

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

Annual General Meeting
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Sunday 27th November 2022 14:00

Meeting

Sederunt: Danny McNaughton, Dave Barber, John New, Alan Patrick, Sam Gibson, Dave Lutwyche, Alistair McGeoch, Alistair Eadie, Jeff Hattie, Ronnie Reid

Apologies: Russ Liddell, Crawford Andrew

The original AGM scheduled for 20th Nov could not be completed because of a venue problem, so it was rescheduled as a Zoom meeting a week later.

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes for previous Years

Minutes of the AGM 2021.

The minutes of the 2021 AGM held on 7th November 2021 were proposed by Alan Patrick, seconded by Jeff Hattie, and passed as a true record of the proceedings.

(Note: The 2021 AGM minutes are printed out and will be available as an extra document at the next AGM).

Agenda Item 2 – Chairperson’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 2021 to 31st August 2022.

The last year has mainly been a recovery year post pandemic. We’ve had to try and regain momentum within the branch as members old and new have failed to reappear and this has meant that attendance at events has been rather patchy. It’s been good to see several new members from the last three or four courses engaging with us and hopefully we’ll gain some of the lost momentum over the next year or two.

The season kicked off in March with an impromptu day at Barrmill, Ayrshire where several of us assisted a local gardening group with a small, raised bed, despite a dodgy stone type, recycled cobbles, it turned really well.

The first course of the season held at Kilsyth was a good day and gave positive feedback. The next was Kilmacolm show, one of the lovely sunny days we’ve had in

years, lots of course enquiries, general enquiries and we repaired a bit of the wall as well, so it turned out a lovely day.

The lack of community projects this year has meant that we've had more time to develop other member skills and walling experience. These turned out to be enjoyable days, good banter, hard work and general upgrading of the walls and tidying of the site. And lots of Alison's home baking kept us going and a big thank you Alison for that.

On the whole, I think the membership benefitted greatly from those days and it showed in three positive test results at the end of the season with passes from Jeff, Jim and Levi. Excellent results and well done for their efforts. A further two courses at Cardross and Kilsyth proved successful and again we got great feedback from them. The coming year holds good promise of a few exciting projects in the pipeline which we'll discuss further on. I think its worth keeping members development days going at Kilsyth as with new members coming along with the courses, they need more one-to-one mentoring than can be given on community projects, as usually the pressure to complete these on time means we have less time to concentrate on mentoring. So, it's striking a balance in a relatively short season.

I'd like to thank all the committee members for their support this year, and all the other years, and also all the members for attending and engaging with the events over the season. The branch in the whole is working well and is very healthy and it's onwards and upwards.

Agenda Item 3 – Finance Report

Chairman John New submitted the annual accounts as per the Annual Submission to OSCR for the period 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022.

The present funds at the moment in the bank are \$5590.

The training courses brought in £4700 last year which is up from £2638 the previous year, so those have been really successful. I think putting the price up to £95 has made a big difference and will continue to do so. The training courses are hard work, but we get good feedback and they're a good way to bring in fresh members and we need those. Subscriptions were £140. We made £3 in bank interest.

General costs: Came out at £4119 which left us with a surplus of £794 for the year so we're well in the black.

The main costs are still the van at £2355 last year. One of the reasons for that is it sat for a long time over the Covid pandemic, so it took a fair bit to get it all up back up and running with it. It's running well at the moment – driving well. Insurance is up £60 from the previous year.

John then asked for any questions: There were no questions.

Recommendation of the balance sheet as a true record of the accounts was proposed by Alan Patrick, seconded by Dave Lutwyche and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 4 – Election of Office Bearers

At this point the officers and committee demitted office and the election for 2022/23 office bearers took place. All existing officers and committee members, (had agreed previously or) agreed to stand for re-election.

The Chairperson, Deputy Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Committee were re-elected after being proposed by Ronnie Reid and seconded by Sam Gibson and approved unanimously by the meeting.

Chairperson: John New

Deputy Chairperson: Gordon Gray

Treasurer: Chairman John New was re-appointed acting treasurer

Secretary: Dave Barber

Agenda Item 5 – 2022 Courses and IT

Dave Barber gave a quick update on the 2022 courses and IT.

The courses weren't full but had between 15 and 17 on each course. We had a large list of people who wanted to be notified of spaces on each course and we managed to fill up as many as we could. After running the Notification list for the past 2 years we can now see how many people on the list actually commit to taking a place. As an example, we may have 30 people on the list but we may only get 3-4 people taking up places. We are developing the Notification list process as we understand these figures, so we are closing the list after a season and opening a new list for the next season. We had free advertising in a supplement in the Sunday Herald and we sold 5 vouchers out of that. We get a continual stream of 1-2 contacts a week.

On the IT side, we haven't had a lot of change. We have a website Wordpress operating system upgrade scheduled for December. Then we'll show some voucher advertising on the home page and implement the new Web payment system (which was kept as a manual system during Covid). This will allow the purchasers to print out a voucher immediately – or have one of our Gift Vouchers sent out.

After the upgrade I'll be liaising with Jeff so he can start learning the Website admin – starting with adding more photos to the gallery.

Agenda Item 6 – 2023 programme

John reported on the 2023 plans.

We have a build at the Lake of Monteith at a school which has a boundary wall made of lovely sandstone. There's about 8 metres to strip and rebuild. We could probably

do it in a day with 6-8 people, but because it's a rural school with around 14 pupils, John was thinking of doing a Friday and finishing on the Saturday, so the kids can come out and watch the different stages of the build. We can use the school facilities and there's good parking. Probably schedule for March/April.

We also have a possible rebuild at the Greenock Ocean Terminal. We've been discussing this for a while – it's a huge project and we have to muster enough bodies to do it over several weekends. Last time it took months with around a dozen people each time, with several hole-in-the-wall gangs during the week.

It's a long wall that could be shortened (especially as some of the stone will disappear during the rebuild). We hope to get 2 or 3 of us to go and have a look around March time to have a look. It's so big that it may take 2 seasons, but John suspected once it's started, we'll have to continue until it's finished. Alistair McGeoch commented that it could be completed in a shorter time, but they may have to pay for that, and John said it would be negotiated. Alistair reiterated that we wouldn't have to split or cut a lot of the stone – most of the preop had already been done – it is (to some degree) a strip and rebuild. John agreed and said that will save a lot of time – with careful dismantling of the cheek ends (put aside in a separate area), all the copes preserved, and if it is shortened a little then it will be a shorter build. Alistair suggested that planning and organisation would help a logical strip down and most of the features put aside on pallets would help. John suggested that it would be interesting for the people on the cruise liners – we would likely have a cordoned off area. We would talk to them about costs and donations. Alistair Eadie suggested a temporary structure over the build area so we could work when rainy. John said it doesn't attract as much rain and can be windy – but it's something to talk to them about.

The Development days at Kilsyth this year were well received and John would like to continue those – with more mentoring. He also wanted to develop the advanced sandstone retaining wall – and build a step style advanced feature with the big stones down the valley.

Also, we suggested we could clean the centre area of the building stone to create a display area for the step style or a curved wall or a sheep fold style. It will give a better look to the site – especially at exam time. Also, the Galloway Dyke style could be scheduled for April time.

John wants good numbers, and he was encouraged by the numbers for weekends and courses. It was nice to see 10s and 12s which is a great improvement on previous years. So, it's good that we are getting good numbers coming out.

John has been looking at new sites for the courses, as he doesn't want to strip down and rebuild the same wall all the time. People want to feel that they're contributing to walling by rebuilding working walls. There's a potential site at Auchenofoyle – a farm with 300-400 yards of stone with facilities – and a stone pile that could be dug out. A Lots of potential. Perhaps 2-3 people to go and have a look at it and make sure we're happy with the site – around February. Perhaps Alistair McGeoch can do a risk assessment.

We can still do a course at Kilsyth later in the year and do a Cardross course. John doesn't know how many years we will have left at Cardross as the farmer is struggling to get fresh stone onto the site – he doesn't want to strip out any other

walls. Ronnie said another farmer in the area was stripping out their walls (same stone) and putting fences up – and leaving the stone piled up in the fields. John said he will mention it to the farmer.

John asked if there was any feedback on the events and course discussion for next year. Alan said they all seemed good and good responses from the training courses – we just have to be careful next year with the Greenock build as it could be big and we don't want people to get sick of the same site/build. John said Norman had the hole-in-the-wall gang in there a couple of days a week (4-5 people)– to keep it rolling along on the original job. Danny spent a lot of time making the copes (a job in itself) – but that's all been done so you wouldn't have that part of it – it would be a strip down and rebuild. Perhaps we could have the site's contractors strip down and we supervise. We can look at it in 2023 and plan it properly – like a commercial job.

Alistair McGeoch said we have to look at it as a project and be more logical – if we're not going to build the straight walls as long as they were then there's no cutting, no forming other than place the stone back – roughly in the same order and find stones to fit. We have 2 features and the corbelling, trying to get the corbel archway up again – it's quite difficult, but other than that you're looking at straight lengths of red sandstone wall and rebuilding them. 4 metres in a weekend no problem, so that's 2 sides done. And then you've got your two features in the middle, so you have the strip out stuff to do and you've got supervision and moving and you've got to put up the frame for the bell, but as a build it's probably going to be half the time it was before.

John agreed and said it was a feasible option even if we have to shorten the straight ends a little. Alistair pointed out that we don't know the new location and may have to adjust it to fit.

John broke it down to cheek ends, corbelling from the back, an archway, and simple walling too, so it's got a lot of good features already built in.

Ronnie said it will be great stone to work with. Alistair said some of the new members hadn't worked with sandstone before. We can make it easier by numbering the stones – for example the cheek-ends, and the Moongate – but we'll have fun with the corbelled arch, keeping the curve and keeping it loose and safe – that took time.

Alan agreed and said we'll know more when we see the site.

Agenda Item 7 – SLG (Scottish Liaison Group)

John New briefed the meeting on the Zoom SLG AGM. (We are not part of the group but are invited to attend).

John couldn't hear them on the call, so he apologised and went through the minutes.

Last year they had a weekend at Thrieve Castle building a Galloway Dyke, John and 2 or 3 others from our branch. We had a terrific couple of days and really learned a lot from it. Brilliant sunny days and we were fed very well. They want to repeat that this

year and do another stretch so it's worthwhile for people to consider going in 2023. It can be done in a day and driving down and back - but we decided to stay over in 2022.

I think that was the only point related to us. They aren't going to be going to Gardening Scotland anymore. GS is more of a selling event now – hardly any display gardens anymore.

Agenda Item 8 – Any other business

Dave said he had ordered 3 new photo albums for the van (£15) – the existing ones are looking very tatty.

Re the cancelled AGM a week before, John received apologies from Balfron McLintock Hall saying they had asked the previous group to leave the doors open for us – but they locked it up. So, we may look at a possible change of venue. Balfron is a fair way out for some people. However, once they open the road again at Croftamie it may become more accessible for some people.

For committee meetings, we use the Waitrose Community Room at Milngavie, and it will hold 20 people comfortably, so it may be more convenient and central. Alistair McGeoch said that you can't take your own cake in, but we believe the café will be open for drinks etc.

John suggested that sometimes events force an issue and people had travelled a fair distance. We really do need to be in the same room for the AGM (for accounts, signatures and passing minutes). Dave said he would find out the room rules from Mandy at Waitrose.

John will put out an email to the membership around February – depending on committee members dates. Dave took on the task of getting information on the Waitrose Committee Room and booking dates for Committee Meetings and the AGM.

At the first Committee meeting we will discuss and organise visits to Auchenfoyle and Greenock.

Alan thanked John for his work as Chairperson and Dave as for the minutes, social media, and the website.

Chairman John New thanked members for the good turnout and the meeting closed at 2.55pm.