

West of Scotland
Dry Stone Walling Association
Scottish Charity No SCO 39439

Annual General Meeting
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Sunday 8th November 2020

Meeting

Sederunt: Alan Patrick, Dave Barber, Colin Nicholson, Alistair Eadie, John New, Crawford Andrew, Jeff Hattie, Russ Liddell, Daniel McNaughton, Ronnie Reid, Dave Lutwyche, Alan Fox, Ian Marshall

Apologies: Richard Donald.

Agenda Item 1 – Chairman’s Statement

This was given by the chairman as per the Annual Submission to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) for the period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020.

2020 has turned out to be an extraordinary year. Due to the COVID pandemic we've had a zero-activity year – the first time this has happened since the branch was founded in 1997-1998. Courses were fully booked but sadly couldn't progress and as such we've carried them over to next year: the whole 2020 program will be carried over to 2021. There's only been a handful of refund requests and these have been compensated by others wanting on the courses. So, what about 2021? Who can say? This COVID seems to be dragging on and on and may continue into the middle of 2021 and with government regulations continuously changing it's impossible to predict. The course for the end of March/early April is full with 22 people signed up. Hopefully we'll be able to do this when the time comes. It's been doubly disappointing for the very new members who joined in the last 2 years as they've lost momentum in their training and development but I would ask them to hang on in there, and next year we'll hopefully make up for lost time once we get started. So, I'll ask everyone to stay safe and be patient with this current mess we're in in the country and hopefully we'll all get going next year.

John then asked for any comments:

Alan Patrick said, Dave has updated us every month or two month what's happening as far as the website and the courses are concerned, revolving them around until we get started again.

Agenda Item 2 – Finance Report

Chairman John New submitted the annual accounts as per the Annual Submission to OSCR for the period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020.

We started off the year with £5357 in the bank and currently we have £4149-89. So, we are still in a very strong position financially, thankfully. The main expense is the van, which has been sitting quite quiet for the last year. There are a few issues with that – there's a lot of problems getting it started and there are other mechanical things we have to keep on top of with it. It should really be run a bit more often.

The total costs for the year: the van took the big chunk of £979 for its MOT and repairs and we had £60 of course refunds, the accountants were £360, website costs were £144 and insurance of £472 a year. We also had a £264 test fee we had make up for the lack of numbers on last year's exams in the annual test. So, all that comes to £2581.

The income has been very low: We received £200 for the Arrochar Seat project, course fee cheques came to £120 and subscription cheques come to £110. We also received £900 directly into the bank account for course fees and vouchers. So, the total income comes to £1374, and deducting that from the expenditure, we're left with £1207 which is a negative. When we deduct that from the opening balance (£5357) we are left with £4149-89, so that balances perfectly.

So, we are quite financially stable thankfully and that's due to well-run courses and good numbers on the courses over the years: it's bringing in around £2500 a season, so we have a wee cushion there. We have also agreed that the subs should be abandoned this year because no one has received anything from the subs, so whoever is paid up for this year will be carried forward until next year, and we won't be asking for any subs until the next AGM in November.

John then asked for any comments:

Alan Patrick commented it was a good set of figures. John confirmed the £4149 would see us through.

Dave mentioned that there were council grants available, and Alan suggested that there were other charities that needed those grants more than the association.

Jeff asked about the livery /signwriting for the van. John confirmed it was pending and will look at it after the restrictions are loosened. Russ suggested that Jim might have been involved in the previous signwriting – and perhaps Norman might know. Dave is to send photos of the old van livery to John.

Agenda Item 4 – Election of Office Bearers

Because of the Zoom AGM and some committee members weren't present, it was decided that John would send out an email to the existing committee members to

confirm that they wanted to extend their committee member status for another year. This would be reflected in the AGM minutes as an addendum.

John New said he was happy to act as Chairman and Treasurer for another year.

Agenda Item 5 – 2020 Courses and IT

Dave Barber talked about the 2020 courses and the new 2021 programme (which is a copy of the 2020 program). The association sent out an email to all Reserved and Confirmed 2020 attendees asking them if they wanted to be rolled over to the 2021 courses and about 50% responded. Some have vouchers, some have paid and some are reserved without payment.

We expect some attendees from the 2020 Course 1 will not be willing or able to attend the associated 2021 course, so we have extended Course 1 numbers to 22 spaces to cater for this. 2021 Course 1 is now fully booked. Also, we have had many requests for the full 2021 Course 1 and most of those have booked Course 2 but have asked to be on a waitlist for Course 1. We have 7 on waitlist for Course 1 at this time.

We have 12 people booked on Course 2. We have 2 people booked on Course 3. Because of the uncertainty around the pandemic, the fullness of the courses and the expected refunds when some people can't make it, we are not insisting on payment to confirm the spaces just now. If people insist on confirming their space, (or they are buying a voucher), then they pay via Internet banking.

Dave then showed the meeting the new on-line booking system which is being tested. The system will accept Debit/Credit cards but the testing is not complete. Even though Dave can set up a shop on the web, a third-party system (cadamy.co.uk) was selected for the shop and payment – for 3 reasons:

- 1) Dave didn't want all the system knowledge to be held by himself (in case he became unavailable)
- 2) There are many people who provide course/shop systems like this and it seems silly to reinvent the wheel
- 3) Cademy have developed their shop as an arts/craft marketplace, for courses around Edinburgh & Scotland (and they have plans to extend the areas). Our courses will automatically be included in the courses that people browse on their main craft website (which is similar to Craft Scotland - where we also upload details of our courses).

Cademy contacted Dave to request our courses and Dave has been testing their systems for them, so he negotiated for free access (and no commission) for WSDSWA.

There is a 2% charge to the Debit/Credit card company (Stripe), but that is a different fee and will always have to be paid. We took this into account when we increased our course prices to £60 a few years back. Stripe is a large CC processing company used by Deliveroo, Booking.com, Made, ASOS, Opentable, Google etc.

We receive funds from Stripe within 2 business days - directly into the WSDSWA bank account.

Dave then showed the card payment process by sharing his screen, including the ability to refund. We get the same details as our current manual system, emails are automatically sent, spaces are automatically limited to 20 – although we can alter the number of spaces if required. Dave also showed the meeting the new voucher system which has just been added. Vouchers can be emailed directly to the recipient, or a PDF can be sent to the person paying, or our existing pre-printed Gift Certificate presentation pack can be sent to an address. Vouchers can be used by the recipient while booking a course.

We also have to load more pictures into our Gallery.

Agenda Item 6 – Any other business

Scottish Liaison Group (SLG). John New briefed the meeting on the Zoom SLG AGM – which this year included a member of the walling group from Skye.

One of the interesting points that came up was the development of a walling test site in Dunfermline at the Scottish Lime Centre. Central branch and East of Scotland branch were associated with this initiative. John mentioned to the SLG group that we were regularly finding it hard to fill the spaces on the annual WSDSWA test day at our site and sometimes cancelled the test day because there weren't enough candidates. Adding another site/day in Scotland could split the existing demand and affect both of us. John suggested to the SLG that perhaps they could have a test day in Spring and we would have ours in Autumn, so keep the days as far apart as possible – to reduce any conflict in attracting attendees.

Alan and John thanked Dave for his work on the website. Dave expressed a concern about the technical skills required for the management of the website and he needed a backup person in case he wasn't available (as all well-planned systems should have). He also suggested that other web technologies could be used in the future as they became more stable (something that a less-technical person could easily manage – e.g. Squarespace). He would re-evaluate the site technology in 2+ years.

Jeff Hattie volunteered to share some time with Dave so he could become familiar with the website. They will look at this in the new year, starting with adding more pictures to the Gallery.

John spoke about how we could get around some of the pandemic restrictions (families, tiers, bubbles etc.). It will depend on what the regulations are in March – on whether we can run Course 1. Hopefully things will be getting better by then.

Alan confirmed that the test site is still open for individual practise.

Chairman John New thanked members for the good turnout and the meeting closed at 2.44pm.