**Essex Bridleways Association AGM Minutes. 12.11.20**

**Meeting held on Zoom**

**Apologies Received**

Denise Dillon

**Approval of 2019 AGM minutes**

The minutes the 2019 AGM were approved. Proposed by Julia Wilson and seconded by Lisa Guy

**Chairperson’s Report 2020**

Julia Wilson gave the chairperson’s report for 2020:

This has certainly been an extraordinary year. It started so well last December a schedule of rides arranged and the details booked. Meetings arranged and maintenance planned. But then covid hit us in March and suddenly our lives were thrown into turmoil. So much work and effort goes into our rides which are not only enjoyed by many riders but also provide us with much needed funds. Initially we were in limbo about our way forward but eventually the decision was taken out of our hands and all events were cancelled. However, history has taught us not to give up easily, and as soon as we got the go ahead we pushed on. A sub committee was set up, so much had to be considered to adhere to strict covid guidelines and to ensure our hosts, riders and marshalls were kept safe. It did mean that we were unable to take as many entries as we would have liked so as a thank you to all our loyal members we made the decision to open the rides to members only. This consequently had a positive effect on our membership which has soared to over 800. Thanks to all the hard work of everyone on the committee we ran 4 very successful rides. Lets hope that next year we can increase that number.

Although the rides were on hold other work has still continued albeit in a different way. Our 3 officers, Chris, Mary and Sue have remained busy. They have attended virtual meetings and endeavoured to pursue projects and claims as best they can. I can report that Chris has researched an impressive 110 routes this year. 10 claims are awaiting a decision from ECC and a further 3 are at appeal stage. Sue has been kept busy with the Agriculture Bill and the environmental land management scheme, as well as keeping abreast of the many development projects going on in Essex. It is imperative that we are fully involved in all future schemes to secure any equestrian access. That brings me to Mary who has to be applauded for her stoic work this year to get some of our 'wish list' projects off the ground. Covid inevitably slowed any maintenance and contract work. However progress has been made and we are optimistic we will see more results in 2021. That brings me on to say that, sadly, Mary is moving to Cornwall. She has only been with us a short time and we all know that making a difference to equestrian access takes a long time however Mary has made so many positive steps towards improving our ROW. We have a lot to be grateful for and we would like to say a huge thank you tonight. It is our intention to replace Mary and she has kindly agreed to help us with our recruitment.

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. We have all had to learn to adapt the way we run the organisation and every one of them has been brilliant. It is also my pleasure to announce our volunteer of the year award. It's never an easy decision because we have so many wonderful regular volunteers but this year it goes to Petra Studholme. Petra has helped EBA in so many ways for at least 15 years. From assisting with holidays, marshalling, marking and setting up and managing our facebook account since 2014. It gives us great pleasure to recognise her commitment and present a special rosette to say thank you.

Now I have nearly finished but there is just one last thing or person to mention. You are all aware that Lesley, as of tonight, has resigned her position as Trustee. At some time or another you have all come across Lesley. She joined EBA as a member on 13.09.2000 and quickly became a trustee and took up post as secretary. She started to support Katie Haines with organising the rides and not satisfied with running 2 a year she was soon liaising with land owners, members and supporters to increase the rides to 9. Not to mention all the wonderful holidays. Over the years she has worked closely with various authorities building relations and getting results.

There is nothing she loves more than to show riders where they can hack and exploring new pastures. She is physically unable to sit still and expects everyone else to follow suit, she is such a motivator. She has recruited numerous members and several Trustees, her enthusiasm is infectious.. I don't know anyone else who is so positive, she makes the impossible possible, always seeing the best in a person. She is incredibly patient with both people and horses always there to help load a difficult horse or encourage an anxious rider to take part. We have so much to thank her for and we will miss her very much. Quite simply she is the best and we all love her. We have arranged a small token of our appreciation which Rick is hopefully bringing up to you now. I am going to pass over to her now to say a few words.

Well that concludes my report for this year. I pray that next year we will resume our AGM in person at the Keene hall.

**Treasurer’s Report 2020**

**Louise Fuller**

As Julia has already said, we find ourselves in a very different place this year, compared to last year when we were having a party to celebrate our Ruby anniversary. However, we must count our blessings.

Copies of EBA’s Income and Expenditure account and Balance Sheet have been posted on our website and have been available for several weeks. I don’t propose to go through them in detail but will pick out some salient points.

Naturally the biggest drop is in income from our rides; in this year it was a third of last year’s. Given that our financial year runs from 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020, we did manage to get some normal rides in before the Covid 19 lockdown came in, and squeezed one ride in post-lockdown in August, but we lost some of our most profitable rides scheduled for the summer. When we re-started rides, we suffered a double whammy as we restricted the number of riders to 100, many fewer than normal, and they were all member-only rides, so we had no benefit from the higher non-member entry fee. There will be a similar effect in next year’s accounts. That said, it was a tremendous effort to run our post-Covid rides safely and all the profits were gratefully received.

As our membership numbers have crept up so has the income from membership fees, so that is welcome.

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; she is nearing a total of £1000 from this source, so well done, Chris.

Our greatest expenditure is for our contractors. They were unable to carry out much of their normal work during the Covid lockdown so their invoices were greatly reduced or not submitted, for which we thank them, as this was helpful to our reduced funds.

With fewer rides, the rides expenditure has more than halved.

Miscellaneous expenses are much less this year, mainly because last year we spent quite a lot on works on bridleways and a First Aid course for trustees and other helpers.

By the end of the year we still held balances of £48,456; a drop of just over £7,000 from last year but still a healthy position to be in.

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**

Two members, Julia Wilson and Jan Arthur 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. Lesley Gillman stood down as a Trustee.

The AGM was then closed by Julia Wilson.