

NORTHERN FELLS GROUP

AGM MINUTES SEPTEMBER 15th 2017 AT MILLHOUSE VILLAGE HALL

THOSE PRESENT: Geoff Batey, Diane Barraclough, Geoff Hine, Jenny Bland, Malcolm Threlkeld, Libby Graham, , Jennifer Stevenson, Barbara Stoddart, Tim Cartmell, Steven Brockbank, David Ward, Philippa Groves, Helen Sturges, Rosemary Bailey, Keith Bridges, Mike Richardson

APOLOGIES: Claire Crookenden – Prince’s Countryside Fund, Brian Scott - Big Lottery Fund, Ellen Clements – Cumbria Community Foundation, Andrew Liddle – Saint & Co, Lyn Hoar - FCSCCT, Ian Edge, Ann Bliss, Lionel & Susan Bidwell, Peter Huntington, Peter Pearson, Len Glead, Marion Grave, David & Janet Parker, Antoinette Ward, Colin & Lesley Smith, Ian & Pat Shaw, Dorothy Shaw, Peter & Anne Burgess, Gillian Skillicorn, Desmond Groves and Simon Braithwaite.

Last year’s minutes were approved with no matters arising. Proposed by Geoff Hine and seconded by Geoff Batey.

CHAIRMANS REPORT: -

Welcome and thank you for coming to our Annual General Meeting and for your continued support of the Northern Fells Group. Our core objective remains the same – to promote and undertake charitable activities of any kind for the benefit and welfare of the inhabitants, communities and organisations in our 7 parishes - no mean task when you consider we serve 3.600 residents of all ages spread over 200 square miles.

One of our many challenges is communication – how do we communicate when trying to promote the services and activities of NFG.

- **Service Users** how do we ensure that residents are aware of our services and activities and how to access them. We take advantage of monthly parish magazines and produce an annual newsletter which is either posted or hand delivered by volunteers to over 1700 households, every house in the area is covered. A Diary of Monthly events is also produced which is emailed to residents, who have asked for it, or is available at events and is on our website. We’ve also given our website a makeover, it looks fresher more modern and is easier to navigate – however as we know not everyone has access to the internet. Charities must consider where their potential service users are likely to turn to for help and this is where our fantastic Village Agents come in – they know everything about everything..... who, where, what and when! They play a vital part in helping NFG achieve its’ objectives.
- **Donors and funders** is probably the most difficult group to engage with, trying persuade someone to reach into their pocket, a charity has to be able to illustrate previous success and capacity to grow. Furthermore, donors and funders must know that a charity is financially stable and well managed, with appropriate checks, controls, audited accounts and risk registers in place, so that any donation isn’t wasted. We must thank Libby Graham our Fundraising Coordinator along with Diane Barraclough

Group Coordinator for the huge amount of time, work and effort put into successfully seeking out funding which amounts to around 71% of total income.

- **Volunteers** I read recently that a significant portion of the charity sector relies on volunteers and NFG is no different in this regard. We have around 100 active volunteers contributing over £30k to the group by the gift in kind of their time. To put it another way this equates to something like 36% of our annual expenditure/running costs. Our band of volunteers come from all walks of life and bring many skills and experiences with them – from helping out at our Drop-in's, Mosedale Coffee Shop, Men-in-Sheds, Minibus drivers, Lend-a-Hand scheme and many more. We simply could not do what we do without them. My very grateful thanks on behalf of the trustees to all our volunteers.

In January earlier this year Julia Trotter, one half of our Minibus Transport co-ordinators, left the Group and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Julia very much for all the time, effort and commitment she gave on behalf of the Northern Fells. As you may be aware Antoinette Ward stepped into the role and we are very grateful to her for continuing to support the Group in the many, many ways she does. Whilst on the subject of the Minibus I would like to thank John and Carol Hickson for allowing us to park the minibus up in their yard and for also ensuring that it turns out on a Monday looking spick and span. Thank you.

We welcomed a new Youth Co-ordinator this summer Aidan Ellis who oversaw the Summer Youth programme with help from staff and volunteers. Many thanks to Gillian Skillicorn, Village Agent for Ireby, Uldale & Boltons who stepped in to oversee the Easter programme.

Once again the Mosedale Coffee shop was open for 10 weeks throughout the summer, well if we can call it summer, all co-ordinated by Antoinette Ward and her band of around 50 volunteers. This not only continues to make a very significant contribution to our funds but importantly also supports the Friends of Mosedale by way of rental income.

We are, as we will hear from the Treasurer, in good financial health despite these difficult times when everyone wants more from less. I would like to thank everyone who contributes, whether that be through donations, funeral collections, subscriptions (we currently have 161 individual members and 150 family members) fundraising activities and grants or otherwise. They really do make a difference.

I would also like to thank all seven Parish Councils for their support, they each make an annual donation and appoint a Trustee to the board. Their willingness to support us and to work with us is very much appreciated.

Whilst the management of the Group is entrusted to the Trustees the day to day running of the Group remains in the very capable hands of our Group Co-ordinator, Diane Barraclough and her small team. They work incredibly hard, often showing commitment and dedication way in excess of what is expected of them – we are truly very fortunate to have such a team behind us. Thank you so much for everything you do.

As some of you may know, I am not standing for re-election as Chair at this meeting. I have had the privilege of being your Vice Chair for 2 years followed by Chair for 3 years. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself, have had some wonderful experiences and have met some incredible people. However, I now feel the time is right to hand over. Geoff Hine has been an excellent vice-chair. He will, I'm sure, if elected make a very good and competent chair.

Thank you.

I will be pleased to answer any questions before moving on to the Treasurer's report.

Geoff Hine thanked Jenny for her report.

TREASURERS REPORT: - I am pleased to present the Unaudited Annual Accounts for the Northern Fells Rural Community Development Group for the Year Ended 31.03.17.

These have been prepared by Andrew Liddle of Saint & Co of Penrith.

Total Funds for the Group stand at £101144 (page 14) a decrease of £16293 over the previous year and this represents the excess of Expenditure over Income for the year. This decrease just about cancels the increase of £17812 in the previous year. Incoming Resources at £95851 were £25066 lower than 2016. Our policy at the moment is to reduce our reserves to around 70% of our annual expenditure, so this is a step in the right direction.

Resources Expended increased from £103104 in 2016 to £112144, an increase of £9040. We are continually reviewing both Income and Expenditure as to whether it is necessary and if it is value for money. However we are mindful at all times of the aims and objectives of the Group and the responsibilities we have to those in need and to our employees. It is also important for us to continue to monitor and react to the criteria which funders are using to evaluate the needs and requirements of charities. We are presently considered by some funders to have sufficient resources and we are therefore finding it more difficult to obtain appropriate funding. With this in mind we are reducing the level of our total funds by funding some activities out of our reserves.

Our Net Current Assets (Page 15) decreased from £117437 to £101144 a decrease of £16293. We expect this reduction in Net Assets to continue in the current year but at reduced rate because of our policy of financing some of our activities out of our own resources.

Financially we continue to be in positive position overall, our major commitments to Village Agents and Men in Sheds are funded until September 2020 by the Big Lottery and our Administration is funded until July 2019 by The Prince's Trust and to June 2019 by the Joyce Wilkinson Trust. It continues to be difficult to obtain new sources of funding with regular funders of recent years reviewing their criteria. We review our pay policy each year and have continued to implement pay rates at least equal to the Real Living Wage rates. This rate is higher than the National Living Wage and will mean that Wages and Salaries will form a major part of our costs.

All Charities continue to be in a similar situation regarding funding and I still feel there will continue to be more organisations chasing the fewer funds available.

I would therefore like to present these Accounts to the meeting for Approval but if there are any questions I will do my best to answer them.

David Ward thanked Geoff for his report.

ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS: - Our treasurer then recommended adoption of the accounts, proposed by David Ward and seconded by Mike Richardson. All were in favour.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:-

Jenny Bland thanked Len Gleed ,who is standing down as a trustee, for his massive contribution to the trustees.

Jenny Bland confirmed she was standing down as chair and asked if there were any nominations. Geoff Hine was proposed by Jenny Bland and seconded by Malcolm Threlkeld. There were no other nominations and Geoff Hine was duly elected as Chair. All were in favour.

Nominations were asked for vice-chair. Tim Cartmell was proposed by Geoff Hine and seconded by Philippa Groves. There were no other nominations and Tim Cartmell was duly elected. All were in favour.

Geoff Batey confirmed he was willing to stand again as treasurer. Nominated by David Ward and seconded by Mike Richardson. All were in favour.

The Parish Council representatives are:- Geoff Hine – Castle Sowerby, Peter Pearson - Sebergham & Welton, David Ward – Caldbeck, Keith Bridges – Ireby & Uldale, Jenny Bush – Boltons, Steven Brockbank – Westward and Jennifer Stevenson – Mungrisdale.

The remaining trustees - Malcolm Threlkeld, Tim Cartmell, Mike Richardson, Peter Huntington and Jenny Bland were proposed en-bloc by Diane Barraclough and seconded by Geoff Hine and were elected unanimously.

ELECTION OF SECRETARY: - Diane Barraclough was willing to continue as company secretary. She was proposed by Jenny Bland and seconded by Jennifer Stevenson.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER: - Jenny Bland proposed we continue with the present independent examiners, Saint & Co, this was seconded by Jenny Bush.

FIXING OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: - Jenny Bland proposed it continued at £5.00 for single membership and £15.00 for families. This was seconded by Keith Bridges and agreed unanimously.

There was no other business to discuss and Geoff Hine thanked Jenny Bland for her work as chair of the trustees and closed the meeting at 7:50 pm

Chair Geoff Hine