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OutdoorLads 2020 Annual General Meeting

Date: Monday 21st September 2020

Location: Digital Edition

Opened: 19.00

Closed: 21.30

**Attended 133 at 7pm (Reached 149, did not drop below 120 during the meeting)
(All online)**

Board and Staff Attendance (on the Panel)

Board Members:

Matt Tennant (MT) Chair

Danny McKeown-Henshall (DMH) Vice Chair

Ted Youngman (TY) Treasurer

Steven Allan (SA)

Neil Sharp (NS)

Dan Barcroft (DB1)

Danny Ballantyne (DB2)

Jimmy Brash (JB)

Fergus Brunning (FB)

Co-opted Member: (elected to Trustee during meeting)

Simon Hawthorn (SH)

Staff Members:

Liam Russell (LR)

Dan Byrnes (DB3)

Yvonne Goldsmith-Rybka (YGR)

AGM /20/01 Apologies

Colin Cumine

Simon Curran

AGM /20/02 Welcome

Chair Matt Tennant opened the first ever digital AGM and thanked all those that had signed up and were present (via Zoom.) As this was a new format for many both the virtual voting and Q&A procedures were explained.

A welcome video was played with contributions from trustees and staff outlining their time with the organisation and current roles.

MT presented the aims of the meeting and briefly highlighted this years' unique challenges incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As an organisation that runs outdoor activities there may have been many setbacks, but there have been many positive surprises too; and there is much to celebrate and look forward to in the coming year.

MT presented the main points for discussion with the agenda as follows:

- Annual Performance including Events, Survey Results and Leaders
- COVID-19 and OutdoorLads Response
- Governance including Board Working Groups, Financial Review & Election of Trustees
- Aims for the Future
- Any Other Business
- Awards

AGM /20/03 Approval of 2019 AGM Minutes

Question: Comment on last year's minutes - the vote accepting the accounts is not recorded, as Dave Banks and Wilco Stekkinger abstained. In fact, the vote is not recorded at all. Will this be rectified? (Wilco Stekkinger)

Answer: MT agreed this would be amended on the final approved minutes.

MT then opened the vote to approve the minutes (Proposer Tim Hooson, Seconder John Cornley) with the results a clear majority (For 81%, Against 0%, Abstain 19%) and the minutes were passed as presented.

AGM /20/04 Annual Performance

Event Performance

MT presented a number of stats showing that although a challenging year (with an entire cancellation of our events programme from April to July) OutdoorLads had still managed to deliver an impressive 1138 events across the various disciplines. This is only down by 385 on the previous year, bearing in mind some 315 events had to be cancelled or postponed since the start of the lockdown in March.

Survey Results

Presented by Dan Barcroft: 'to get more gay, bi and trans guys into the outdoors should be at the heart of what we do' – but this year that hasn't always proved possible. Despite the ongoing and changeable restrictions

imposed by COVID-19, there have been so many innovative alternatives offered that our members still feel part of a community, albeit virtually and digitally, which goes to show the power of our organisation in these uncertain times.

With the stats from our annual member survey (Aug 2020) showing a higher success rate than the previous year across the board in all areas, DB concluded that we should feel proud of what we do at OutdoorLads; in still managing to attain our mission of providing fun, professional, friendly and safe environments to our members. He gave special thanks to all those members that completed the survey; their honesty, their glowing testimonials, and their suggestions for moving forwards.

Question: We do a lot of indoor sports and social events. Is our new mission statement designed to promote outdoor events more than indoor events on purpose? (Aaron Moran)

Answer: MT We will always prioritise outdoor over indoor events where possible, but we need to remain within current government guidelines, and ultimately that will dictate the programme of events that we are able to hold.

Question: One likely to be controversial for some, but might widening inclusion start with our name, which excludes at least 50% or so of the UK population? (Wilco Stekkinger)

Answer: MT Yes, gender and gender-ID/expression have been mentioned a couple of times. I understand a name-change may seem/feel radical, and will take some time and consideration but meanwhile the focus on 'lads', 'guys', etc. fails to include non-binary, gender-questioning people, as well as women of course. So how is this current position consistent with the aims of a charity which specifically states that ODL does not discriminate on the grounds of sex?

Well I joined a group for gay / bisexual / queer identifying men. There are a broad range of groups out there that cater to different people, seeking different types of social outlets . . . in my humble opinion, if ODL changed its membership base or USP to replicate some of those other groups then it wouldn't be the organisation it currently is, with the charitable aims it currently has, and would not be as attractive to me as a group to be a member of. As an organisation should we have to be everything to everyone? I would never say never, but this is not something that we are currently considering as there is no evidence or feedback to suggest this is what our members want.

Question: I have been a member for at least 10 years and I feel that if I lived in a hub such as London, Manchester or Brighton I would make more friends. What advice do you suggest for people wanting to create more of a social network but not living in these hubs? (Timothy Healey)

Answer: NS Become a leader yourself and put on more events in your area.

Leaders

Neil Sharp, the trustee responsible for volunteers and leaders, would normally have asked all those leaders in attendance to stand to our applause - as without their time and commitment none of the events would be possible and OutdoorLads would not exist. On this digital occasion, an amusing GIF video of applause would have to do!

NS highlighted changes to the regional teams with the North now successfully being split into two separate areas of North West & Wales, and North East.

Leader numbers now stand at 283 with over 80 leader applications in-flight. The recruitment process has been made easier and regional leaders and volunteers now meet and communicate more frequently. But he stressed we need more, just a 10% increase in leader numbers would result in over 300 extra events per year.

Although COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown/ ongoing restrictions have been an often stagnant and frustrating time for leaders; it has also shown their innovation. Leaders came up with #StayInMore at the height of lockdown and put on 260 events. Moving forward there are also over 200 events planned for BWAB (Back with a Bang) when restrictions lift further – these are ready to go! It's a great position to be in.

Neil has generously committed three years of his time to this role, and although he will continue as a trustee, he will shortly be stepping down from the position. Two new posts will be taken on by Danny Ballantyne covering Volunteer Communication and Culture; and Nick Read taking on the Volunteer Training & Development.

Their goals for the coming year include volunteer recruitment, training and development including mental health awareness training, Back with a Bang, and getting back to business as usual. NS closed with 'Leaders just keep planning, soon we will be free!!'

Question: Why does it take so long to become a leader? (Mike Beaman)

Answer: The process isn't perfect, and it can take some time to juggle people's diary availability to get a shadow event as well as an assessment in place. This does of course vary by event type as well. We are however about to look at feedback on the leader application process with a view to seeing how it can improved. It does however, need to remain a high quality process for the safety and protection of leaders and members on events.

Question: While having more leaders is brilliant and will inevitably lead to more events, the trouble seems to be to get leaders to lead. I've passed lots of leaders but none of them have any events coming up (and I know Covid makes the time unfavourable). How can we inspire leaders to lead as well as members to become leaders? (Gavin Blackman)

Answer: NS By leader testimonials is the easiest way. Leaders – talk about your experiences to the members on your events, let them know what you get out of it, inspire them to want to try themselves. If I can do it, anyone can.

Question: Re Mind Out, why does it say potentially partner with other GBT organisations and not LGBT? (Anonymous)

Answer: NS Because we are an organisation for men the L was removed. But on reflection this will be amended in future.

Question: That's a good number of leader applications, can we prioritise training those applicants in underrepresented areas? (Ian Williams)

Answer: SH We are looking at those white space areas and looking to inspire the members there to become leaders. If there are no leaders in their area to train them, we are looking at regional training weekends.

AGM /20/05 COVID-19 and OutdoorLads

At the beginning of March 2020 MT shows a slide of one of our groups heading up the summit of a mountain. Just a few days later, Boris Johnson announced the country was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and was going into lockdown.

OutdoorLads got together a team of experts, and took guidance from various organisations (including BMC, Ramblers, Charity Commission and NCVO) and made the painful decision to cancel the event program from April to July. This was the right thing to do in order to put our members safety first.

Action was taken to reduce costs including a reduction in rent and moving two of our three staff onto the government furlough scheme. We applied and were successful in gaining a Sports England Grant for £7483, and we received an amazing £5111 in donations from our members who we cannot thank enough!

Danny McKeown-Henshall took over to discuss the impact on our events. As well as the cancellation of the program of events from April to June entirely, we also cancelled all BIG events including BIG Spring Camp and Halloween. It is also highly probable our Christmas hostels won't happen.

But not to be defeated, we launched #StayInMore, we have hosted over 60 micro events, and we are as ready as we can be to pick up the pace once legislation allows. Events have been postponed as opposed to cancelled where possible; and we are reintroducing cycling (groups of 6), larger group walks (mountain walks in groups up to 12 and regular day walks with groups up to 20) and social distance camps (limited to bubbles of 6) with tighter restrictions in place.

But going forward we have no firm answers, tighter restrictions are expected within days as a second wave of the virus is on its way in, and so we continue to adapt as the restrictions continue to change. We are in a good position and have financial reserves in place.

Question: What procedures are in place if a member has symptoms post an event?

Answer: LR We have contact details of all members on events and would liaise with each member individually should we need to contact them, for example, if contacted by the NHS.

Question: Can I ask with the restricted numbers just spoken about, what are you doing with upcoming events that are already subscribed over those numbers? (Kevin Rowley)

Answer: MT Our events are first come first serve so members would be contacted in order to confirm or cancel their place.

Question: Could we change to allowing groups of 30 for daywalks? It would help enormously (although numbers will fall below it on the day of the event). (Gavin Blackman)

Answer: In the interests of erring on the side of caution and keeping members safe, we have decided for now to limit event sizes to 20, which is below the legal limit of 30.

Question: Can I ask what if a leader doesn't feel comfortable leading a walk of over 6 people? (Ian Fletcher)

Answer: NS Leaders can do whatever they feel comfortable with, it is their choice. Some may feel scrutiny from members of the public therefore it is understandable if they would rather manage a smaller group.

AGM /20/06 Governance

Overview of Board Working Groups

Sub-groups were set up following February's 2020 Board meeting consisting of smaller groups of Trustees plus 1 staff member to take smaller decisions away from taking up time at Board meetings and for a smoother decision making process.

One major result of the Operations sub-group was the securing of new insurance providers, AIM, as outlined by Fergus Brunning. It was imperative we had full cover for all of our mountain biking and climbing events and AIM came highly recommended, they are experts in activities insurance, and information will be on the website shortly.

Danny Ballantyne then went on to introduce the Comms & Marketing sub-group that will focus on a programme of projects for the next 12 months. He stressed it is imperative we involve the members, and Tom King has offered to assist with environmental policy.

(MT had intended to show a Telegram video here on our Telegram channels, but due to time the video was pulled and made available to members on social media instead.)

Simon Hawthorn presented a new Equality & Diversity sub-group being established to improve on the diversity of our community as participating in outdoor activities presents difficulties for some people. We are creating a member-led forum to consider the best way to improve access to our events for all. Members should express an interest to OutdoorLads Support account in the coming month.

Financial Review and Approval of Annual Accounts

Treasurer Ted Youngman firstly explained that the previous years accounts (2018-2019) included some income for Membership Fees that should actually have been included in this years accounts (2019-2020) therefore figures have been restated to allow for this.

Income was £273,206 for this financial year ending March 31st (2019-2020) This was down from the previous year by £27,759.

Direct costs for the year (accommodation, travel, food & drink, other) stand at £158,672 which is £9943 higher than the previous year.

Indirect Costs/Overheads (staff, rent, bills, insurance, website, marketing, training, other) stand at £147,373 which is £43,733 lower than the previous year.

This means our current annual accounts (2019-2020) show an overall net loss of £32,839.

Brief Analysis is that spending is still exceeding income - with a number of events occupancy rates fell therefore direct costs were higher, which needs addressing this coming year. Overheads were reduced substantially and we should maintain this. Membership income is holding up despite the current situation. The future is still uncertain.

We are still pending our case with HMRC to be identified as a sports organisation and thus exempt from VAT on all membership fees and events – this could also involve an historical reimbursement which would go a long way to help our financial situation.

Question: What is our cash position? (Anonymous)

Answer: TY Our cash position stands at Reserves of £70,000 and Current Account £28,500.

Question: Looking at the overall reduction in occupancy on events, was this a drop across the board or a case of a few less successful events making a big loss? Are there any further insights at what worked and what didn't? (Thomas Loader)

Answer: LR There was no consistent pattern of a certain type of event not selling well.

The vote to approve the annual accounts for 2019-20 was taken (Proposer Jerry Bateman, Seconder Phil Owen) with an overall majority approved and passed (For 82%/ Against 1%/ Abstain 17%)

Elections of Trustees

Turning to the election of trustees, company secretary Liam Russell informed members that three people were standing (there are sufficient vacancies and so the candidates were not competing against each other.)

Each of the candidates introduced themselves and spoke about their reasons for standing and what they would bring to the board. Manifestos had been made available prior to the meeting on the website.

Gavin Bridge (For 90%/ Against 4%/ Abstain 6%)

Gavin was new to standing for the board; already a proud member, he wants to be able to contribute more, and questioned how we can thrive and still think big despite the current climate? He believes listening to our members is key, plus keeping it fun. He wants to get involved with more fundraising events.

Steven Allan (For 72%/ Against 19%/ Abstain 8%)

Steven was up for re-election. He is one of the original founding members and is our longest standing Trustee. He offers professional expertise and historical knowledge continually, plus he co-ordinates BIG events, but is hoping to get more involved with other events too once OutdoorLads is fully back up and running.

Simon Hawthorn (For 85%/ Against 6%/ Abstain 9%)

Simon has been working as a co-opted Board member for the past 12 months, managing the website as well as offering his expertise in technical areas/ data analysis. He is the South-East Regional Organiser and wants to see more diversity in our events programme and membership.

The motions to approve all three candidates as board members was approved with a clear majority (see brackets)

LR welcomed the new and returning trustees to the board.

AGM /20/07 Aims for the Future

Jimmy Brash talked about the exciting year ahead, and what our events programme might look like? We still can't be sure. But what we have proved is that we can still plan and make the best of any situation. We need to celebrate our 15th birthday year in a fun and optimistic way, whatever way is possible! We will continue to run events in line with government guidance and be flexible as policies change. And we will be #BackWithABang

Steven Allan says all the trustees and regional organisers need to work with Nick Read on improving leader assessment and sign off criteria. We need to review our pricing model (which has been on hold due to the impact of COVID-19) as how we structure the organisation is key to its sustainability and future.

AGM /20/08 Any Other Business

Question: Is there a strategy to avoid spreading the interest for paid events too thinly, especially over summer? Last summer there were weekends with multiple paid events in competition not that far apart... (Anonymous)

Answer: There are many variables, and we do consider locations and timing of events. There are certain parts where we believe we can fill two events on a weekend based on previous demand.

Question: Have you considered making an OutdoorLads mobile phone App, or is that too expensive/complicated compared to the website? (Anonymous)

Answer: MT It would be a waste of money doing an app when ODL already have a mobile friendly website. It was considered but the sheer cost makes it unaffordable. The site is optimised for mobile web and we are building further functionality through Telegram and other social media.

There was no further any other business.

AGM /20/09 OutdoorLads Awards 2020

The OutdoorLads Volunteer Awards were then presented by Neil Sharp. These were nominated by members and then shortlisted by the committee. Certificates will be awarded to the following leaders for their innovating events, especially during these challenging times!

Ben Silifant 'he really is the hub of ODL in Bristol'

Peter Phillips 'his Friday night quiz became the highlight of the lockdown week.'

Mike Smith 'so helpful to me being part of a small remote community.'

James Couldrey 'thank you for the virtual lunch break chats.'

Mike Rawlinson 'an exceptionally kind and thoughtful Mountain Bike leader.'

MT closed the meeting thanking all those that had submitted nominations. And last but by no means least offered a BIG thanks to Neil Sharp for everything he has done over the last three years in his role as Trustee for Volunteers and Leaders, they are going to be very big shoes to fill.

A very uplifting video created by Dan Byrnes was shown to close the meeting – showing what we had managed to achieve in the year - and hopefully are able to achieve much more of in the next!

The meeting closed at 9:30pm

OutdoorLads 2020 Annual General Meeting Q&As (not answered live)

Date: Monday 21st September 2020

Location: Digital Edition

Question: Is voting confidential? (Anonymous)

Answer: Voting is confidential, yes.

Question: The minutes for last year appear correct but are quite brief, they could have benefitted from more detail of the comments and questions made from the membership/floor. Can the recorded AGM be uploaded to the website please alongside the docs? Thanks (Mark Jones)

Answer: Hi Mark, yes the recording will be made available via the usual social media and website channels.

Question: Who manages the ODL brand standards, guidelines etc? (Sam Stewart)

Answer: Hi Sam - the newly formed Comms group (which is a sub-group of the board) oversees these, but the work has only just begun and we would welcome input from anyone with expertise in Comms/marketing/Brand management.

Question: How many members responded to the member survey, and what is the year on year comparison numbers wise? (Alan Dunn)

Answer: 421 this year, and 531 last year (2019.)

Question: Did ODL leadership consider offering to freeze users membership accounts during the lockdown - similar to gyms? As during the lockdown we lost 3 months membership where we could have been on walks, events etc. I appreciate some events were moved forward to a future date - but in terms of membership - one of my friends has not renewed as he feels he has lost out on 3 months membership and felt the stay-in events on offer were not a suitable alternative for his membership. (Mike Wingfield)

Comment: I reckon that may vary from person to person...I did lots of the Stay In More events and reckon I got loads out of them, particularly given that they were all "free", so I wouldn't have wanted a freeze/discount in my membership. But I do recognise why others might think otherwise. Not just that, different areas of the country are in or out of lockdown for different lengths of time.

Answer: This was considered. The reality is that the impact on our finances, as a small charity, would cast doubt on our future at a time when our biggest source of income (our events) has dried up entirely, and could mean that we wouldn't survive the pandemic. We want to still be here for our members. We have

tried to give members the best experience we could at the time through our #stayinmore events.

Question: One idea from me which could help improve BAME inclusion would be having a themed food buffet at a venue which has a kitchen and where different dishes are prepared by members or guests with different backgrounds. Won't be possible to do this in the current climate but after Covid is over maybe a possibility? (Matt Bewers)

Answer: An excellent idea Matt thanks! Will add to the list

Question: Will there be more of a drive for watersports particularly kayaking, not in a training environment? (Adam Cooper)

Answer: We are hoping to be able to expand on all of our events, including water-sports - pending changes to the law and advice from the governing bodies in the time of C19. Salford Council (who operate the leisure centre for kayaking) rules kept changing - hence the Manchester kayaking, SUP and sailing event had to be cancelled this year. Adam, as a kayaker from years ago, I know how fun it can be to take skills from training at places like Salford Quays and other places onto rivers and lakes and have a great day. We have to look at insurance related issues with such high risk events, but also having trained leaders who meet governing body standards. We are always happy to look at sponsoring people to do NGB qualifications so drop us an email if you know anyone, yourself included, who may be interested in something like that.

Question: If there was a more of an incentive to be a leader- for example free membership - then more people might lead! Yes the £4 rewards are nice but when I found out that a non-member is charged about £12.99 for attending one of my walks I was surprised. (Mike Wingfield)

Answer: LR As a charity, we are allowed to provide token incentives to volunteers, but the charity commission regulations prevents more "generous" incentives to volunteers, as volunteers shouldn't be receiving payment, or payment in kind. Non-members pay £12.50 for attending the events that are free to full members. That is because if they were free to attend, there would be less benefits to membership and so those paying £65/year would be losing out. That means once someone is doing just over 5 events a year, it's worthwhile for them to join as a full member - which is in everyone's interest. That money goes to pay for our overheads, which is where the membership fee also goes.

Question: NCVO? Can you avoid acronyms please (Anonymous)

Answer: Sorry National Council of Voluntary Organisations, and point taken.

Question: Were donations gift aided? (Mike Beaman)

Answer: LR Some were - we set up the facility for this with an online form.

Question: Currently we're able to do walks and can legally exceed the 6 person limit. What can we do to make this clear externally (and avoid possible reputational damage)? There were lots of disapproving looks from other walkers seeing a group of 10 out walking this weekend. (David Fletcher)

Answer: We have communicated to leaders about the exemptions we currently are operating under, including a letter that can be produced if leaders are challenged whilst out and about.

Question: Fully appreciating the costs/feasibility - might be good to explore 'micro hostels' for Xmas if this hasn't already happened? It's such an important event to many members. (Mark Jones)

Answer: LR This is being looked at Mark, but it might be very difficult to make it work financially. Some bunkhouses are quite small anyway and could host a bubble of 6 guys? We wonder if YHA would be open to deals - better used than an empty estate - that was actually what allowed the one hostel that's gone ahead since March (and very good it was too) - we had a room booked, and ended up with a whole hostel in Ullapool for the same money, and so a room each, which made distancing fairly easy.

Question: If we were to do testing before events as a pre-requisite to being allowed on an event, are we assuming this test would be free to the user? in terms of moonshot, I believe it could be a portable testing kit, who is then paying for this test kit? Would it be the leader, ODL or the people attending the event? (Anonymous)

Answer: That's a step beyond where we are currently at to be honest, and needs further consideration if and when it becomes a possibility.

Question: If someone is in an area which is under local lockdown restrictions that prevent them mixing with people outside their household signs up to an event can they attend the event under the guidance we are following from BMC. If they are not allowed to attend is ODL policing this? (Jonathan Austin)

Answer: Hi Jonathan - as i'm sure you'll appreciate, this is tricky to police. However our expectation through our regular communication via the event page and pre-event communication is that the member/attendee keep to the ruling and law of their region. We are working on the basis that members will take that action themselves and come off the event. People in local lockdown areas shouldn't socialise with others (indoors or outdoors) and events do ask for members not to attend if they have symptoms. We would expect common sense to apply. I think we could look to update the standard text on event pages to ensure it reflects specifically about travelling from a local lockdown area. Does that answer your question?

Question: I remember something last year about a sub-group for Environment and Sustainability being setup and asking for volunteers? Did anything happen with that? And how can I get involved? (Steve Clifford)

Answer: Hi Steve, yes we are looking at this as we start to relaunch events, sadly from last year the group didn't get off the ground in the way we wanted. So that will be a focus for this year. I will keep you informed as I recall you were commenting on the initial leader page section that I did before the AGM last year, keen to get a great representation from members and seize the chance as we are spun down on most paid events (and most events generally) for the moment.

Question: Re financial accounts: we appear to have been running at an effective loss of around £30k and £40k this and last year respectively. What does the board foresee as its long term plan to rectify this, particularly given against a background of (presumably) a lack of income due to our running of significantly fewer events through Covid for the current year? (Wilco Stekkinger)

Answer: Yes, this year and last year have been disappointing to say the least. The Board decided to try and grow events, but the reduction in occupancy rates meant that we had an increase in event costs but did not see the extra income we anticipated. Last year ODL cost about £130k to run (excluding events, depreciation and one-off costs) and we need to get the balance right between funding contributions from annual membership, pay as you go and event/bar income. There are plans to look more closely at event costing and the balance between different income strands, but clearly we need to manage costs closely also. We have made use of the job retention scheme and negotiated a reduction in rent and members have been very generous in maintaining membership and making donations during this year. At the AGM I mentioned the VAT claim relating to membership income and we are still waiting the outcome, but it has the potential to improve outturn for this and future years. Unfortunately, the current year will almost certainly be another one where we make a loss.

In summary, and I appreciate it may be a bit late for that, we are very conscious of the need to improve income and manage costs. There is no one answer, but the right balance between them will get us back to a sustainable footing and making a small annual surplus so that we can restore reserves.

Question: The VAT is undoubtedly good news going forward, but retrospectively, is this technically not members' contribution that has been incorrectly charged to them in the first place? (Wilco Stekkinger)

Answer: For clarity, the VAT has not been incorrectly charged, as it must be charged on all VAT-able items, which includes membership. Instead, we are applying for an exemption relating to sporting activity which affects future payments and also enables us, if granted, to claim this back for the previous four years. Hence, this isn't an error or something that's been done incorrectly.

Our thoughts before COVID19 was that any money we received would be invested either in new developments on the website, future savings for any large scale web upgrade, or for leader development and training, so very tangible items that would benefit everyone. Though in the time of COVID19, the money may well be very much needed to support the organisation in these exceptional times until we can begin our normal or close to normal paid event programme.

Question: What are the current cash reserves and what is the plan should ODL run out of cash?

Answer: We currently have a cash balance of £98500. The plan is to plan not to run out of money! We are monitoring expenses and income closely and have done well at reducing overheads, applying for supporting grants. All things considered we have a reasonable cash balance and we are planning for 2021 to be a great year when we all want to #getoutmore on events and so contribute to a financially strong OutdoorLads.

Question: Will membership payments be made available to split across the year without penalisation for members with lower income? (Andrew Shearwood)

Answer: It's an aspiration, certainly. There are issues as the reality is that more payments results in higher transaction costs, even aside from our own overheads. We do offer currently a three and six month membership option alongside annual direct debit. We are looking at a proposal to split event payments into three monthly instalments for the pricier events.

Question: Are the trustees looking at admin going totally online and foregoing the office and therefore saving money? (Marty Glossop)

Answer: DB1? Hi Marty, we did look at doing this and indeed have done in the past when Harry and Simon were based at home, but it was decided then that staff work better when they have personal interaction. Things have changed since then with the world getting more used to online or home working, so this will be looked at I am sure as part of an ongoing review of costs but I think if we can keep the office, then we will keep it.

Question: Can we please ensure the accounts are published when the AGM notification is sent out next year to give members sufficient time to review them? (David Banks)

Answer: Absolutely it's something we should aspire towards. We recognise they were up much later than usual.

Question: Perhaps in the future we could have the elections earlier in the AGM as this has run over and is a little difficult for schedules etc. (Anonymous)

Answer: Thank you for the feedback, we'll add it to the 'zoom learnings'

Question: Acknowledging the Big Spring Clean mentioned earlier, has there been any other progress on the environmental work from last year's minutes? (Thomas Loader)

Answer: DMH Hi Thomas, sadly not. That was something I was to take forward this year, but with the COVID situation taking up all of our time, sadly I haven't

been able to put work to this. Someone else has asked about this so I am keen to see this off the ground. We are now very well placed with most of our events spun down so to speak, so a great chance for us to look at how we can emerge sustainably going forward.