCG for being an excellent Chairman and for all his achievements for the club during his tenure.

Ken was presented with two bottles of wine and stood down as Chairman to very enthusiastic applause.

Meeting Closed at 8.10pm

