

WILTSHIRE BRIDLEWAYS ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – THURSDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2022  
HELD AT RUSHALL VILLAGE HALL

Welcome and Apologies

The meeting opened at 7:30pm with our Chairman, Norman Beardsley, welcoming those present disappointingly only 16 [including the speaker]. Apologies had been received from Elinor Goodman, Claudia Evans-Freke, Sue Massey, Bee Rycroft, Ednah Beardsley & Amanda Cunliffe.

Approval of the 2019 AGM Minutes

Norman Beardsley, Chairman, stated that, due to Covid restrictions, the last WBA Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019 the Minutes (verified by Committee later that year) would be kept on file along with the Treasurer's report and the accounts for the 2018 year.

Proposed by Rosie Cunningham    Seconded by Rosie Pack

All present in favour

Treasurer's Report – Michelle Haley

Copies of the Balance sheets relating to the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 had been available for attendees before the start of the meeting;

Overall Income for 2021 = £1,755:76p against £1,233:74p for 2020

The Covid Pandemic affected, as with everything else, WBA – Income in 2020 was down by £500 as a result of not being able to hold any 'Pleasure Rides' and vital repairs to the roof of the Porta cabin, renewal of website domain, an increase in miscellaneous expenses and production of an extra newsletter raised Expenditure for 2020;

Overall expenditure for 2021 = £442:05p against £1,627:99p for 2020

Current Account = £5,970:33p

Savings Account = £17,569:00p

Total £23,529:33p

Merchandise £288:00p [Fleece x3, Sweatshirts x 9 Polo Shirts x5]

WBA Badges £95

Assets of dehumidifier, photocopier, number tabards, filing cabinets, furniture & the Porta cabin itself now have a zero valuation; a laptop and projector for presentations are kept by our Chairman for safety.

Adoption of Accounts – Proposed by Emma Hodgson; Seconded by Ruth Clarkson; All in favour

### Chairman's Report – Norman Beardsley

At our AGM of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019 I commented that the Committee had grown by the addition of two new members. Unfortunately I must now report that during 2021 we shrank by two; firstly Viccie Palmer and her husband have moved to Devon; secondly Vicki Thomas, our Minutes Secretary, after a little over two years in post resigned with effect from December 2021. To both we pass on our thanks and best wishes for the future. Through our Newsletter we advertised for a replacement secretary. In the meantime Barbara Mac Mullen, our previous Minutes Secretary, volunteered to step back into the role on a temporary, and I stress the word TEMPORARY, basis; I am most grateful to Barbara – Thank You. The position of Minutes Secretary is still open - so please give this some thought and volunteer.

During 2019 the Committee continued with their roll of attending meeting with other agencies - Wiltshire & Swindon Community Access Forum, Wiltshire Council PRow department, DIO (MoD) to name but three – travelling around the county to assess reported problems and submitting relevant documentation to WC. We also continued to examine and comment on a healthy helping of applications for DMMOs, Planning Applications which affected PROWs etc.

Then as we approached March 2020, the bubble burst and we were grounded by COVID; a planned formal opening of the completed Imber Range Perimeter Path (a project in which WBA had been involved from the beginning) was postponed and subsequently cancelled; as was our own AGM (scheduled for the same month). Monthly Committee Meetings for the period March to August inclusive plus November and December 2020 (8 in total) were also cancelled; we did manage to hold meetings in September and October but these were strictly limited to six attendees. 2021 continued in the same vein, five meeting only from August to December inclusive. Correspondence from WC and other organisations also dropped dramatically and volunteer clearance groups were forbidden to operate.

However people were still out for their one hour permitted exercise and as such submitting some reports of defects – e. g. gates secured with padlock and chain; in one case a gate that had been nailed shut; and the usual vegetation growth and fallen trees; recently I have been hearing whispers of more landowners denying the existence of PRow across their land – these have still to be investigated. As for reporting problems, please continue to do so to Wiltshire Council via the 'MyWilts' app. and to WBA via our website. We may have additional information about your route which could help further; don't turn a blind eye and leave it for someone else – you are, in all probability, denying yourself and others of what could be a most pleasurable ride; also, once reported, keep checking progress and any comments that WC may have added; some simply say in progress and there they stay; others may say – 'Dead end so will be low priority' or 'will deal when time allows'.

Over the last four years + WBA has made several approaches to Wiltshire Council to offer some financial assistance towards paying for contractors to carry out maintenance work. Responses have invariably been 'I'll give it some thought and get back to you', 'It may create accounting problems', 'It must be used for maintenance issues only, not enforcement', 'Deal directly with the individual Countryside Access Officer'; None of these have taken us any

further forward but simply delayed the process; however, the PRoW team have recently been taken under the umbrella of 'Highways' and the challenge is being taken forward by Michelle Haley. I am pleased to note that at the moment she does appear to be making some headway. While on the subject of 'remaining work'; on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March I attended a virtual CAF meeting where we heard from WC that they currently have a backlog of 4,913 PRoW reports; during the last year 1,348 have been recorded as completed / closed. At the same meeting we also heard that after much lobbying from interested parties and user groups the Government have dropped the requirement for DMMO applications to be submitted by the 2026 deadline. In that context it was reported that currently WC have 347 DMMOs awaiting action; at the current rate of progress WC estimate these will take between 50 – 60 years to process.

As you are aware membership fees and revenue from 'Pleasure Rides' are our only source of income. No rides were held in 2020. However despite all the difficulties and much hair pulling; Rosie Pack managed to run the annual ride within Savernake Forest for 2021. This was rather smaller than in previous years as Forestry England limited the number attending to a maximum of 50 riders. To Rosie and all her Marshalls a big 'Thank You'. I know Rosie is working on the possibility of having two 'Rides' this year but is already having various obstacles put in the way.

On that note I will close, but before I do, I hope you will join me in saying a BIG 'Thank You' to all the members of your Committee for the number of voluntary hours they spend devoted to your bridleways.

#### Election of Chairman for the year 2022/2023

Norman Beardsley has agreed to taking on the role of Chairman for another year; he works tirelessly on behalf of WBA liaising with WC and other agencies on matters of RoW as well as practically - checking referrals of RoW needing attention travelling the length and breadth of the county, and working with Nigel Linge on signage issues on SPTA – as well as keeping Committee Members up to date with all issues. As there were no other nominations for the role of Chairman Barbara MacMullen proposed the re-election of Norman for this post this was seconded by Rosie Pack and all WBA members present were in favour.

#### Election of Committee Members for the year 2022/2023

Prior to this meeting Norman had consulted all Committee members who had agreed to continue in their roles and there being no other nominations to join the Committee it was proposed by Ruth Clarkson that the Committee, as it stands, should be re-elected en-bloc seconded by Emma Hodgson.

#### Any Other Business

① The matter of finding a replacement Minutes Secretary was discussed; RP put forward the idea that the role could be shared; EH also thought this might be possible but the general consensus was that this was impractical; however it will be discussed further at Committee meetings and the search for someone to fill the post will be put in the Newsletter and on the Web site.

② The subject of WBA's Facebook page was raised and the general feeling was that this could be improved if 'interaction' could be incorporated – this can be achieved by forming a group but will need a manager to monitor it and delete irrelevant / out of date material; David Riley offered to do this and will be in contact with Charlotte Hill-Baldwin to set this up.

③ Anne Riley thanked all WBA members for the work we do; NB replied on our behalf and asked that our thanks be reciprocated to Bill Riley who continues to put so much time into providing information on all aspects of PRow but sadly didn't feel up to attending this meeting in person.

There being no other matters raised there was a brief break during which refreshments were available, raffle tickets sold and members were able to look at the display boards, discuss various problems encountered with Committee members before NB introduced the speaker for the evening Ms Sarah Holden of the Wiltshire Police who is involved with the 'Wiltshire Horse Rider Volunteer Group'; via video link Sarah was able to engage with the 'Rural Crimes Team' and an interesting talk followed with the emphasis of personal safety if encountering any participants in illegal activity; use of mobile phones to record photographic evidence and to make contact with the Rural Crimes Team; very large sums of money are involved in illegal hare coursing both in betting and in the sale of dogs. NB gave a vote of thanks at the end of the session and Sarah was presented with a pot of spring flowers.

The Raffle was drawn and thanks to generous donations made £66.

The meeting closed at 21:20 hrs.

31<sup>st</sup> May 2022 / BM

7<sup>th</sup> June 2022 / BM