

Minutes of the ELCV AGM 2021

2pm, Tuesday 30 March 2021
Zoom Meeting

Present: Dick Gill (Acting Chair), Anne Pearson (Secretary), Colin Ballantyne (Membership Secretary), Katty Baird, Abbie Marland, Dave Quarendon, Mike Sharp, Peter Wells, John Laws, Terry Page, Janet Hardwick, Liz Curtis, Angus Currie, Chris Gunstone, Morag Cook, Andrew Stevenson (Sn), Andrew Stevenson (Jr), Graham Pettigrew, Robert Russel, Jan Maxwell, Charles Stable, Karen Fullerton, Collette Nelson, Rod Reeve.

Attending: Jenny Hargreaves, ELC, John Harrison, ELC.

Apologies: Kate Odling, Flora Sinclair, Dave Oldham, Donald Hay, Louise Hardy, John Hardy.

Welcome and introductions from Dick Gill

Dick Gill welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He explained how a Zoom meeting operates and the voting procedure to be adopted at the appropriate times. He introduced the Trustees.

Minutes of previous meeting

The meeting was held on 13 December 2019. The minutes were accepted. There were no matters arising.

Review of 2020 activities

Dick Gill reported that it had been a quieter year than usual. There was one Trustee meeting on 12 February 2020, but the others had to be cancelled. Group volunteering sessions stopped, but individual sessions took place – namely the Path Wardens and other small projects. Please see the website (www.elcv.org.uk) and ELCV facebook page for details. Some important progress was made on projects despite the lack of group sessions, see below. The Trustees will take stock this year and aim for a practical focus, working within any regulations/guidelines on gatherings.

Jenny Hargreaves reported on volunteer news. In 2020 livestock checkers continued to operate at Traprain and North Berwick Laws, Aberlady Reserve and Barns Ness. There was a pause at Traprain for a short period. The shepherd at Barns Ness and Aberlady thanks all the volunteer checkers keeping an eye on the sheep in 2020. Ragwort removal by individuals continued at Traprain and N Berwick Laws. Many of the wildlife surveys were discontinued in 2020 and replaced by Ad Hoc monitoring of Eider ducks, Butterflies and Bumblebees. It is planned to reintroduce the surveys in 2021. Butterfly sighting and numbers were collated by Nick Morgan and published. He thanks those volunteers involved. The path wardens were busy individually, 5 new ones have joined this year. We are sorry to see John Laws step down as coordinator of the Path Wardens and all thanked him for the work he has done. Terry Page has agreed to take on the job of coordinator. Two team tasks did take place in the summer involving step repairs and also cutting back of undergrowth.

Looking ahead Jenny pointed out that social distancing will still apply and small groups will hopefully be able to undertake tasks identified by Path Wardens and the Countryside Rangers. It is hoped to also complete the projects which were partly funded by North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership (NBCAP).

Jenny explained the way in which Path tasks are identified and prioritised within the whole of East Lothian. Path Wardens report to Terry Page, who communicates problems to Jenny Hargreaves who then identifies the most appropriate way in which the problem can be sorted, not just using the volunteers, but working with other sections of ELC or other organisations should other skills be needed.

John Harrison reported on the Aberlady Hub project. Aberlady Reserve volunteers were set up in 2008, now there are about 100 volunteers on the books. In 2017 it was felt a base or 'Hub' was needed to act as a base for volunteer activity and plans were put in motion. In October 2020 after successful fundraising a container converted to provide meeting space was procured and arrived on site ready to go. £5000 funding was obtained for the box and about £2000 for furnishing and kit was pledged. An additional funding application has just been submitted. Solar panels will provide electricity and once up and running the hub will help in the running of three main projects over the next 5 years. Wildlife monitoring will be a key activity. A marine intertidal Phase 1 Biotope Mapping Survey is one example, with two marine biologists already involved, the project will look at habitat change and trends in wildlife over time. A moth monitoring project, with funds secured from Butterfly Conservation by Katty Baird, is planned. Dragonflies, as new species are being discovered in the county, and a rare weevil found on site are other species to be monitored on the Aberlady Reserve. The Hub will also help in site patrols, habitat management and estate work. John Harrison thanked Dick, Kate, Peter, Abbie, Mike and Bruce for all the work they put in to get the hub funded and on site.

Dave Quarendon reported on the River Tyne Invasive Species project. In August 2020 all Gt Hogweed spotted along the Tyne had been removed or sprayed, none was seen in the tributaries. Japanese Knotweed is widespread as was seen on the maps displayed, but it spreads slowly so it is hoped that it can be controlled over several years. A large stand of Gt Hogweed was spotted at Cousland, dealt with by volunteers and the farmer helped dispose of the heads and agreed to spray it in 2021. The system is that volunteers act mainly as plant spotters while the farmers and land owners do the bulk of the control work (including spraying). Much of this is funded by the farmers but 50l of spray was donated by Bayer in 2019 and 2020. In 2019 Nature Scot (aka SNH) also provided funding of £1000 to ELCV which we distributed to farmers as a token contribution to their costs (though several did not accept the money, which was very welcoming. NatureScot this year declined to repeat its 2019 grant towards the project. The landowners are all thanked for their work in controlling the Gt Hogweed. James Wyllie is thanked for his work in coordinating the project, which was recognised with an award to ELCV from the Scottish Land and Estates for the project. For a more detailed report on the project see www.elcv.org.uk/tasks/invasives/the-program. This year more spotter volunteers are needed to make sure the project continues to be a success.

A new project organised by Kathryn Wyllie (James' daughter) to eradicate Gt Hogweed along the Esk from Dalkeith Country Park to the Sea has been set up. Not ELCV, but based in Inveresk, volunteer spotters are welcome. Already 20 spotters have identified 600 GT Hogweed sites.

Dave Quarendon also reported on the social media sites (ELCV Website and Facebook pages) which he has set up and monitored, for which he was gratefully thanked. The Facebook pages have had over 100 people accessing them, 60 posts from a small number of regulars with 80 likes on average on each of the postings. Dave recommended checking the ELC Rangers Facebook pages on which are regular daily posting of interesting wildlife sighting and information. People who don't wish to access Facebook pages can go to the ELCV website (www.elcv.org.uk) and subscribe to News then they will get regular email updates of ELCV activities, tasks and information. 25 people already make use of this.

Jenny Hargreaves reported on the successful small grants. Sustrans donated money to buy tools as did NBCAP (£1500). These have been purchased for use at Gullane and Aberlady. There has been an increase in people willing to volunteer as litter pickers on the coast and some more offering to be path wardens, current numbers registered with ELC stand at 330 volunteers in East Lothian.

Treasurer's report

Dick Gill gave his Treasurer's report: In brief ELCV started off the year with a balance of £3,944 and received project grants and donations of £4,809. Payments in the year amounted to £4,343 leaving a net surplus of £466 and a closing balance of £4,410. £1,010 is available as a general fund, £2,169 is reserved by the Trustees for the Path wardens' activities. Restricted funds are: £ 482 for Aberlady Hub, £749 from Sustrans for the purchase of tools for the volunteers.

Appointment of Trustees and Office Bearers

All Trustees and Office Bearers stepped down from their positions. Except for Dave Oldham the other 10 Trustees indicated that they were keen to be re-elected. Two people Terry Page and Andrew Stevenson (Sn) were proposed as additional Trustees. Dick Gill agreed to remain as Treasurer and Acting Chair and Anne Pearson as Secretary. All actions were approved from the floor. All were sorry to hear that Dave Oldham was stepping down as Chairman and Trustee, he will be greatly missed and was thanked for all he has done. The ELCV look forward to catching up with him on volunteering days.

Formal proposal to amend the constitution.

Dick Gill proposed that the constitution be amended to allow virtual meetings as well as those held in person. The proposal was unanimously approved.

AOB

There was no other business and Dick Gill closed the meeting.