**Essex Bridleways Association AGM Minutes. 08.11.19**

**Apologies Received**

Deidre Graham

Catherine Raffe

Julian Niemic

Jo Childs

Carol Taylor

Jeff & Hannah Hibbs

Helen Mathias

**Approval of 2018 AGM minutes**

The minutes the 2018 AGM were approved. Proposed by Julia Wilson and seconded by Lisa Guy

**Chairperson’s Report 2019**

Julia Wilson gave the chairperson’s report for 2019:

Those of you who usually come along will know that my speech generally involves me sitting here gloating over all the good results from the year and you sitting there nodding in agreement. And this year is no exception. Our major breakthrough moment came about when Councillor Kevin Bentley, head of ECC highways, agreed to meet us. A positive discussion was had and Mr Bentley agreed to review the archaic policies in place so that bridleway provision is firmly back on the agenda. We have agreed to work alongside ECC PROW team to set up an improvement plan which will be considered when planning takes place in Essex. This is, of course, a massive piece of work that we hope our members will help us with. But I’m not going to spend too much time talking about the past achievements of this year because there is enough evidence around the room for you to see that for yourselves. Suffice to say the funds raised through membership and our rides is still being put to good use paying for Chris and her HR, Sue with her BW development and planning and Mary looking at projects that we can organise and fund.

When we were putting together tonight’s information we trawled through all the archive material which in itself was very interesting. We came across all sorts of interesting bits including the minutes of the first meeting held by EBA – held on 26.11.79 – almost 40 years to the very date. Deirdre Graham, our president, took the chair and I will just read you a short exert – ‘over the past few years riding rights are being lost. Roads are cutting riding routes, farmers are obstructing and ploughing up bridleways and the County Council is closing areas like Norsey Woods and Langdon Hills. We urgently need a strong persistent and vocal body of riders to support each other by riding existing BWs, clearing overgrown ones, familiarising themselves with the law and watching local papers for public notices regarding ROW. No one person can do it in any one area’

And subsequently EBA began, it’s rather ironic really that we are still faced with the same challenges and 40 years on equestrians still get forgotten when it comes to provision of off-road riding. However I strongly believe that without EBA’s intervention a great many opportunities would have been missed. It is such a shame that Deidre couldn't be with us tonight. We owe her so much, it must have been a daunting task taking on the whole of Essex and its prejudice towards equestrians. I have spoken to her recently and she is immensely proud of all that EBA have achieved. So tonight should be a real celebration of all the hard work by current and past Trustees, our volunteers and members who have made EBA the true success it is today.

The AGM is always a good opportunity for me to thank the committee for all their hard work over the year. Without them none of this would be possible. One of our esteemed crew resigned this year. Carol Allison joined as a member in 2008 and before she knew it was recruited onto the committee. She initially started helping John with the Update and then took over when John stepped down in 2014. She certainly added her own stamp and has never failed to produce an interesting and informative publication ever since. I’m sure you all agree that she has done an outstanding job and we are really going to miss her. (PRESENT FLOWERS).

It is also my duty to announce our Michael Clark Volunteer of the year award. It’s never an easy decision because we have so many wonderful regular helpers. However the committee were unanimous that this year’s award should go to Malcolm Lees. Without Malcolm we would surely struggle at the rides, he often gives up both his Saturday and Sunday to assist with marking and marshalling and he’s done that now for several years. It really takes the pressure off the organiser to know they can rely on Malcolm’s support. PRESENT ROSETTE

So there we have it, another year over...........

**Treasurer’s Report 2019**

**Louise Fuller**

Copies of EBA’s Income and Expenditure account and Balance Sheet have been left on your chairs.

I won’t spend long as I know you are all keen to get on with the party. But finance is important as without it, there wouldn’t be an EBA, at least not in the form it takes today.

Looking at our income, you will see that as usual the largest amount comes from our rides. Our rides are very successful and the profit from rides this year was £14,829. We charge a reasonable fee for ride entries and this encourages more people to come on them.

Members’ subscriptions account for the next largest figure and the increase between last year and this reflects the significant increase in our membership numbers.

Miscellaneous income can vary greatly year by year. It is a heading in the accounts where I put things which are pretty well a one-off and therefore do not justify a heading of their own. However this can obscure a lot of information so this year I have added a note at the bottom to give you an idea of some of the major items under that heading. All three of our contractors have been successful in obtaining significant grants from the British Horse Society towards our work, so “well done” to them.

Looking at our expenditure, the largest amount is for our contractors – Historic Research, Bridleways Development and Projects and Funding. They have all done sterling work again this year and the money we spend on them is definitely worth it.

The rides expenditure has gone down this year – as I have said before, the figures related to rides can vary quite a lot according to which rides we run and what the associated expenses are. If anybody would like more detailed information, have a word with me later and I will show you the relevant spreadsheet.

As with the income, the category of miscellaneous expenditure can hide a multitude of sins (although of course that’s not the intention!). I have put a note at the bottom of the sheet to explain some of the miscellaneous expenditure, some of which is standard admin-type items. This year we put on first aid training for trustees and area reps, which was very useful and gave us all more confidence to deal with situations we may face out in the field. But please don’t take this as an invitation to have an accident! Anyone who chokes on the buffet tonight will however be sure of swift assistance as Jan Arthur’s Heimlich manoeuvre has to be seen to be believed.

We spent £4663 on works to bridleways, which were partly offset by BHS grants of £1,000. The resulting improvements were welcomed by local riders. We are still working to see what can be done about the bridleway bridge at Stow Maries and commissioned a surveyor’s report to help move this along. Still a long way to go yet on this one! But it is a lovely bridleway and if we can get it re-opened that will be great.

Our year-end balances dropped by £7,719 this year, still leaving us with a healthy balance of £55,708. As you know, we don’t believe in leaving money festering in the bank, so we are happy to be spending money which will benefit bridleways users in Essex. Some of this work is quite long-term but it will bear fruit in the end.

I always tell you about our volunteers who do such a great job for us. We can’t calculate all the hours given, but in respect of the rides, last year we had a total of 224 helper days, not including our wonderful bikers. Helpers on rides are entitled to a voucher for membership renewal or a free ride, although many of our helpers do not take advantage of this “perk”; if each helper day was valued at £15 (the cost of membership or a member’s ride entry) the total would be a staggering £3,360. Vouchers to the value of £910 were used for ride entries or annual memberships, so you can see that the balance is very much in our favour and our ride volunteers are worth their weight in gold. Next time a request for ride help comes out, see if you can help us and add to that total. Then there’s all the voluntary work done by area reps and trustees.

As part of our Ruby Anniversary celebrations, I did try to find some information about finance from the early years but it was a fruitless task. So you are spared me telling you about the figures from 1979, for which I expect you are very grateful.

We need to appoint the Independent Examiner for next year; I hope that Ian Dunn will continue to do this and ask you to approve this, or in the event of him not carrying on, then to approve whoever can be appointed as a suitable person.

The attendees were invited to ask questions.

**Proposed changes to the EBA Constitution.**

None to be proposed.

**Appointment of Trustees**

Four members, Lesley Gillman, Louise Fuller, Lisa Guy and Sally Crone came to the end of their three year appointments as trustees and were proposed, seconded and re-elected. Three new members wished to be elected to the Committee: Sandra Deeran, Alison Power, Jane Skinner. They were proposed and seconded.

The AGM was then closed by Julia Wilson.