

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Hamsterley Trailblazers held on Monday 4 April 2011 at 6.30pm in Hamsterley Village Hall.

PRESENT

Trustees

Olly Graham (Vice Chair)
Mat Clark (Treasurer)
Vicky Chilcott (Secretary)

Committee Members

James Dods
Gary Ewing
Kath Gander
Neil Gander
Lisa Jobling
D Nicholson

Members

John Burgess
Steve Carson
James Chilcott
Michael Chilcott
Fiona Ewing
Kay Graham
J Halcyon
Andrew Jobling
Rob Myers
Michael Richardson
Andrew Walker

In Attendance: Alex MacLennan and Neil Taylor (FC)

1. Welcome

Ollie Graham welcomed everyone to Trailblazers Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Were received from Richard Bower, Marie Brown, Jamie Butcher, Emma Clark, Theresa Cole, Chris Goldsworthy, Bill Grigg, Alan Hazlett, Simon Holguin, David Holmes, Simon James, Emma Johnston, Ted Liddle, Martin Rowland, Craig Smith and Peter Watson.

3. Annual Report

Olly, Mat and Vicky gave a Powerpoint Presentation outlining Trailblazer achievements over the last 12 months:

- **Trailbuilding** – had continued through the help of volunteers with the completion of a new section of Red Route called Transmission. Work had also taken place on other sections during the year, including maintenance work on some trails.
- **Volunteer Trailbuilding Sessions** continued to be held on the 3rd Saturday of each month and would continue throughout 2011. Several members were thanked for being the most persistent volunteers, with the award of the spade going to James Dods, the most persistent of the persistent.
- **Duck Race & BBQ** was held on 15 May 2010 and raised £676 for Trailblazer funds. Over 1000 ducks were sold with prizes of £350 being given away. Another Duck Race and BBQ was planned for 21 May 2011.
- **Coast and Castles Club Ride** – between 29 and 31 May 2010, 13 members of Trailblazers enjoyed cycling the 200 mile Coast and Castles Route from Newcastle to Edinburgh. Olly Graham kindly acted as support driver.
- **1-2-1 Race Weekend, 24 & 25 September** – 107 riders from all over the country took part in a unique race at Hamsterley Forest organised by Trailblazer member Dave Nicholson. After camping out in the Forest on Friday night, riders had to use the same bike for a cross country race on the Saturday and a downhill race on the Sunday. The weekend was great fun and Trailblazer members came out in force to help with it. Orange Mountain Bikes sponsored the race with Orange Crush bike frames as prizes. Other sponsors were O'Neil (helmets and shirts) and Red Ape with technical support. Dave has offered to organise another race in September 2011.
- **Womens Rides** – evening rides for women were held once a fortnight from Easter to September 2010 and proved to be very popular. One ride was across the moors from the Forest to Frosterley for a pizza supper at the Black Bull Inn (and a cycle back in the dark.) Womens rides continued through the autumn and winter with a once monthly Saturday away day ride to places such as Roseberry Topping and Fremington Edge, Reeth. The day rides are planned to continue during the summer and the evening rides were starting again on Tuesday 8 April (6.30pm – 8pm.) The rides would run through fortnightly until September 2011.

- **Dave Church** – a founder member and former Treasurer of Trailblazers tragically died in an ice climbing accident on 26 December 2010. Many members attended Dave's funeral and a group of oak trees have been planted in his memory on the Skills Loop at Hamsterley. At the request of his family, Dave's ashes have been placed under the oak trees. All members of Trailblazers wanted to record their thanks for the work Dave put into Trailblazers and to pay tribute to him. He will be sadly missed.
- **Helping Out** – during the year Trailblazer members have helped out at various events including the Durham Dirty Big Ride, the Duathlon, Halloween Hauntings and the Roger Albert Car Rally in December. Some of these events such as the Duathlon and Car rally raised funds for Trailblazers totalling nearly £1000.
- **Other Events** – included members taking part in the Bowes 12K cycle race, the Durham Big Ride, the Dales Bike Weekend and a New Year Ride and Lunch.
- **Wednesday Night Club Rides** – continued to be held, courtesy of Mat and Gary.
- **Monthly Sunday Club Rides** – continued to be held and were planned for 2011
- **Social Meetings** – were held bi-monthly in the Cross Keys Pub, Hamsterley
- **Formal Meetings** – were held bi-monthly in Cross Keys Pub, Hamsterley
- **Funding** – Trailblazers have recently secured a £10,000 grant from Awards for All for training and trailbuilding. The club also received a £1,000 NatWest Community Fund award.
- **Hands off Hamsterley** – an extremely well attended meeting was held in February 2011 to discuss Government proposals to dispose of the English forests, including Hamsterley. Also attending were representatives of the Horse Riding Association, the Durham Fell Runners, IMBA and the MPs office. There was unanimous opposition to the proposals and members subsequently attended demonstrations at Chopwell and Hamsterley to express their concern. Following a national public outcry, the Government withdrew its consultation document and has instead appointed an Independent Panel to look at the future of the English forests. The Panel is due to report in the autumn and we are waiting to hear further news on how the Panel will carry out its work. Sadly, despite cycling being the largest growing recreational forest user, there is no-one representing cycling on the Panel and no-one who lists cycling as an interest.

3.Member Benefits

- Help design and build England's best mtb trails
- Reduced annual parking permit at hamsterley (£35 instead of £40) or free annual permit for 3 trailbuilding sessions per annum or other voluntary help.
- Membership of an on-line discussion forum.
- Fully maintained website containing a wealth of biking information
- Free coaching
- Discount on holidays, skills courses, weekend breaks, instructor courses, cycle shops and food at Cross Keys Pub, Hamsterley
- Opportunity to be part of a social group of like-minded riders on organised rides and social activities.

4.Future Plans

- Continue to build the Red Route! Trailbuilding every 3rd Saturday 10am
- We are now a British Cycling Go Ride Club and are planning to work towards Club Marque status to help us secure more funding. We are actively seeking funding to increase our number of coaches so that we can run monthly Children's Clubs. Volunteers welcome!
- Club Rides every 2nd Sunday 10.30am start from WoodNWheels
- Night rides every Wednesday – 7pm outside the Information Centre with a pint at the Cross Keys Pub afterwards
- Female evening bike rides from Tuesday 8 April at 6.30pm and fortnightly until September 2011
- Monthly women's day rides – dates to be arranged
- Duck Race and BBQ – Saturday 21 May from 1.30pm
- 1-2-1 Race September 2,3 and 4th 2011
- Coaching Sessions – dates to be arranged
- Club long distance away ride – date to be arranged
- Weekend away ride – date to be arranged
- We will continue to promote responsible cycling by working with other organisations to enable everyone to enjoy the forest.
- We will look to secure more funding to develop more trails.

Particular thanks went to all the funding and other organisations with whom we had worked during the past year and who had continued to help raise the profile of Hamsterley including Groundwork, CDENT, County Durham Council, Durham Primary Care Trust, Forestry Commission, Co Durham Tourism Partnership, ONE, WoodNWheels, Cross Keys Pub, Cummins, Pete Laing Cycle Trail Designer, Craig Cummings (Rifty) Web Meister, Radius Pipe Line Systems and A D Engineering.

5. Annual Accounts 2009/10 and Independent Examiners Report

Mat Clark presented the Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year ended 2009/10. Discussion also took place on changing the financial year end to either 31 March or 31 December and it was members AGREED to do this, subject to seeking legal and financial advice. Mick Richardson proposed the accounts be adopted, seconded by Dave Nicholson and AGREED by members.

5. Election of Officers

It was reported that for personal reasons Andy Samanjoul and Mat Clark no longer wished to stand for Chairman and Treasurer. Members formally recorded their thanks to Andy and Mat for their work in these positions.

The following appointments were made:

- Chair – Neil Gander (proposed by Mat Clark and seconded by Chris Goldsworthy)
- Vice Chair – Olly Graham (proposed by Mat Clark and seconded by Dave Nicholson)
- Secretary – Vicky Chilcott (proposed by Olly Graham and seconded by Kay Graham)
- Treasurer – Emma Johnston (proposed by Olly Graham and seconded by Mick Richardson)
- Assistant Treasurer – Mat Clark (proposed by Vicky Chilcott and seconded by Fiona Ewing)

6. Election of Committee Members

The following members were elected to the Committee: Marie Brown, James Dods, Gary Ewing, Kath Gander, Lisa Jobling, Rob Myers, David Nicholson and Andrew Walker. Craig Cummings was nominated Web Master, assisted by Chris Briers and Mike MacTimney.

7. Report from Alex MacLennen, Forestry Commission

On behalf of the Forestry Commission Alex asked to address the meeting and expressed appreciation for the achievements and commitment shown by Trailblazers over of the last 6 years. Alex drew attention to the difficulties caused by current reductions in public funding and uncertainties over the future of the forests and forest staffing levels. Alex stressed, however, that FC were still committed to working up a 5 year plan for mountain biking development in conjunction with volunteer groups such as Trailblazers.

8. Close of Meeting

Neil Gander thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

