

THE DAVA WAY ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual Members Meeting held 30th November 2023

Venue: Forres Lawn Tennis Club, Albert Street, Forres, Moray, IV36 1PR.

Meeting Opened: 19:30

Item	Minute	Action By
1	<u>Welcome:</u> Neil Sinclair (Dava Way Association (DWA) Chair) chaired the meeting and welcomed those present. He encouraged any non-members to engage fully in any discussions but reminded them that they could not vote on any proposals made.	
2	<u>Present:</u> DWA Members Alex Ross, Howard Davenport, Malcolm Campbell, Neil Sinclair, Norman Thomson, Paul Barron, Pete Mitchell, Robbie Roberts, Tim Heaps, Trevor Thornley.	
	<u>Apologies:</u> Bill Budge, David Binney, Greg McAulay, Jim McKay, Michael J Sutherland, Stuart Jebb, Wilson Metcalfe.	
3	<u>Membership Invitation</u> Neil Sinclair invited any non-members present to apply for membership by completing a DWA Membership Application form. He added that, under clause 13 of the DWA Constitution, any membership applications will be considered by the board at its next meeting.	
4	<u>Review Approved Minutes from Previous AMM</u> Neil Sinclair reported that the minutes from the previous Annual Members Meeting (AMM) were approved by the DWA Board of Trustees at the board meeting held 06/12/22; ref clause 51 of the DWA Constitution. However, any errors or omissions may be noted in the minutes of this AMM. A copy of the approved minutes of the previous AMM was circulated to members as part of the pre-meeting document package. No errors or omissions were made known before the AMM or by those present.	
5	<u>Matters Arising from Minutes of Previous AMM</u>	
5.1	Ref 8.4: Malcolm Campbell (DWA Secretary) reported that he submitted the DWA Trustees Annual Report (TAR) for Fy 21/22 to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). Action closed.	
5.2	Ref 12.3: Paul Baron (DWA Treasurer) reported that the statement on the DWA H&S record that he inserted into the TAR for Fy 22/23 was somehow not included in the final copy signed off by the DWA accountant. The DWA Treasurer will ensure that a statement on the DWA H&S record is included in the TAR for Fy 23/24.	DWA Treasurer

5.3	<p>Ref 12.1: Malcolm Campbell reported that he included an item in the agenda of the DWA BoT meeting held 06/12/22, to discuss options to better promote the work of the DWA volunteers. Action closed.</p> <p>Malcolm added that feather banners have been purchased for display at work parties, to inform path users that DWA volunteers are carrying out the works, and to advertise the presence of the organisation at other events.</p>	
5.4	<p>Ref 13: Malcolm Campbell reported that the Forres Lawn Tennis Club opted to hold their AGM on the 23/11/23 so, after consultation with the DWA Trustees, he arranged to hold the AMM on 30/11/23 instead. Action closed.</p>	
6 6.1	<p><u>Chair's Annual Report</u></p> <p>The Neil Sinclair presented the following report; ref clause 29.1 of the DWA Constitution:</p> <p>Welcome one and all to this our Annual Members Meeting and as Chair I would like to present my report for the period May 2022 up to April 2023. This reporting period is to coincide with our financial statement which our Treasurer will cover next.</p> <p>Thank you all very much for taking the trouble to come along tonight and supporting the Dava Way Association.</p> <p>It was during this reporting period that we had to make the difficult decision to postpone the Ghost Train Walk, this we did for reasons I will cover later, but as things turned out it was the correct decision and the Ghost Train Walk held this year, 2023, was the most successful event we have ever held.</p> <p>With not having the GTW in the summer this gave us more time to concentrate on activities such as path maintenance and developing future projects. The largest of these new projects was to develop a replacement ramp at Dallas Dhu Distillery. We held site meetings, had initial surveys carried out and estimates produced. We initially thought that the project could be completed for an approximate figure of £30,000. This we thought could be achieved as potential funders had been identified and approached. Subsequent planning and developing of this project however has made us rethink the entire project with the 2023 estimated figure being closer to £120,000. The Dallas Dhu replacement ramp has been put on hold for the time being. Part of this decision being down to the possibility of assistance from other sources and a change of ownership of the distillery. I can announce that only this week we have been in contact with the new owners, and they are extremely keen to work with us as they have plans for attracting tourism to the area and we think there might be a mutual benefit to both parties.</p> <p>Other important tasks we were able to carry out included refurbishing the steps at Mannachie and upgrading AJ's Bridge.</p>	

During the Autumn we operated a mini digger for a trial to see if it would be beneficial to the Association. 'Worth every penny' I think would sum up this trial. We are all having birthdays and anything that can mechanise the hard labour we put ourselves through is worth 'every penny'.

We continue to enjoy good working relationships with the estates, and we met with the 'property managers' on several occasions. The term property manager is a more up to date title than 'factor'. Hamish Hope, now left, Will Anderson and Andrew Howard are always enthusiastic to meet with us and encourage our efforts on maintaining the path through their estates.

With the passing of Bob Hellyer, we lost the use of the Hub during this reporting period and alternative accommodation was found and we are currently in it and the Town Hall being our registered official address. With the passing of Bob several organisations in the town lost the valuable asset of the Hub.

First Aid training was undertaken by a number of Trustees and we now all believe that the work parties are better covered for any accidents that might happen. Luckily no one has been required to put their training to use and a big thank you goes out to all who make our work days as safe as they possibly can be. This training was provided by the Scotia Medical Group, and it proved to be very thorough and extremely worthwhile.

When the new FDT sponsored website went live we discovered that it did not exactly fit in with our requirements or expectations, but new website Mk2 has been custom built to suit our needs and this has really shown us all what such an asset can do for an organisation such as ours. A big thank you to our Web Master for all his efforts. I am pleased to report that we still on talking terms with FDT despite the initial set back, and the door is still open to us for future plans.

Many trees were planted along the Way and approximately 300 saplings were provided via the Jubilee Celebrations scheme. We enlisted the help of school pupils to plant these along with many oak trees grown by Andersons Primary. Our link with Grantown Grammar school goes from strength to strength and it is good to see youngsters taking ownership of our countryside.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Trustees and volunteers for all their hard work over this reporting period but an issue that I hinted to earlier is now becoming critical. We must pull all the stops out now and try and recruit more members and volunteers to join us if we want to keep this beast that we have created alive. We are not getting any younger and young blood is essential if the Dava Way is to survive. The main reason the Ghost Train Walk was postponed was the shortage of volunteers, each work party has the same faithful volunteers turn up and each workday seems to longer to recover from. I ask all of you to please think about how we can recruit more members.

	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Neil Sinclair invited questions from the floor. There were no associated queries or comments from the membership.</p>	
<p>7 7.1</p>	<p><u>Treasurer's Annual Report</u> Paul Barron (DWA Treasurer) presented the following report:</p> <p>As a SCIO the members are required to consider our annual accounts for the financial year 22/23. Accordingly copies of the Trustees Annual Report incorporating our annual accounts starting on P5 have been circulated to all Trustees and Members for their consideration and are hopefully available on the screen.</p> <p>These annual Payment and Receipt accounts follow OSCR guidance and have been examined by our accountant Gordon Scott, CA and he is satisfied that our accounting records comply with the necessary legislation and regulations.</p> <p>DWA Finances Key Points</p> <p>Receipts/Income</p> <p>Total Annual Income for 22/23 was £12640 with £8640 of unrestricted income and £4000 of restricted grants. This restricted grant from Money for Moray was provided for potential ramp works at Dallas Dhu.</p> <p>There was £5610 income receipt for fundraising activities during the 22/23 year associated with entries for the June 23 Ghost Train Walk.</p> <p>Other significant income through donations totalled £2806 covering only general donations, with no other significant donations, legacies or a HMRC Gift Aid contribution for 2022, which will be recovered in the 23/24 financial year.</p> <p>Under our Gross Trading Receipt heading, sales of DW Companion Guidebooks produced an income of £218 and badge sales £5. As there are almost no stocks of the former left and no plans to reprint due to the overlapping Moray Way Companion guide, this slight income stream is coming to an end.</p> <p>During the financial year the number of individuals that give regular monthly donations to the DWA has remained at 6. This provided us with a continued steady income stream to help cover known general fund liabilities. If any other members are like minded to financially assist the DWA in this way, we would welcome this help from any other benefactors.</p> <p>Payments/Expenditure</p> <p>Total Expenditure over the financial year amounted to £9339 with £5175 from unrestricted funds and £4164 towards the Places called</p>	

	<p>Home grant carried forward from 21/22, to procure and design an upgraded ramp at Dallas Dhu. Both the £836 balance from Places Called Home grant and the £4000 grant from Money for Moray is now carried forward into the 23/24 year.</p> <p>The unrestricted expenditure figure included £4119 spent on general day to day activities to maintain the Dava Way, includes £426 on Trustees Expenses and £367 on insurance. Additionally, £623 was spent under Expenses for Fundraising Activities namely the June 23 Ghost Train Walk, £360 on independent examination of accounts covering 3 years and £73 on the last AMM.</p> <p>There were no significant assets purchased during 22/23, so the book value of our fixed assets after depreciation has therefore decreased from £5630 to £4504. In accordance with our accounting policy any assets will continue to depreciate in value at 20% per annum. In addition, the DWA no longer holds stock of unsold Dava Way Companions, and it has been decided by Trustees to write off the token value of cloth badges still held.</p> <p>At the comparative year ends 21/22 and 22/23 our General Fund bank balance increased from £12675 to £16140, and we held £4836 in restricted grants at the 22/23 financial year end.</p> <p>The trustees consider that this General Fund amount is still appropriate to allow them to continue to support the charitable activities of the DWA in the foreseeable future and have agreed that the bank balance now available should be used either to support collaborative opportunities with other grant funding bodies, in order to deliver significant upgrades to the path, or to replace/upgrade important items of equipment should the need arise.</p> <p>Although this General Fund bank balance remains healthy, the Treasurer recommends that the prudent position to always maintain a minimum operating bank balance of £1500 agreed at the AMM in Nov 2019 should be sustained.</p> <p>Paul Barron invited questions from the floor. There were no associated queries or comments from the membership.</p> <p>Resolution 1: Although the DWA General Fund bank balance is healthy, it is proposed that the Minimum Operating Balance (MOB) of £1500 should be sustained.</p> <p>Resolution 1 passed unanimously; MOB of £1500 to be sustained.</p>	
<p>8</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p>	<p><u>Consideration of the Trustees Annual Report:</u></p> <p>Neil Sinclair quoted clause 29.2 of the DWA constitution, “The business of each AMM must include ... consideration of the annual accounts of the organisation”.</p> <p>A copy of the DWA Trustees Annual Report (TAR) was circulated to members as part of the pre-meeting document package. Paul Barron read out and explained the various sections within the TAR and invited questions from those present. There were no associated queries or comments from the membership.</p>	

8.3	Resolution 2: It is proposed that the Trustees Annual Report for Fy 22/23 be submitted to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) as circulated. Resolution 2 passed unanimously.	DWA Secretary
8.4	The DWA Secretary will submit the DWA TAR to the OSCR as circulated.	
9	<u>Review of Membership Fee Amount</u>	
9.1	Paul Barron quoted clause 16 of the DWA constitution, "A membership subscription will be payable annually, the amount to be agreed at the AMM". He stated that this amount is currently nil. The pros and cons of introducing a membership fee were discussed at length. Examples were provided where other organisations charge a membership fee, and engendering a sense of belonging in addition to raising funds was cited as a positive effect. Detractors were concerned that implementing a membership fee without tangible benefits (e.g. a related member discount scheme) may dissuade potential members. It was confirmed that the only current benefit to being a DWA Member is the ability to influence the working of the organisation through voting on resolutions at the AMM, or any special members' meeting. Discussion did broaden at times to include volunteer recruitment, but Neil Sinclair suggested that this topic should be discussed under Item 12 AOCB.	
9.2	Resolution 3: It is proposed that the DWA annual membership subscription amount payable should remain as nil. Resolution 3 passed unanimously; DWA annual membership subscription amount payable will remain as nil.	
10	<u>Health and Safety</u>	
10.1	Malcolm Campbell noted that Clause 4 of the DWA Health and Safety Policy requires that health and safety be included as an agenda item at each AMM, when volunteers will be invited to raise issues or concerns. Malcolm Campbell reported that the review of the DWA Health and Safety System has been completed. The DWA H&S Policy has been signed off by the DWA Chair, with the risk assessments for tasks carried out by DWA volunteers attached as annexes. A copy of the policy and risk assessments has been inserted into each of the DWA first aid kits. The DWA H&S Policy will be reviewed annually.	
10.2	Malcolm Campbell reported that there were no DWA health and safety incidents reported in the year 2022-2023.	
10.3	Malcolm Campbell asked if those present had any health and safety issues or concerns that they would like to raise. Tim Heaps noted that the DWA H&S policy covers risks to DWA volunteers but asked if the DWA have any liability regarding path users. Neil Sinclair explained that path users access the route at their own risk under current legislation, but the DWA has a duty of care to adequately maintain the gates and any other infrastructure that it has installed along the route.	
11	<u>Current and Future Projects</u>	
11.1	DWA Strategic Plan Projects Malcolm Campbell provided a progress update for each of the projects listed in the DWA Strategic Plan 2020-2025.	
11.1.1	Dava Bypass Project Cyclists and equestrians currently need to descend onto the busy A940 in order to bypass the Dava settlement. Planning constraints placed on	

the development of the [Ourack Windfarm](#) may facilitate the implementation of an all-users bypass in the future. The Dava residents, landowners and Local Authority Access Officers have been consulted and they have agreed to a notional bypass, to be routed to the east of the Dava settlement. The next steps are:

- Complete an aerial survey to identify potential routes (2023).
- Confirm and mark the optimal route (2024).
- Secure formal agreement from the landowner and Local Authority Access Officers (2024).
- Clear a rough track and sign as optional bypass (2024).
- Improve track as and when resources available (2025/2026).
- Upgrade to all-user path in conjunction with construction of the Ourack Windfarm (2028?).

11.1.2 **Drainage Improvement Project**

Following the successful mini digger trial to improve the drainage in the Clashdhu Cutting, a mini digger has since been utilised at several sites where drainage and path surface improvement works have been carried out. These sites include Peathillock Cutting, Cairn Eney Cutting and Foxhill Cutting. A budget of £5,000 from the proceeds of the DWA Ghost Train Walk 2023 has been earmarked for further improvements to the drainage in the Peathillock Cutting, to be carried out in 2024.

11.1.3 **Clashdhu Bridge Stabilisation Project**

Erosion of masonry by water flowing beneath the Clashdhu Bridge was identified as a concern during an inspection of the structure in 2018. As there has been no further erosion since, this project is no longer considered a priority.

11.1.4 **Equipment Storage Compound**

Suitable storage for the DWA tools and equipment is a continuing problem. These are currently stored in garages/sheds/ISOs at the homes of the DWA Trustees. It was hoped that the [Finderne Development Trust](#) (FDT) would, at some point, develop the land adjacent to the Edinkillie Village Hall as a community hub, part of which would provide a secure compound for the storage of DWA tools and equipment. However, the FDT are currently focused on developing a site at Rafford to provide affordable housing. One solution is to locate a dedicated ISO, or two, on the hardstanding of a local farm.

11.1.5 **Squirrel Neuk Cutting Project**

This is a major, long-term project to reroute the Dava Way along the cutting north of the Squirrel Neuk Bridge to the embankment adjacent to Woodside. It would enable the Dava Way to be upgraded to full all-users standard from Mannachie Avenue south to Drumine Crossing. The Dava Way was not originally routed along the cutting due to the proximity of a protected species, but this is no longer the case. It is anticipated that preliminary discussions with the landowner and Local Authority Access Officer may take place in 2024/2025.

11.2 **Other Projects**

Malcolm Campbell provided a progress update for a number of other projects not listed in the DWA Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

11.2.1 **Ghost Train Walk 2023 Project**

This event was held on 24-25/06/2023 and it was a great success. Over 200 tickets were sold online at £30 each, and 13 'fundraiser' tickets were sold at £15 with the entrant agreeing to raise at least £60 in funding for the DWA. Of these 200 entrants, 175 participants started

the walk. The event raised £5,000 in funding for the DWA. Marshalling and communications were provided by the [Community Offroad Transport Action Group](#) (COTAG), first aid cover by [Scotia Medical Group](#), and catering and spooky entertainment by [1st Forres Scout Group](#). Each of these organisations received a donation from the DWA. The ability to manage ticket sales via the new DWA website developed by Tim Heaps contributed greatly to the success of the event. Feedback from the event participants, received via a post event online questionnaire, was 100% positive. Planning is already under way for the Ghost Train Walk 2025, and it is hoped local businesses will consider sponsoring certain aspects of that event.

11.2.2 **Dallas Dhu Ramp Improvement Project**

Malcolm Campbell reported that the cost of upgrading the ramp at Dallas Dhu to full all-user standard had risen to an estimated £120,000. The DWA Trustees decided on 10/10/2023 that this is not achievable, and an alternative option to upgrade the existing ramp, removing the sharp switchback by extending the lower section of ramp straight up to the top of the embankment, should be investigated instead. Altyre Estate have already approved the plan, and the new owners of the Dallas Dhu distillery, [Aceo Limited](#), have also expressed their support. The intention is that the works will be carried out by local contractors and DWA volunteers.

11.2.3 **Footfall Counter Project**

Pressure plate footfall counters were installed at Edinkillie (2010), Dallas Dhu (2015) and Lochenoun, with a [RadioBeam People and Bicycle Counter](#) (RBBP) being installed at the Lynmore Bypass (2017) as part of the Sustrans upgrade works. The Edinkillie pressure plate counter failed earlier this year and was replaced by relocating the Lynmore Bypass RBBP. The Dallas Dhu pressure plate counter failed in Oct 2023. The plan is to replace the Dallas Dhu and Lochenoun counters with an RBBP, and to install two new RBBP at Grantown and around the CNPA boundary at the Huntlys Cutting. RBBP each cost about £3,000. An application for funding will shortly be submitted to the [Berry Burn Community Fund](#).

11.2.4 **Website Development Project**

Tim Heaps (DWA Webmaster) provided a demonstration of the redeveloped DWA Website (<https://davaway.org.uk/>), its content and functionality. He highlighted the embedded video showcasing the Dava Way, created by John Whitehead and donated to the DWA. Tim added that he is looking forward to working with John to add more content to the video.

11.2.5 **Information Board Redesign Project**

Tim Heaps showed a mockup of the new information board design, which he and Norman Thomson are currently developing. The currently installed information boards are showing their age, with much of their content being out-of-date. The size of the new boards will increase, with the left-hand side of the board providing standard information about the route, a map with 'You are here' indicator displayed in the centre, and the right-hand side of the board split between information about the area around the location of the board and information about the DWA. Tim and Norman are close to finalising the designs for all the boards, ready for approval by the DWA Trustees before printing onto stiff plastic backing sheets.

<p>12 12.1</p>	<p><u>AOCB</u> DWA Membership/Volunteers</p> <p>Neil Sinclair reiterated his concern for the future of the DWA and asked how more members/volunteers could be recruited. Malcolm Campbell reported that the DWA currently has just 24 registered members. He noted that the 1500 members of the Facebook group Friends of the Dava Way were all invited to attend the AMM but none of them responded. He added that 70% of the Facebook group members are female, with a similar percentage for Ghost Train Walk 2023 participants. Tim Heaps noted that volunteering with the DWA may be perceived as all ‘hard manual labour’, but there are admin/support roles that volunteers could fill. Howard Davenport queried if the work of the DWA is publicised enough, do users of the Dava Way know that the DWA exists and what it does? Alex Ross suggested that it may be useful to inform the walkers, mountain bikers and groups using the Dava Way, such as the Moray Ultras, about the DWA, what it does, and the fact that the DWA may cease to exist in its current form if it cannot recruit more volunteers/members. Trevor Thornley suggested leafleting path users on work party days. Paul Barron suggested following up the invitation made to members of the Facebook group, with an appropriate statement intended to gently shame them into a more active participation in the work of the DWA. Neil Sinclair suggested that the DWA Trustees should investigate ways to improve the recruitment and retention of DWA volunteers/members. The DWA Secretary will add an item to the agenda of the next DWA BoT Meeting for the DWA Trustees to investigate ways to improve the recruitment and retention of DWA volunteers/members.</p>	<p>DWA Secretary</p>
<p>13</p>	<p><u>Date of the Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Neil Sinclair proposed that the next AMM should be held on 28/11/24. Agreed unanimously. The DWA Secretary will arrange to hold the next DWA AMM on 28/11/24.</p>	<p>DWA Secretary</p>
<p>14 14.1 14.2</p>	<p><u>Resignation and Election/Re-election of Board Members</u></p> <p>Neil Sinclair noted that the existing DWA board members were all standing for re-election. He asked if any other DWA members would like to stand for election; there were no takers. The DWA board members all retired from office.</p> <p>The following DWA members were duly re-elected as DWA board members:</p> <p>Malcolm Campbell, Michael J Sutherland, Neil Sinclair, Norman Thomson, Paul Barron, Pete Mitchell, Robbie Roberts, Tim Heaps, Trevor Thornley</p> <p>Neil Sinclair announced that the next DWA Board of Trustees meeting would be held 19:00 12/12/23 at Forres Lawn Tennis Club, Albert Street, Forres, Moray, IV36 1PR.</p>	

Meeting Closed: 21:30

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Sinclair', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Neil Sinclair
Chair
Dava Way Association