



**Minutes of
VALEWAYS AGM
2 November 2019
2.00 pm, Unit 1
Barry Enterprise Centre**

Present & Apologies: see attached sheet. Phil Gibbins welcomed everyone.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting.** The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. Proposed: Val Warlow, seconded: Glen Stevens
3. **Matters Arising.** There has been no response from the Vale Mayor who had undertaken to address Aston Martin on the matter of funding.
4. **Resignation and Appointment of Trustees.** Penny Fell and Xavier Quayzin were re-elected and Lynne Frugniet was elected and welcomed as a new trustee. Phil was resigning as Chair but would continue as a trustee. The search for a Treasurer continued with one lead being followed currently.
5. **The Annual Report** (see attached). Phil explained that the circumstances for Valeways at this particular time dictated that it deal with the current time as well as the usual April - March period. Critical funding issues could not be ignored. In answer to Huw Allaway, Phil explained that Valeways could not accept the Strong Communities grant when the charity did not have the means to continue operating in its current form with paid staff. It has been necessary to make our much valued staff, Carolyn and Rebecca, redundant with effect from 3 November. Valeways would continue as a volunteer-led charity providing the year-long programme of led walks. Carolyn commented that the current programme of walks was the most extensive to date, given the good numbers of trained walk leaders.

There was extensive discussion of the issues of funding and how Valeways would continue to operate without paid staff. Many suggestions on funders were made, most of which had been investigated often to find that core funding was not eligible. Penny, who has dedicatedly secured considerable amounts of funding, put on record that in addition to the generous discretionary grants from the Waterloo Foundation, the Simon Gibson Trust had contributed some annual core costs.

A group consisting of Alan Simmonds, Huw Allaway, Paul Hawkins, Phil Bond and others had investigated in some detail how the Walk and Clear activity might continue as volunteer-led and intended to proceed. Between 14 and 16 volunteers were keen to continue and a group of 6 to 8 were prepared to take on the responsibility of running the activity. However, without trained staff, it would not be possible to accommodate unaccompanied volunteers with special needs. It was agreed that Peter Weston should be their contact with the Trustees. Phil thanked them and all who had been so

supportive. He confirmed that the office would be retained as a base for co-ordination. The cost was relatively small and retaining it would allow a revival of former activities as the search for funding continued. The following actions were agreed:

- A meeting was already arranged for Walk Leaders and Trustees at 6.30pm on Mon 14 October at the Old School, Sully. Any Walk & Clear representatives who are not also Walk Leaders were invited to attend.
- Carolyn has offered to continue to administer the walking programme until the end of the current session.
- Before the meeting on 14 October, the Walk & Clear group would forward to Trustees via Carolyn a list of queries concerning use of the office and administration of the activity with a view to retaining the activity as an official part of Valeways.
- Walk & Clear contact with the Council would be maintained. It was believed that use of the Council Land Rover was not essential but Gwyn Teague (Vale Public Rights of Way officer) suggested that it might be made available. The Walk & Clear group agreed to meet with him.
- The importance of retaining the Friends of Valeways organisation was agreed as was the need for administration, possibly by a rota of volunteers.
- Anyone was welcome continue to investigate funding opportunities. Huw suggested regular fundraising meetings to check on what organisations had been approached to avoid duplicating applications.

Accounts to 31 March 2019

Sadly, our Treasurer, Colin Dunford, died unexpectedly at the start of the year. Frank Learner presented the accounts as compiler, reminding the meeting that the documents presented the financial position of seven months earlier. Since then, as Phil had pointed out, the situation had become more critical and the Trustees had taken action in a constructive manner. It was obvious that the charity could no longer depend on its former supporters.

Carolyn agreed to supply copies of the full accounts to all interested parties. Phil stated that future plans would be made by the Trustees collectively.

AOB

Kathryn Vinnicombe asked about charging for walks as she and others would be happy to contribute. It was explained that charging was both against Valeways' policy of inclusiveness and the wishes of Walk Leaders who already had many responsibilities. Those who wished to contribute should become "Friends".

Phil Bond recommended individuals to distribute Valeways literature in their own localities.

Penny thanked Phil for his work as Chair over many years and he paid tribute to the support from other trustees, staff and volunteers.

He also thanked Frank, on his retirement, for his financial advice and general support over many years with a small gift in appreciation.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Valeways AGM 2018-19
Wednesday 2 October 2019
Unit 1, Barry Community Enterprise Centre

Attending

Alan Simmonds
Barbara Breen
Brenda Gibbins
Carolyn Gully
Cen Williams
Charles Davis
Frank learner
Glen Stevens
Gwyn Teague
Hugh Allaway
Kathryn Vinnicombe
Lynne Frugtniet
Margaret Prosser
Mike Edwards
Pam Hill
Pat McCarthy
Paul Hawkins
Paul Ogden
Penny Fell
Peter Weston
Phil Bond
Phil Gibbins
Sandra Thomas
Val Warlow

Apologies

Avril Hughes
Cathie Brannigan
Dave Phillips
Fay Brinsdon
Glenys Rugman
Greg Clark
Jane Hutt AM
Jenny Davies
Liz Dimond
Margaret Pearce
Marion Eynon
Mike Holley
Sylvia Tapp
Vera Hopkins
Xavier Quayzin



VALEWAYS AGM REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OCTOBER 2019

In my report this year I shall not follow the usual timing i.e. April to March in the preceding financial year. This is because of the major impact of loss of funding on our charity and the actions that have had to be implemented by Trustees in the last few months. It would make no sense to ignore this.

So I shall begin by a review of the main points from last year and conclude by summarising our current situation.

Ironically 2018/19 has been a most successful year for our core activities. Our walk and clear programme, lead expertly by our Volunteer Coordinator, Rebecca, has throughout the year sent out weekly up to two working parties in all conditions. Without this effort pathways in our beautiful Vale quickly become difficult to access and walking in our own led walks programme, similar programmes led by other groups and individual's own walks would become increasingly problematic. It is not just the clearance of pathways; early in the year our volunteers took on a programme of installing the way marker signs that are essential to following routes, especially in more remote areas. In excess of 1,000 way marker discs were put in place by Valeways volunteers.

A further access improvement has been achieved by the Vale Council adopting, with our encouragement, a practice of steady replacement of stiles by kissing gates. Those of you who have encountered the challenge posed by the number and complexity of some stiles in the Vale will heartily welcome this development.

Our Walking Programme, led by volunteer Walk Leaders and administered unfailingly by Carolyn, who to many of us, is the face of Valeways ran throughout the year. A full fifty two weeks a year programme, free to access, and graded for all abilities that is unrivalled in the Vale. Towards the end of the year Rebecca undertook the training of eight new volunteer Walk Leaders to sustain and extend our programme.

Our walk programme is for everyone and the out standing demonstration of this is our Coffee Shop Strollers programme which not only provides healthy exercise for people with limited mobility but is an important social activity for those who otherwise would not have the opportunity. Significantly a group, Living With Cancer Strollers, has been added to our programme. A provision for 'carers' whose assistance can go unnoticed has been made and a joint walk with the charity 'Mind' was conducted.

The annual Vale Walking Festival is now managed and delivered by Valeways through the dedication of a variety of walk leaders and the overall organisation of Valeways Trustee Marion Eynon. This significant profile-raising event in the Vale attracts visitors from beyond the Vale. This year they will have been inspired by our Rebecca with a badly damaged ankle leading a walk from the confines of her wheelchair.

Our recently instituted Friends group (Honorary President the Weather Man Walking himself, Derek Brockway,) has proved invaluable as a means for individuals to contribute financially to Valeways as well as enjoying specially organised events. This year included a guided visit to the Senedd arranged and hosted by Jane Hutt AM, a real long-term friend of Valeways. Jane was photographed presenting Colin, our Treasurer, with her cheque. At a further event Derek led a walk around Dyffryn Gardens and Tinkinswood.

Further evidence of the sheer breadth of our contribution to life in the Vale came via Cen Williams who, with Carolyn, produces our outstanding Newsletter. Aware of the visual art talent amongst the people in our charity Cen agreed with the Travellers Gallery at Barry Station to put on an exhibition of paintings 'Valeways and Railways' of works from Valeways supporters. The exhibition ran for 5 weeks and was a great success.

Nor was it the only artistic effort of the year. The friends of St. Curig's Church, Porthkerry faced with an unaffordable cost estimate for the necessary lime washing of their church decided to do the job themselves. Three of our volunteers decided that this was a type of painting that they could cope with and joined in. The result is a stunning improvement.

On sadder notes; Barbara Palmer one of our co-founders has died. Barbara was instrumental in recovering a Vale Pathway Network that had become unusable. Then, early this year, came the sudden and unexpected death of our Treasurer, Colin Dunford, who had done so much to organise our fundraising activities. Both are sadly missed.

The loss of Colin was a particular blow as it came when our funding by public bodies, principally Lets Walk Cymru and Natural Resources Wales, had ceased through lack of funds for those bodies themselves. So Valeways, a body established by the Vale Council and initially totally funded by them faced a future with no public funding at all.

We had already through the efforts of Trustees, amongst whom Penny Fell deserves special mention, attracted private funding that had enabled us to survive longer than

many other bodies affected by 'austerity'. But fundraising is a task that becomes increasingly difficult. In the main because funders are always looking for new projects to support and what we need is support for the excellent work that we already do. What this means in the jargon on funding is covering 'core costs'. Whilst the huge majority of the work that Valeways does is conducted by unpaid volunteers giving their own free time this contribution requires coordination and organisation. Much of that is done by our volunteer Trustees but the day to day operation of our activities is enabled by two part time paid staff, Carolyn and Rebecca, who always put in more than they are paid for so are themselves an element of volunteering. Most funding bodies will not support 'core costs'.

In doing the financial forecast for this year it was clear to Trustees that without additional money coming in we would run out of funds before the end of the calendar year.

The major funding possibility that the Trustees were following up was a potential for support from the Vale Strong Communities fund but this itself had suffered delays so was six months later than anticipated. Although we did receive a substantial offer nearly all the money offered would have to have gone into the employment of someone to work for us on fundraising. Valuable though this could have been it would not have addressed our fundamental problem. None of the money could be used to fund our existing staff and before the new position could have delivered results we would have run out of money.

Faced with a serious situation the Trustees decided that the absolute priority was to keep Valeways in existence and therefore keep open the possibility of building back up again at some time in the future. So it was decided to reduce our activities to those that could be supported by volunteer effort only and to cease to be an employer of paid staff. This means the dropping of all our activities except to continue running a year-long Walking Programme. Our walk and clear activities and annual Walking Festival will cease except where elements can be sustained on a purely voluntary basis. While regrettable and painful, this is a way of maintaining our existence and public visibility, allowing Trustees to continue in their search for funding. That would allow us to contribute to our full potential once more.

I regret having to close on such a sombre note especially as I am standing down from the position of Chair. I have served as a Trustee for a decade or so, most of that as Chair and it is time for new blood. My last observation is that Valeways is a great little charity which consistently punches well above its weight and it is NOT closing down. In extremely difficult times it is regrouping so that it may thrive again.

Phil Gibbins