

Minutes of a meeting of Hamsterley Trailblazers held on Monday 2 February 2004 at 6.30pm in the Forest Classroom

Present: Andy Samanjoul (in the chair)
Michael Chilcott
Vicky Chilcott
Dave Church
Chris Dauber (Teesdale Marketing Ltd)
Michael Elstobb
Oliver Graham
Dean Grindle
Robin Lofthouse
Stuart Parry
Bill Pike
Mike Richardson

Apologies for absence were received from Marie Brown, Jill Church, Dave Gelson, Simon Goodwin, Ian and Yvonne Robson.

1. Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2004 were approved as a correct record.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

2.1 Insurance Pete Laing had suggested affiliating to IMBA to obtain trail building insurance. Cost was estimated at around £50 - £75 per annum. Further details were awaited from IMBA.

2.2 Bank Account Dave Church reported the bank account with HSBC was set up and that he would produce a Statement of Accounts each month.

2.3 Assistant Treasurer It was noted that due to prior commitments, Ian Robson was usually unable to attend Trailblazer meetings on Monday evenings but was keen to help in other ways. In particular Ian felt he could contribute to mapping and survey work. Vicky Chilcott proposed Mick Richardson as Assistant Treasurer and this was seconded by Andy Samanjoul and **AGREED.**

2.4 Constitution Bill Burlton, Forest Enterprise had previously suggested 4(ii) of the Constitution be amended to read "**Landowners or their agent's..**" and this was proposed by Mike Richardson, seconded by Andy Samanjoul and **AGREED.**

2.5 Tools It was noted the Forest had donated £500 towards the purchase of tools. After discussion it was **AGREED Robin purchase the following for Trailblazers:**

- 10 Grubbing Mattocks
- 6 Round Shovels
- 4 Spades
- 4 Wheelbarrows
- Brushing Saws
- Lopers
- High vis jackets
- Gloves

Robin said the tools could be stored in the green container near the Visitor Centre although inner protection would be needed to prevent them going rusty. **Ollie offered to find a suitable storage cupboard that could be left in the container. Ollie also thought he could find some additional tools and offered the use of his trailer for transport. Discussion took place on the McCloud tool that Pete Laing had demonstrated on 24 January. Michael Elstob offered to make one of these tools for the group.**

2.6 Mapping

Simon Goodwin had been unable to see the Forest mapping facility before going on holiday and after discussion it was **AGREED Mike Richardson, Ian Robson and Stuart Parry arrange to see it as soon as possible.** Robin said a mapping facility was now available at the Hamsterley offices. Discussion took place on the pros and cons of Trailblazers buying their own mapping facility. Chris Dauber suggested leaving this until the Group reached the £107,000 funding stage and then examine the purchase as a capital item for revenue generation. It was generally felt purchase could not be justified on these grounds at the present time.

3. Cycle Survey

Discussion took place on the Cycle Survey for 7 and 8 February. The following volunteered to help with the survey: Michael and Vicky Chilcott, Jill and Dave Church, Michael Elstob, Ollie Graham, Stuart Parry, Bill Pike and Andy Samanjoul. It was agreed questions should be kept as brief as possible and that Andy liaise with others over the content of the questionnaire. Chris Dauber suggested the draft survey be sent to Sue Berresford to check all relevant information was covered. It was agreed to carry out the survey between 9am and 4pm on Saturday and Sunday. It was also agreed to cover the Grove Car Park and Downhill Course.

4. Website

Dean Grindle demonstrated the new website he had put together. Members were very impressed with the site and thanked Dean for his hard work. Mick Richardson, on behalf of www.gritmtb.co.uk offered to sponsor the purchase of domain space and it was agreed to organise transfer of domain name as soon as possible. It was further agreed to produce new photographs of trailbuilding to appear on the site.

5. Phase I Funding

Vicky reported that the Phase I funding bid for £107,000 had been submitted with the help of Sue Berresford and the outcome was awaited. Funding under European money was currently experiencing some delays and it was noted bids through alternate sources may need to be submitted if delays looked like being lengthy. A bid had also been made for £3000 towards hardcore from a funding source that required take up by the end of March 2004. Discussion took place on the need to register for VAT and it was agreed to take professional advice on this matter.

6. Pete Laing Visit – 24 January 2004

Andy, Mike and Vicky reported on the meeting with Pete Laing, the Glentress developer, on 24 January. Pete had described the background to the Glentress development and the Whinlatter project. He detailed how he carried out survey and design work making a metre by metre on-foot survey, followed by production of spreadsheets showing work required and construction costs. He suggested various features to include in trails, talked about tools to use, trail construction and maintenance, training of contractors and volunteers, content and location of Skills Area, different graded trails from family friendly to highly technical, risk assessments and health and safety and insurance. It was felt that the day had proved extremely valuable and members were impressed with Pete's breadth of knowledge and experience in trail design.

Discussion took place on the best way to produce an Operational Plan/Work Programme for Phase I. It was agreed to ask Pete if he would quote for carrying out Phase I survey work and produce a design plan for that Phase which would fit in well with long term trail development. It was noted under public funding regulations, two other comparable quotes would also be required.

7. Forest Shop – cycle supplies

A suggestion had been received from the Forest Shop that it stock cycle supply items such as inner tubes, puncture repair kits etc., and information on appropriate goods and suppliers had been requested from Trailblazers. It was agreed to ask Iron Horse if they were interested in ordering items on behalf of the Forest, possibly on a commission basis. Stuart Parry agreed to approach Iron Horse on this matter.

8. Risk Assessments and Health and Safety Policy Pete Laing had offered to send an example of the type of Risk Assessments used at Glentress. Andy noted that IMBA also produced guidelines on this matter. It was agreed Andy and Mike Richardson draft Risk Assessments for consideration at the next meeting. It was also agreed Mike Richardson email Simon Goodwin for the full list of Trailblazer members.

9. Publicity Mike Richardson said he felt it important Trailblazers developed a clear communication plan as early as possible. Major biking magazines had indicated their willingness to include articles about the Hamsterley proposals but it was necessary to agree when such articles should appear eg prior to the results of Phase I funding bid or afterwards. It was noted that whilst we wanted cyclists to come to Hamsterley, there was a danger that if many came too early, they would be disappointed. Chris suggested involving the local press as soon as possible eg Darlington & Stockton Times, and to go for a big, exciting story on the development. Chris suggested asking for advice on publicity from Bill Oldfield of Teesdale Marketing. Chris had contact names of local journalists that he would forward to Trailblazers. It was agreed local publicity should be a first priority but that to foster local support and understanding, an article be written for the March edition of the Parish Magazine. Vicky agreed to draft this article and email it to others for consideration before 15 February. In addition, Mike Richardson agreed to look at the publicity produced by other successful sites, eg Redlands.

10. Membership fees Discussion took place on whether funds for Trailblazers could be generated by charging a membership fee. It was felt that if this could be linked to a reduced fee for permit parking and other benefits, this could be successful. In the short term, however, Chris suggested that Trailblazers concentrated on raising awareness and membership numbers as much as possible which would mean making membership free.

11. Calendar of Events

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 February 2004 Cycle survey and questionnaire – meet 9am Visitor Centre.

Sunday 22 February 2004 Trailbuilding at Hamsterley. Meet 9.30am Visitor Centre.

Sunday 29 February 2004 Cycle ride from Broompark, Durham to Parkhead, Stanhope (15 miles approx) along dedicated cycle trails – lunch at Parkhead. Meet 10am, Broompark.

Sunday 7 March 2004 Trailbuilding at Hamsterley. Meet 9.30am Visitor Centre.

Sunday 21 March 2004 Trailbuilding at Hamsterley. Meet 9.30am Visitor Centre.

Sunday 28 March 2004 Cycle ride to be organised by Dave Church – details later.

Friday 30 April – Monday 3 May 2004 Cycle weekend at Aviemore – email www.gritmtb.co.uk for details

Sunday 16 May 2004 Second Great Milk Stout Ride in Hamsterley Forest for Macmillan Cancer Relief – David Bellamy to start at 10 am. Choice of 3 rides – Green 10km, Blue 18 km, Red 25 km. Email vicky@century.gb.com for further details.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting It was agreed the next meeting be held on Monday 1 March 2004 at 6.30pm in the Forest Classroom.