

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Hamsterley Trailblazers held on Monday 2 April 2012 at 6.30pm in Hamsterley Village Hall.

PRESENT

Trustees

Neil Gander (Chairman)
Olly Graham (Vice Chair)
Emma Johnston (Treasurer)
Vicky Chilcott (Secretary)

Committee Members

Marie Brown
Mat Clark
James Dods
Gary Ewing
Kath Gander
Neil Gander
David Holmes
Lisa Jobling
Rob Myers
Bill Pike
Andrew Walker

Members

Theresa Cole
Fiona Ewing
Steve Gash
Kay Graham
J Halcyon
Stephen Matthews
Shaun Rogers
Dan Small

In Attendance: Alex MacLennan and Neil Taylor (FC)

1. Welcome

Neil Gander welcomed everyone to Trailblazers Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Were received from Richard Bower, Paul Brabbins, Sarah and John Burgess, Emma Clark, Michael Collinson, Andrew Frith, Richard Hixson, Helen Lund, John Musgrave, Andrew Powell, Simon Rhodes, Alex and Lindsey Talks, Ian Tate, Davinia Walker and Peter Watson.

3. Annual Report

Neil, 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 completion of the Red Trail Accelerator and near completion of Red Trail Nitrus. This meant that along with Transmission, there was now a Red Trail single track descent from the transmitter mast just below 5 lane Ends down to the Grove. Members were asked to nominate which trail sections they wished to see worked on next. Suggestions included the short cut up to Transmission; an off-road section of Black route Star Wars to the ford; the Red trail from Descend Hut to Blackling Hole; making Transmission into more of a loop to link in with other trails; the Black Climb behind the Visitor Centre; a Blue trail; a Kiddies trail. A paper ballot was held to determine priorities.
- **Chrome Gnome Trophy for Trailbuilding** – went to Rob Myers! Many congratulations and thanks!
- **Route Maps** – thanks were extended to Neil Taylor for organising route maps and signage.
- **MBR Trail of the Year – Best Shot Glass of Singletrack** – Accelerator was nominated for an award under MBR's Trail of the Year Awards. Hamsterley also featured in a 3 page write up in MBR with Olly Graham being named 'Local Hero' for all his trailbuilding work.
- **Volunteer Trailbuilding Sessions** continued to be held on the 3rd Saturday of each month and would continue throughout 2012.
- **Youth Volunteering Award** – Kyle, one of the young Trailblazer volunteers who had been involved in the Hamsterley trailbuilding scheme through the 'Turning the Corner' Awards for All funding had received the British Cycling Regional Youth Volunteers Award and attended the British Cycling Annual Dinner in Birmingham to receive it. A film was shown on the work and cycling skills of the volunteers.
- **Youth Coaching** – A number of members offered to train as volunteer coaches so that the club can establish a Children's section. Training would take a number of months but funding had been obtained from British Cycling to help.
- **Duck Race & BBQ** was held on 21 May 2011 and raised some £800 for Trailblazer funds. Over 1000 ducks were sold with prizes of £350 being given away. Another Duck Race and BBQ was planned for 13 May 2012.

- **1-2-1 Race Weekend, 2, 3 & 4 September** – Dave Nicholson organised the 2nd 1-2-1 Race at Hamsterley when nearly 100 riders from all over the country competed in a cross country race on the Saturday and downhill race on the Sunday, using the same bike. Orange Mountain Bikes again kindly acted as main sponsor. A big ‘thank you’ was extended to Dave and also to Kaye and Angela for sorting out the catering at the last minute. The 3rd 1-2-1 Race would take place this September.
- **Womens Rides** – evening rides for women were held once a fortnight from Easter to September 2011 and proved to be very popular. Regular day rides have also been held that apart from Hamsterley Forest, have included several ‘away’ rides such as the ‘Tour of Teesdale’ in May 2011 (a 20 mile circular ride starting at Barnard Castle) and a spectacular moorland ride from Blanchland in October 2011.
- **New TB babies!** – Several new babies have been born to Trailblazer members – many congratulations to Theresa and Paul; Helen and Steve and best wishes to Lindsey and Alex for their expected new arrival.
- **Website** – Craig Cummings, our long standing webmaster of many years has decided it was time to stand down – many, many thanks to Craig for all his hard work. Many thanks to Steve Gash who has offered to take over from Craig.
- **Helping Out** – during the year Trailblazer members have helped out at various events including what may sadly be FC’s last Halloween Hauntings. In December members marshalled for the Roger Albert Car Rally when it came through Hamsterley.
- **Other Events** – included members organising a stand at Helen Goodman MP Green Fair, Bishop Auckland on 16 July 2011. Some members competed in the Bowes 12K cycle race in September. A Trailblazer New Year Ride across the moors to Wolsingham with lunch after at Peggotys took place in early January.
- **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 2012. In May 2011 Ted Liddle from IMBA North East took members on a great ride called the ‘Shire Shuffle’ starting at Blanchland. In August, Rob Myers led a ride across the Cleveland Hills.
- **Formal Meetings** – were held bi-monthly in Cross Keys Pub, Hamsterley

- **Funding** – Trailblazers had received funding from ‘Awards for All’ to develop youth training (trailbuilding skills and bike coaching.) Paul Burgess had also been instrumental in securing an award from Seedbed Christian to help with youth coaching and development. WoodNWheels had donated £200; Swaledale Outdoor Centre £200 and the club had received funds from marshalling at events such as the Duathlon and car rally. The Duck Race and 1-2-1 Race had also produced funding for the club.

4. Member Benefits

- Help design and build England’s best mtb trails
- Reduced annual parking permit at Hamsterley (£35 instead of £40) or free annual Hamsterley permit for 3 trailbuilding sessions per annum or other voluntary help or free annual permit for Northern Forests for 5 trailbuilding sessions per annum (Hamsterley, Kielder, Whinlatter, Grizedale and Gisburn.)
- 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.

5. Future Plans

- Continue to build and improve trails! Trailbuilding every 3rd Saturday 10am
- Explore new possible funding streams including British Cycling and Paths for Communities.
- Continue working towards British Cycling Club Marque status.
- Continue plans to train volunteer coaches so we can start the Children’s Club.
- Duck Race and BBQ Sunday 13 May 2012
- UK Gravity Enduro at Hamsterley – 26 and 27 May 2012
- Bowes Museum – Sporting Life Exhibition featuring Trailblazers
- North Pennines MTB 100 – 7 July 2012
- 3rd 1-2-1 Race at Hamsterley – 2,3 & 4 Septmeber 2012
- 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 Monday 16 April at 6.30pm and fortnightly until September 2012
- Monthly women’s day rides – dates to be arranged
- We will continue to promote responsible cycling by working with other organisations to enable everyone to enjoy the forest.

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, County Durham Council, Durham Primary Care Trust, Forestry Commission, Co Durham Tourism Partnership, Awards for All, Seedbed Christian, WoodNWheels, Cummins, Pete Laing Cycle Trail Designer, Craig Cummings (Rifty) Web Meister, Radius Pipe Line Systems, A D Engineering and Dunhouse Quarry

6. Annual Accounts 31 December 2011 and Independent Examiners Report

Emma Johnston presented the Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2011. Neil Gander proposed the accounts be adopted, seconded by Gary Ewing and **AGREED** by members.

7. Conversion to Charitable Incorporated Organisation status Bill Pike presented a briefing paper on the proposal that Hamsterley Trailblazers convert to Charitable Incorporated Organisation status - a new legal form a charity could adopt. It was an incorporated form which was not a limited company or subject to company regulation. A CIO would be able to:

- Own land in its own name
- Control substantial funds or assets
- Enter into contracts eg by employing staff
- Engage in charitable activities involving financial risks
- Members and trustees would usually be personally safeguarded from the club's financial liabilities
- The charity had a legal personality of its own, enabling it to conduct business in its own name rather than the name of the trustees.

CIOs had important differences to other forms of charities including:

- The requirement for all CIOs to register with the Charity Commission, regardless of income
- A CIO did not come into existence until it was registered with the Charity Commission
- All CIOs had to submit annual returns and accounts to the Charity Commission
- CIOs had to keep a register of members and trustees that anyone could see
- Amendments to a CIO constitution were not valid until registered with the Charity Commission
- Insolvency laws applied to CIOs.

To transfer to a CIO Trailblazers needed to register with the Charity Commission; transfer the assets and undertakings of the unincorporated charity to the CIO and settle any liabilities; dissolve the unincorporated charity and have it removed from the register of

charities. The CIO would be a new legal entity and would have a new registered charity number.

The following motion was proposed by Neil Gander, seconded by Gary Ewing and unanimously **AGREED**:

- **That Hamsterley Trailblazers converts from unincorporated organisation status to Charitable Incorporated Organisation status.**

A constitution for the new CIO was also received and considered and the following motion was proposed by Neil Gander, seconded by Mat Clark and unanimously **AGREED**:

- **That Hamsterley Trailblazers adopts the attached constitution and that this constitution be formally submitted to the Charity Commissioners.**

A vote of thanks was given to Bill Pike for all the work he had carried out on this matter.

8. Election of Officers

The following appointments were made:

- Chair – Neil Gander (proposed by Vicky Chilcott and seconded by Mat Clark)
- Vice Chair – Olly Graham (proposed by Neil Gander and seconded by Marie Brown)
- Secretary – Vicky Chilcott (proposed by Neil Gander and seconded by Lisa Jobling)
- Treasurer – Emma Johnston (proposed by Mat Clark and seconded by Fiona Ewing)
- Assistant Treasurer – Mat Clark (proposed by Vicky Chilcott and seconded by Fiona Ewing)

9. Election of Committee Members

The following members were elected to the Committee: Marie Brown, James Dods, Gary Ewing, Kath Gander, David Holmes, Lisa Jobling, Rob Myers, and Andrew Walker. Steve Gash was nominated Web Master, assisted by Chris Briers. Rob Myers offered to take over looking after membership from Mat Clark.

It was further proposed by Neil Gander, seconded by Gary Ewing and **AGREED** that the officers and members elected today become the trustees of the new CIO when its formation was approved by the Charity Commissioners.

10. Adoption of British Cycling policies

It was noted that in order to achieve British Cycling Club Mark status, Hamsterley Trailblazers adopt British Cycling policies (previously circulated with the Agenda papers) on:

- Child Protection
- Code of Conduct
- Equity Policy

Neil Gander proposed the policies be adopted, James Dods seconded the proposal and it was unanimously **AGREED**.

11. Report from Alex MacLennen, Forestry Commission

On behalf of the Forestry Commission Alex expressed thanks and appreciation for the achievements and commitment shown by Trailblazers over the last year. Alex referred to serious implications of changes at FC with 25% staffing cuts and the withdrawal from provision of frontline services including educational services. This meant the shop at Hamsterley would close at the end of September 2012. The shop had been offered to the private sector and it was understood the café would be taking over this function as well as expanding its opening hours and offering a take away food service. Alex also drew attention to the eagerly awaited report from the Independent Panel on the Forests that was due out in summer 2012. Alex said that in terms of trailbuilding, national priorities were now much more on provision and funding of blue grade trails rather than black or even red.

12. Close of Meeting

Neil Gander thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.