



Minutes of Annual General Meeting held at King Stanley Village Hall 4 August 2017

Those present: David Ashbee, John Bartram (Chairman and Treasurer/ trustee), Philip Coates (trustee), Bernard Gill, Chris Gill, John Heathcott, Alan Hooper (trustee), Martin Lovegrove, Simon Mallatratt (trustee), David Owen, Mavis Rear (trustee), Margaret Reid (trustee)

Apologies for absence: Jean Booth, Colin Hunt (trustee), Val Kirby, Keith Sisson (trustee), Rob Talbot, Sheila Talbot

Administration: It was agreed that with immediate effect Alan Hooper will take on the role of Secretary and Margaret Reid the role of Membership Secretary, both of which roles had been carried out by Simon Mallatratt for the past year. Simon will take on the role of Project Coordinator.

Annual Report and Accounts

John Bartram reminded that the annual report and accounts had been compiled in line with the requirements of the Charity Commission. He noted that the Commission does not accept submission of reports and accounts until August so the document presented to the AGM had not yet been endorsed. John reminded the meeting of the formally approved objectives of the CWA and summarised the report as showing the activities that had been undertaken largely to set up and publicise the CWA in its first year. He thanked Keith Sisson for generating the first newsletter, Rob Talbot for setting up the website, Ramblers' Charitable Holiday Trust for the generous grant to support the website development, and Simon Mallatratt for establishing the membership procedure through MemberMojo and the PayPal banking arrangement.

John went through the accounts that had been circulated to members prior to the AGM. A copy is appended to these minutes.

The annual report and accounts were approved unanimously for acceptance on a show of hands.

Appointment of Trustees

The Chairman advised that all the current trustees had notified willingness to continue for a further year and that additional trustees would be welcome if anyone wished to put themselves forward. The meeting was content that the current trustees should continue with no further trustees at this stage. John clarified that at the next AGM one third of the trustees must stand down but can if they

wish seek re-election ; trustees can serve a maximum of two continuous three-year terms as laid down in the CWA Constitution, written in accordance with Charity Commission regulations.

Routes supported

The Chairman sought approval for the routes listed as being supported by the CWA in the agenda circulated to members prior to the meeting. It was suggested that two further trails would logically be added to the list, namely the Wysis Way and the Wyche Way, both of which specifically link other National Trails to the Cotswold Way. The meeting noted that the list of supported routes forms part of the constitution so a two-week notice period prior to the AGM is necessary to effect the suggested additions. It was agreed that these proposals would be considered at the next AGM.

Bernard Gill prompted a useful discussion as to whether the inclusion of so many named routes in the constitution represented a lack of focus, for example as compared with the Cambrian Way Association that has a clear focus on that one trail. He also noted that a large proportion of the Gloucestershire Way, listed as a supported route, falls outside the Cotswolds AONB. The Chairman agreed that the trustees needed to consider that specific point and to report back to the next AGM. A consensus emerged that the Cotswold Way is very much the marketing brand of the CWA; the inclusion of other supported routes in the constitution gives flexibility to improve the enjoyment of trails in the Cotswolds but should not be seen as the primary focus of CWA activity. These other routes could perhaps be presented as “feeder trails” to the Cotswold Way. It was emphasised that the CWA will not contravene charity legislation by using its resources to provide financial support to other charities looking after supported trails.

Following this discussion, the meeting approved the list of supported routes for inclusion in the constitution.

Projects in hand and in prospect

The Chairman reported that there are currently two approved projects in progress, namely the installation of steps at Weston (north of Bath) and the installation of two gates on the Winchcombe Way. Both are likely to be completed shortly (of order six weeks maximum) subject to the expected resolution of issues raised by respective landowners.

David Owen gave an update on project outlined to the CWA previously concerning improvement of access from the Cotswold Way above Coaley Peak. South District Wardens had managed to make the agreed diversion using resources already available but there are further improvements that may be put forward to CWA in respect of signage/ waymarkers and a possible handrail. Alan Hooper to report back to the trustees as soon as possible and work with David to generate a funding proposal as appropriate.

Philip Coates gave an update on the proposed project involving the installation of steps or a handrail at Wistley Grove. The optimal method of improving the trail was under review but he hoped that this would be resolved very soon to enable a costed estimate of the necessary work to be submitted in the week following the AGM. Philip reported that consideration was also being given to installation of a handrail to improve the trail at Edge Common.

The Chairman noted that some improvements may be required in the area of the diverted Cotswold Way at North Nibley following major land-slips in recent years. Alan Hooper is to consult with the Trail Officer and fellow wardens and report back to the trustees.

The Chairman stressed that the CWA has the objective of improvement and not routine maintenance of the Cotswold Way. Simon Mallatratt sought a decision in principle from the meeting concerning the possible funding of fill-in hedging plants in the event that a hedge currently requiring continual maintenance by Cotswold Wardens is improved by comprehensive hedge-laying. It was agreed that this could be viewed as improvement.

This prompted Chris Gill to raise an important question about the existence of a CWA business plan or similar. The meeting was satisfied that the process of those regularly surveying the Cotswold Way identifying improvements and seeking support in principle followed by approval of a costed estimate, including contingency, provided a robust approach to deployment of the CWA resources. In the event that a desirable improvement could not be covered from existing funds, then a specific fund-raising initiative would be considered.

Plans for the coming year

The Chairman proposed that the main activity over the next twelve months would be to publicise the CWA and to engender increased support from users of the Cotswold Way and the many organisations that benefit from its use. Initiatives would include targeted distribution of promotional A2-size posters and of the leaflets produced earlier in 2017. Additionally a business card is being produced for easy distribution to walkers on the trail and at associated events.

Any Other Business

Benefits to members: Rob and Sheila Talbot had e-mailed to request that consideration should be given to the issue of the limited benefits to CWA members as compared with those afforded by other, broadly comparable associations having similar aims. The communication included a well-researched summary of the various benefits on offer by the other associations. The consensus of the meeting was that this provided a valuable pointer to where the CWA should be heading in the future if it is to have long-term sustainability. It was felt that the CWA had achieved all it could in this respect in the short time it has been operating and that the other associations had performed similarly in their initial years with the exception of one or two that had been initiated by large donations. Rob and Sheila were thanked for their thoughtful contribution and the ideas that it contained will be revisited periodically by the trustees.

Relationship with CCB and its officers: John Heathcott queried the CWA's relationship with the Trail Officer. He was reassured that there is a close relationship in the sense of general interest and provision of meeting room facilities. He suggested that the Trail Officer should receive minutes of trustee meetings and be invited to attend those meetings. Mavis Rear noted the potential for the Cotswold Conservation Board itself to overlap the activities of the CWA.

Membership: David Owen felt that more Cotswold Wardens should be CWA members than is currently the case. He suggested that it is timely to remind fellow wardens of what membership involves and in particular that improvements to the trails are best identified by those most involved in surveying and caring for the trails. John Bartram asked if it would be possible for the relevant

trustees to give a presentation on the CWA at the next round of quarterly meetings; this was generally agreed. John Ashbee felt more could be done in distributing the CWA leaflets to pubs and hotels lying on the route of the Cotswold Way; again it was agreed to take up this initiative.

Relationship to Cotswold Wardens: Bernard Gill asked what will happen to the money currently directed by CCB to the Wardens for repair and maintenance of the Cotswold Way. The Chairman responded that the CWA can currently be viewed as a contingency against reduction in the Government funding that is the source of the relevant budget. Martin Lovegrove (currently Head Warden) stressed that under current arrangements there must continue to be a clear separation of the activities of the Wardens and the CWA.

Signage: Philip Coates raised the issue of installing signage to promote the CWA funding of certain projects such as Wistley Grove where there is no obvious eye-level structure on which to place the sign. It was agreed that, subject to the necessary approvals, a low post should be installed to take the sign.

Close of meeting: In closing the meeting the Chairman thanked his fellow trustees for their work and support in establishing the CWA over the past year. He also thanked David Owen for arranging the meeting venue, including refreshments. In turn Simon Mallatratt proposed a vote of thanks to John for his initiative and commitment in launching the charity.