

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

Annual General Meeting
Waitrose Community Room, Milngavie
Sunday 26th October 2025 14:00

Meeting

Sederunt: John New, Dave Barber, Alistair McGeoch, Ronnie Reid, Crawford Andrew, Russ Liddell, Gordon Gray, Mike Thornley, Alistair Eadie, Jeff Hattie, Aileen MacLean, David Leach, Danny McNaughton, Jim Martin, Dan Marshall and Tam Wadwell

Apologies: Dave Mackie

The Chair, John New opened the meeting at 2pm, welcoming everyone who had come along.

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes for previous Year (2024)

Minutes of the AGM 2024.

The previous AGM minutes, which had been circulated online, were reviewed. Corrections were identified: a reference to the “2024 minutes” should read “2023”; the previous AGM date should be 29 October 2023 rather than 27 October 2023; and the word “fuel” should replace “feel.” Subject to those amendments, the minutes were approved as a true record.

Proposed: Russ Liddell.

Seconded: Alistair McGeoch.

Outcome: Approved as a true record of the proceedings.

Agenda Item 2 – Annual Report by Chairperson

This was given by the Chair as per the Annual Submission to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) for the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025.

The Chair reviewed the Association’s activities during 2025. Three training courses were held at Auchenfoyle in April, June and August, attracting approximately 55 participants in total. Feedback was generally very positive, despite the stone at the venue being challenging to work with. A branch practice day was held at Kilsyth in

April, followed by participation in the Kilmacolm show, which provided an opportunity to demonstrate dry stone walling and engage with the public. The programme also included a two-weekend build at Gartocharn using red sandstone, with the possibility of constructing a matching wall and two entrance pillars in the following year. At Kilsyth, members completed a horseshoe-shaped stone seat as a tribute to Alan Patrick and other past members. Four members attended the joint branch build at Threave, where work was completed in the Galloway style. A bespoke red-sandstone bench was also built for a community shed group in Greenock, which may lead to further work.

At the time of the report, further work was planned at Auchenfoyle and Glenarn Gardens. Since the formal programme had ended, members had also undertaken activity at Culzean and delivered a small training course at Dumfries House for eight young people studying farming and rural skills. The Chair described the participants as highly engaged and noted the possibility of repeat visits. A potential joint approach with the Southwest branch was discussed because of the location.

The meeting recorded with sadness the death of Deputy Chairman Alan Patrick. His long-standing service, practical contribution to projects and donation of the Kilsyth site were acknowledged, and members noted that he would be greatly missed.

Agenda Item 3 – Finance Report

Chair John New submitted the annual accounts as per the Annual Submission to OSCR for the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025.

The Chair presented a comparison with the previous financial year. The bank balance stood at approximately £10,500, compared with approximately £11,500 in the preceding year. The reduction was attributed principally to van repairs and maintenance, which remained the Association's largest recurring cost, and to the purchase of stone. Van expenditure was reported as £2,264, while activities expenditure of £2,956 largely related to stone, including two 18-tonne loads of red sandstone for Kilsyth.

Training courses remained the Association's principal income source and generated £4,698. Subscription income was broadly consistent with the previous year. Donations comprised £23 from Kilmacolm, with a further £140 reported under other income. Accountancy and governance costs were £360 and had changed little from the prior year. In response to a question, the Chair confirmed that the stone purchase comprised two loads of 18 tonnes each.

The meeting considered the Association's finances to remain healthy, while recognising the need to retain sufficient contingency for vehicle maintenance and eventual replacement. The financial report was approved.

Proposed: Crawford Andrew.

Seconded: Alistair McGeoch.

Outcome: Approved.

Agenda Item 4 – Election of Office Bearers

John New demitted office for the election and was returned as Chair.

Proposed: Crawford Andrew.

Seconded: Ronnie Reid.

Outcome: Approved by the meeting.

The existing six-member committee was re-elected.

Proposed: Alistair McGeoch.

Seconded: Mike Thornley.

Outcome: Approved by the meeting. No additional committee members were appointed.

Agenda Item 5 – Update on 2025 Courses and IT

2025 Courses, Pricing and Safety

The Association expected to continue with three courses during the year. Dave Barber reported that approximately 140–150 people were registered on the online waitlist. He clarified that the waitlist was a notification service rather than a firm expression of commitment from the public. Conversion from late cancellation emails was typically around 4%, because recipients might already have other plans or have booked elsewhere. When new annual dates were released, conversion was estimated at approximately 15%, after which the list was cleared.

Members then considered whether the current £95 weekend fee remained appropriate. The discussion covered comparable course prices, the professional standard of instruction and equipment, accessibility for younger people and those on lower incomes, replacement-tool costs, and the Association's charitable purpose. Members also noted that the Association did not pay its volunteer instructors and should not increase charges simply to accumulate funds. Against this, the meeting recognised the need to meet rising costs and maintain a financial reserve for a replacement van, estimated at approximately £15,000 for a reasonable second-hand vehicle.

Course safety was considered alongside pricing. Members discussed providing a defibrillator at remote venues, either by confirming an existing maintained unit at Auchenfoyle or hiring one for course weekends. Hire was estimated at approximately £60 for delivery on Friday and collection on Monday. Alistair McGeoch also offered to arrange in-house emergency first-aid training, with certification costs estimated at £15 per person and a preferred group size of approximately eight to ten participants. The intended timing was around March, before the practical programme commenced.

Following discussion of potential fees of £105, £110 and £120, the meeting resolved that the course fee should be increased to **£120**.

Outcome: Carried unanimously. No proposer or seconder was recorded.

The annual membership subscription was considered separately and retained at **£10** as a nominal contribution to membership.

Discount Scheme and IT

Dave Barber reported that the website and booking system were operating reliably and had substantially reduced manual administration. Planned improvements included adding a structured community-project enquiry form so that prospective partners would provide details of their organisation, proposal and charitable purpose. This would help distinguish suitable charitable or community work from requests for private domestic walling.

Members discussed linking the website to favourable press coverage and other external material that promoted Association projects. Dave Barber also agreed to investigate displaying Facebook updates on the website, particularly because project photographs and progress reports were increasingly being posted through Facebook and Instagram.

The meeting considered a personalised friends-and-family discount scheme to accompany the revised course price. Members approved a **10% discount**, to be issued through unique codes on request. Codes would remain valid for 365 days and would not be limited in number – they could be issued to multiple people.

Outcome: Passed by a show of hands; no proposer or seconder was recorded.

Agenda Item 6 – SLG (Scottish Liaison Group)

The Chair explained that the Scottish Liaison Group brought together Scottish branches to discuss matters affecting dry stone walling nationally. The principal organisational matter was the proposed amalgamation of the Central and Southeast Scotland branches. The Southeast branch had insufficient active membership to remain sustainable, while the Central branch had experienced difficulty filling committee positions. Combining the memberships and funds was intended to maintain an active branch structure.

The Southwest branch had agreed to host another joint project at Threave. Although there was some concern that repeating the site might become routine, members considered the Galloway-style construction to provide a distinct and worthwhile learning opportunity. The Liaison Group had also raised the provision of defibrillators for remote walling activity, which informed the Association's earlier safety discussion. No formal resolution was recorded under this report.

Agenda Item 7 – Any other business

Community Projects and Member Development

Members discussed the continuing need to identify varied community and charitable projects that would develop skills and maintain interest beyond routine field-wall construction.

Opportunities mentioned included further work at Culzean; a potential memorial at Peaton Hill Conservation Park; additional work with the Greenock community shed;

and projects at Gartocharn, including a possible seat and repairs to an existing retaining wall at the former church, now used as a community centre.

The Committee intends to seek wider member feedback on the skills and activities members would value, including stone splitting, features, archways, stepstyle, different regional wall styles and progression through recognised qualifications. The meeting discussed the Level 1 and Intermediate pathways, the availability of the Kilsyth site for practice, and the Association's continuing subsidy of half the assessment cost for members.

Recent trainees explained that they had not always understood (or could believe) that they were welcome to return to later courses and branch projects for further practice. The meeting agreed that this opportunity should be communicated more clearly. Members favoured clearly described continuation or development days at Kilsyth, with stable dates published in advance, and considered that returning trainees should be reassured that they remained learners rather than additional instructors. The purpose would be to provide further supervised practice, build confidence and encourage eventual progression to qualification where desired.

Chairman John New thanked members for the good turnout and the meeting closed at 3.33pm.