

# ESK VALLEY TRUST 19TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held via Zoom

Friday 29th May, 7.30 pm

(Agenda, Draft Minutes of 2019 AGM, Chairman's Report and Draft Accounts for 2019 had been available on the web site from 6 May 2020)

## MINUTES

### Present

Victoria Bullock, Roger Crofts, Rennie Fraser, Susan Goldwyre, Shelagh Jenkins, Cameron Manson, Susan Manson, Ben Miller, Cathy Oldham, John Oldham (Chairman), Peter Raine, David Ross

### Apologies

Apologies were received from: Pat Frankland, David Newlands, Susan Newlands, Rosemary Buchanan, Robin Buchanan

### 1. Minutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved unanimously with no matters arising.

### 2. Chairman's Report

The Chairman referred to the written report and highlighted:

- The conversion of the Trust's incorporated status from that of a Limited Company to a SCIO had been completed swiftly and with no problems.
- Action to improve the website that will need additional grant support to be completed
- The continuing issue of listed members not renewing subscriptions and that, once Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed, action to recruit more members will be renewed.
- Enhanced management of the Hewan Wood (new signs, waymarkers, fencing tree management and tree safety survey)
- Limited progress with developing the North Esk Way, notably blockage to progress in Dalkeith Country Park until a short length of path currently restricted to horses can be recognised as accessible to pedestrians but good will in discussions with Penicuik Estate that, once Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed, hold the prospect of agreement on a new route through the Estate from the south.
- Some progress in the 'Stories of the Esk' project with the Mavisbank Trust.

In discussion the point was raised as to whether new housing developments at Roslin (on the former site of the Roslin Institute) might limit vehicular access to the Hewan Wood which is important for maintenance. **Agreed** that the Chairman would raise this question with the Council Planners.

**Action: John Oldham**

Regarding the blockage to progress in agreeing a pathway through the Dalkeith Country Park it was noted that management of the Dalkeith Estates had now passed to Walter Scott, Earl of Dalkeith (the Duke of Buccleuch's eldest son) and that a fresh approach should be made to him.

**Action: John Oldham**

### 3. Accounts

Assessment of the accounts, on a *pro bono* basis, for the financial year ending 31 December 2019 had begun in good time and had identified no major issues but the assessor had recently informed the trust that she was not in a position to sign off the accounts. An alternative assessor is being sought but this meant that the accounts, as presented to the AGM, had not been formally assessed.

**A resolution was passed** that the AGM approved the accounts subject to a satisfactory report from a suitably qualified assessor.

Key points from the Accounts were that Unrestricted Funds had risen from £2841 at the end of the previous year to £3610 at December 2019. This takes the amount in Unrestricted Funds back above the minimal threshold of £3000 as set by the Trustees. Restricted funds had also risen from the previous year from £5675 to £6172.

#### **4. Independent Scrutiny of Accounts.**

The AGM authorised the Trustees to appoint a suitably qualified auditor to scrutinise the annual accounts at an appropriate fee.

#### **5. Appointment of Trustees.**

Under the terms of the Constitution of the Esk Valley Trust SCIO the Trustees all retired from office at the AGM and were all re-appointed.

The Board would welcome further nominations of Trustees both to achieve a more equal gender balance on the Board and a more comprehensive geographical representation. Current Trustees live in Carlops, Loanhead, Edinburgh, Eskbank, Newbattle and Musselburgh. The communities between Carlops and Loanhead (eg Penicuik) are least well represented.

#### **6. Members' proposed resolutions**

No resolutions had been proposed ahead of the meeting.

#### **7. Any Other Business**

The AGM was informed that an Ironmills Development Trust had been mooted. Such a group could be helpful to our Trust in achieving improved access through Dalkeith. The details would be forwarded to the Chairman who would make contact with the organisers.

**Action: John Oldham**

Access to the Melville High Drive was discussed. The High Drive is not currently listed as a core path but is marked as an accessible path in the Midlothian Core Paths Plan. Noted that a razor wire barrier had been reported on a nearby path and that unfriendly signage remains at the entry and exit to the High Drive. Issues around the High Drive will be raised again at the Access Forum.

**Action: Susan Manson**

The Chairman was thanked for his work through the year.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.