

Minutes



Annual General Meeting of the Cotswold Way Association

Held on the 5th January 2024 commencing at 1400 at Kings Stanley Village Hall, Marling Close, King's Stanley, GL10 3PN

Those attending: John Bartram (Trustee and Chairman), Martyn Hall (Trustee and Vice Chairman), Malcolm Higgins (Trustee and Secretary), Martin Lovegrove (Trustee), John Tennant (Trustee), Clare Muir (Trustee), Richard Holmes (Trustee), Simon Jones (Trustee), David Owen, Rebecca Jones, John Shaw, Rebecca Atkinson, Bridget Richmond, Bernard Gill, Nigel Meredith.

1. **Apologies for absence** Mavis Rear (received after the meeting)
2. Minutes of the last meeting held in October 2022 were unanimously accepted as a true record of the meeting.
3. **Matters arising** from the last meeting.
 - a. **Election of Trustees.** The Chairman explained the Constitution requires one third of Trustees to stand down at each AGM and if eligible may offer themselves for re-election. John Tennant, Martin Lovegrove and Claire Muir stepped down by rotation, were available for re-election and were duly re-elected unanimously.
4. **Annual Report.** The Chairman referred to the Annual Report which had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting and which had been submitted to the Charities Commission, commenting on the following:
 - a. The completion of a strategic review to provide us with a clear direction for the next five years.
 - b. Continuing close working relationship with Cotswold National Landscape.
 - c. Supporting improvements on the Cotswold Way.
 - d. Funding an innovative project to lay a non-slip surface of Eco Grid and gravel on a moderately steep slope of the Cotswold Way near Weston.
 - e. Purchase of 50 oak National Trail “acorn” waymarker posts to replace failing posts along the length of the Cotswold Way.
 - f. Contributing funds to enable the production of the Cotswold Young Explorers Project – an online educational resource based on the Cotswold Way and tailored to fit with the school curriculum.
 - g. Expansion of the CWA Online shop.
 - h. Publication of The Cotswold Companion, An Insider Guide by former Trustee Keith Sisson.
 - i. Further expansion of the CWA web site.
 - j. Engagement with organisations involved with promoting Cotswold Tourism.
 - k. Expansion of CWA presence on social media.
 - l. Recruitment of two new Trustees.
5. **Finance Report.** The Chairman referred to the Finance Report which had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting and which had been submitted to the Charities Commission and commented on the following:
 - a. The cash balance held at the end of the financial year (31 Mar 23) was £15,893.65.

6. **Other major trails supported** within the AONB. The Chairman explained the CWA constitution requires a review of other major trails supported by the charity where they route through the Cotswold AONB.
 - a. Trails that have previously been supported are the sections through the Cotswolds AONB of the following trails: *Winchcombe Way, Wardens Way, Monarchs Way, Macmillan Way, Heart of England Way, Gloucestershire Way, Diamond Way and Wysis Way*. These trails were unanimously approved to continue to be supported.
 - b. The 3 Choirs Way trail was discussed but not supported.
 - c. Simon Jones proposed adding the Windrush Trail, which was discussed and the trail supported.
7. **Any Other Business**
 - a. The Chairman commented that he would have to stand down as both Chairman and Trustee at the end of 2025 due to the rotation clause referred to at 3a above. To help plan for this a position of Vice Chairman had been created and Martyn Hall has taken up the role.
 - b. The Chairman announced a feasibility study to consider all aspects of creating a Cotswold Way (CW) route from Bath to Chipping Campden accessible to less able-bodied people, those using mobility scooters and young families using pushchairs. The existing (CW) route would be used wherever possible but inevitably some new sections would be needed. The Chairman stressed this would be a very first stage look to determine feasibility, costs and timeframes.
 - c. There followed an open discussion during which Bernard Gill expressed concern over hard coverings (tarmac or compacted stones/shingle) on footpaths and added The Ramblers were embarking on a policy of keeping the countryside green. This was duly noted but it was also pointed out by David Owen that some sections of footpath would be unusable in bad weather if they were not properly laid and maintained. The general consensus was of merit in at least looking into the challenges such a project might have.
 - d. The Chairman said that John Shaw was a member of the oversight committee for the A417 project and asked him to provide an update. John Shaw explained he attended meetings as part of a working group with the contractors for the A417 project alongside CNL and said at a recent meeting the contractors had given clear assurances that access along the CW would be continuous with no disruption other than some temporary sections bypassing work activity. He added the contractors held detailed maps and Gantt charts of the circa 25 footpaths being impacted by the works.
 - e. Simon Jones made the general point that the CWA was always looking for additional Trustees and Volunteers to help us grow and become even more effective.
 - f. The Chairman noted with pleasure the presence of two representatives of the solicitor firm Willans, a CWA Business Member, and opened the floor for a discussion about what Business Members sought from the CWA and what their motivations were in joining. Rebecca Atkinson replied that their motivation to join was twofold: to encourage and support their staff to use the CW and engage with the CWA; and, to give something back to the local community. She added that these aspirations could manifest as staff volunteering on work projects, helping fundraising, encouraging Giving for Living through Wills, or any number of other possibilities. From the floor other options were added such as Cotswold Warden guided walks and habitat improvement activities. The Chairman thanked Willans for their positivity. Simon Jones was nominated as the CWA link for Willans to help get some of the ideas mentioned off the ground.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15.18.