**Essex Bridleways Association AGM Minutes. 11.11.21**

**Meeting Held at Keene Hall, Galleywood.**

**Apologies Received**

Lesley Gilman, Simon Taylor, Caroline Cowell, Geoff Box Beverley Egan

**Approval of 2020 AGM minutes**

The minutes the 2020 AGM were approved. Proposed by Julia Wilson and seconded by Lisa Guy

**Chairperson’s Report 2021**

Julia Wilson gave the chairperson’s report for 2021:

Firstly I must thank you all for coming and say how nice it is to see you all face to face, last years Zoom meeting went very well but there is nothing like a good gathering and social occasion to bring us all up to date.

So again Covid has played a part in our rides this year, restricting both our numbers and the venues we use. We were put back a couple of months but despite all the regulations we still managed to run 6 rides with Epping still to go next month. As the year progressed we were able to lift some of the restrictions. We started taking more entries, we met with marshals on the day and we started taking the trailer along for us to meet and greet throughout the day. I have to say it has been nice to get back to some semblance of normality. However the lack of rides over the past 2 years has had an affect on our funds and I am sure Louise will reflect on this in her report. Running the rides requires an enormous amount of work and it is truly a team effort. We do rely heavily on volunteers to help on the day but sadly these seem in short supply and its does appear to be the same faces that turn out to help. So this is a plea to you all here this evening, if you can spare one Sunday morning we would really appreciate it.

As we all know EBA is certainly not just about the rides we run, indeed these are a small amount of the work we carry out. This year we have been busy looking at ways to enhance and improve the access for riders in Essex. No one can failed to have noticed the level and speed of development. Although we feel powerless to stop the growth of urbanisation we can use some of it to our advantage and this is why it is so important to us to have both Sue and Chris still working for us. The knowledge they have gained over the years and their continuity of approach, the relationships they have built up with our partners, have all aided their successes.

Chris has researched 126 routes this year resulting in 4 new claims, 3 successful appeals, 1 order confirmed for a restricted byway. Currently we have 11 claims waiting on decisions. Chris has also made a start looking at possible routes that we maybe able to obtain through Express dedication, this is a work in progress but we are hopeful that we can achieve some success here.

Sue – I have to say too much work here to mention it all but to mention a couple of big successes we have secured enhancements to bridleways around the Lower Thames Crossing, South Woodham Ferrers, Chatham Green over the A131 and a pegasus crossing at Sandon. In addition to this Sue played a major part in securing riding on Frinton beach. And lastly and very importantly met with Councillor Lee Scott, the new Portfolio holder for Highways and sustainable transport. He is keen to support access for all in Essex and we will certainly be holding him to that.

This year we welcomed a new member to the team – Chris Rust. Chris took up the project and funding role in May and it hasn't taken her long to get to grips with the job. In the short time she has been with us she has sorted clearance of routes in Maldon and Epping. She has also looked at funding possibilities to assist with projects in Thundersley and Brentwood.

So as you can see lots of great work is going on. The AGM is always a good opportunity for me to thank the committee and Area reps for all their hard work over the year. Without them none of this would be possible. They all play an important role in helping EBA to run smoothly, supporting each other and our three employed officers. We are always looking for new trustees and area reps to come on board and join the team, if you feel you have something to offer then please speak to myself or any of the trustees/reps here this evening.

Many of you here this evening will know our long standing Trustee Mick Brash. Mick has been a figure in EBA for many many years, more recently playing a supportive and mentoring role from his house boat in Leicestershire. He is the font of all knowledge when it comes to PROW. Although not a rider he has been especially interested and vocal for equestrians. Mick has decided to step down from the official role of Trustee but will still be very much in the background for us to call on when we need that expert help and advice. We truly owe him a huge debt of gratitude for his commitment to EBA. I wanted to officially thank him in public.

It is also a time to announce our volunteer of the year award. It's never an easy decision because we have so many regular volunteers but this year we decided the award should go to Spencer Dobson. Spencer has supported us on our rides for the past 4 years. He turns out both Saturday and Sunday for almost every ride throughout the year. He is happy to help in any way asked from marking the route, putting out signs, mashalling or manning the car park. He never complains and always has a smile! So thank you Spencer I have a token of our appreciation here.

So I am nearly finished but before I end I have one plea for you all. You may have read, and hopefully you have, in the latest update my request to you all to write to your MP appealing to secure permanent access for all in the countryside. This is an opportunity not to be missed and if successful will enhance our network 10 fold and more. We have done the hard work for you and Jan is here tonight with a letter template for you to take away. So please please see Jan during the break and make her a happy person!! So that concludes my report for tonight, thank you for listening.

**Treasurer’s Report 2021 – Louise Fuller**

I will say again, what a pleasure it is to be here with you all in person, albeit we are taking sensible Covid precautions.

Copies of EBA’s Income and Expenditure account and Balance Sheet are on your chairs and I hope you have had time to have a quick look at them.

We have fortunately been able to run many of our rides for this financial year although we dropped some and slotted others in as extras. This has improved our income compared to last year. All the rides were limited in the number of entries in order to be able to maintain Covid spacing and were members-only rides. Obviously this affects the income, with fewer riders and none at the higher non-member entry fee. However it is definitely a big step in the right direction. As you can see at the bottom of the Income and Expenditure sheet, the profit from rides has increased hugely from last year.

As our membership numbers have increased so has the income from membership fees, so that is welcome. I expect that many of the new members joined in order to be able to enter members-only rides but we hope they will now stay with us.

I hope you have all signed up to help EBA’s finances via platforms such as Amazon Smile and Easyfundraising. There is no cost to you to do this and it all helps our funds. In the financial year we received £60 commission from online retailers and I don’t think that was all from Lesley Gillman’s Christmas shopping! There is a little article in the latest Update magazine which tells you how to sign up so please do so if you haven’t already.

Our Historic Researcher, Chris Tout, puts in an application for a grant of £100 from the BHS every time she makes a claim to Essex County Council for a Definitive Map Modification Order and this year it amounted to £500. Well done, Chris.

Our contractors (Historic Research, Bridleways Development and Projects and Funding) were able to resume much of their work this year. We lost Mary Pengelly, the Projects and Funding Officer, in January when she moved to Cornwall, and there was a gap before we recruited her replacement which probably accounts for much of the drop in expenditure. The work they carry out is very valuable to EBA and we are pleased to be able to fund this.

The committee restarted meeting in person in August so the cost of meetings, which we held by Zoom (courtesy of Sally Crone’s husband’s Zoom account), was very low. This will go up next year as we have started meeting again here at Keene Hall. Postage has reduced significantly as most of our membership communications (invitations to renew and renewal letters) are now done by email.

By the end of the year we held balances of £51,373 which I am pleased to say is an increase of £2,917 compared to last year.

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.

**Proposed changes to the EBA Constitution.**

None to be proposed.

**Appointment of Trustees**

Three members came to the end of their three year appointments as trustees and were proposed, seconded and re-elected. There were no new members to elect.

The AGM was then closed by Julia Wilson.