Coleford Welcomes Walkers Steering Group
Minutes
27th April 2023
Coleford Town Council Chambers
18:30 – 20:00

Attendees: Debbie Sturgess (Chair), Libby Sharpe (Treasurer), Stuart Cox, Jack Sturgess (Secretary)

Apologies: Paula Massey

Volunteers: Two volunteers

1. To confirm the minutes of the last meeting, held on 26th January 2023

The minutes concerning the meeting held on the 26th of January 2023 were agreed to be an accurate portrayal.

2. Matters arising from the previous minutes

i) Partnerships with other organisations / businesses

a) PRoW / training

The chair informed the group that this matter was ongoing and that she would receive word from PRoW officer Jeff Wheeler when this was ready to go ahead.

b) Buchanan Park – Direction sign to town

The chair stated that she was awaiting a quote for the PRoW officer regarding the implementation of this sign.

c) Milkwall to Coleford Cycle Track (FODDC Licence)

Regular maintenance of the cycle track is continuing to take place.

ii) PR & Marketing

a) Quiz Trail

There has been no progress of the quiz trail as Jack has not had the capacity to continue this project.

iii) Local photographers / gallery section for CWW website

The chair noted that a variety of photographs had been sent in and were now available to view on the Coleford Welcomes Walkers website (Gallery - Coleford Welcomes Walkers)

3. **The viability of CWW going forwards**

A discussion took place regarding the ability for CWW to continue, due to the lack of existing steering group members and the lack of work being shared. The chair noted her inability to continue with the large volume of work she currently undertakes and requested that other members of the steering group be more active in supporting the group and its endeavours.

The chair also presented the original application to the steering group, sighting several excerpts regarding actions that would be taken in solidarity with and in support of CWW if it were to be accredited. She noted that many of these commitments had not been met and were not forthcoming and that this was disappointing to see from original steering group founders.

Stuart suggested that if the chair felt she was too encumbered by her current workload, then a potential solution was to narrow the scope of work CWW engages with to the essentials to meet the application. This was challenged by the Chair, who stated that if each steering group member contributed actively to the group, then this capacity issue would be solved in its entirety, and that a decrease in activity could result in the revoking of the towns accreditation.

The chair highlighted that some members of the steering group were capable of or knew people who could act as walk leaders in aid of CWW but, despite encouragement, had failed to introduce these people to CWW and offer to host a walk themselves.

A discussion took place regarding the need for walk leaders to expand the scope of CWW's work. Stuart stated he felt many people were put off of participating with CWW and acting as walk leaders due to the level of bureaucracy involved in the process, which he said was off-putting, and made it more convenient to act independently. The chair argued that the regulations in place went above the group and that these regulations had to be followed by all groups and individuals as well to ensure the safety of all involved.

A member of the public suggested that there is anxiety among some people regarding who is liable for any harm that comes to participants of the walks and that interest in becoming a walk leader is counteracted by this fear. It was suggested that further publicity regarding the protections in place (like insurance) would help to mitigate this factor.

Stuart stated that he is qualified to lead walks and could host a monthly walk on behalf of CWW, with a draft schedule to be proposed by Stuart in the future.

The chair encouraged the group to produce more walking routes and provide them to be hosted on the CWW website and noted that certain committee members / volunteers had previously agreed to do so but this had not yet been achieved.

It was agreed that the committee group would consider ways that work could be offloaded from the chair in order to reduce the burden placed upon her to be consistently engaging with a large workload.

A conversation was had regarding the ability of CWW to produce more walks to be hosted on the website. During such discussions, it was categorically stated that no work from third parties was to be taken or used in any material produced by CWW and that any and all walking routes would need to be new and completely original to be used on the website. These were to be produced independently and without the use of third-party software or AI assistance.

During these discussions, the Chair reminded the group that respect was to be offered to each participant in every instance.

4. Co-opting of new members

It was agreed that Paula Massey would be accepted onto the steering group and that Libby would become Treasurer instead of Public Engagements Officer.

5. Audit of footpaths

A heated discussion took place when an attending volunteer suggested removing a piece of furniture on the PRoW that appeared to be in a state of disuse. The chair reminded those present that no such removal was permissible without the explicit permission of the PRoW officer. The chair signposted the volunteer to the PRoW officer in continuing the discussion further.

6. Walk leaders

As stated in point 3 (viability of CWW moving forwards), there was a strong need for qualified walk leaders to assist CWW in its deliverance of walks. It was also mentioned that some people on the steering group knew qualified walk leaders but had failed to introduce them to CWW as had previously been requested. It should be noted that nobody volunteered to assist.

7. The writing up of local walks

As was also stated in point 3, the Chair requested that members of the steering group write walks to be hosted on the CWW website and encouraged those who had already committed to writing walks to do so as these had not yet been sent to the chair. It should be noted that nobody volunteered.

8. Renewal of advertising subscription

The chair noted that many of the original business subscriptions to the CWW website were coming up for renewal and requested support from the committee in approaching these businesses and asking them to renew their subscriptions. It was also noted that it would be excellent if new businesses could be reached and encouraged to subscribe to the website. It was noted that nobody volunteered.

9. Treasure report

The Chair delivered the treasurers report on this occasion, and highlighted areas in which grant money CWW had obtained needed to be spent soon. A discussion took place regarding the provision of further high viz jackets to this end. It was also agreed by the group that the bill for the new webmaster was acceptable and was to be paid in due course. A discussion also took place regarding the potential of a for-profit leaflet to be produced to generate revenue for the group, potentially being a collection of local walks and trails.

10. Any other business – to be advised in advance

There was no further business to discuss.

11. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 25th of July

END