

Hamsterley Trailblazers

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Hamsterley Trailblazers held on Thursday 16 April 2015 at 6.30pm in Hamsterley Village Hall.

PRESENT

Trustees

Neil Gander (Chairman)

Mat Clark (Assistant Treasurer)

Committee Members

James Dods

Gary Ewing

Kath Gander

David Holmes

Shaun Rogers

Dan Small

Alex Talks

Members

Darren Best

Vicky Chilcott

Fiona Ewing

Andrew Frankcom

Jon Lambe

Geoff Morson

Paul Stockdale

Lindsay Talks

Ian Tate

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 Andy Keaveney, Olly and Emma Graham. Neil asked for the thoughts of all members to be with Olly and his family as Kaye, his mother and a long standing member of Trailblazers, was in the terminal stages of cancer at St Teresa's Hospice, Darlington and Olly and Emma were not able to be present tonight.

3. Report from Alex MacLennan, Forestry Commission

Alex gave a detailed presentation on the Northern Lands project outlining the achievements of last year at Hamsterley which included, in collaboration with Trailblazers, new mtb routes 'Pike's Teeth' and 'Oddsox' together with the new bridge by the main car park and multi-user trail on the opposite side of the river (which was the most used trail in the forest since September 2014.) Other work included improved car parking, the refurbished café with outdoor seating area and refurbished toilet block. Alex was taking the presentation to the IMBA conference in France where he hoped to show the results of how effective collaboration between voluntary, statutory and other organisations can increase tourism. He hoped, as a result, that more EU funding could be made available for future tourist driven plans. Alex gave special thanks to Trailblazers for their funding and in-kind volunteer help contributions and to Beamish Oddsox (who donated £2,750) to enable the project to be completed. Alex also hoped to provide a self-loading track barrow at Hamsterley from FC for trailbuilding.

4. Annual Report

Neil and James gave a Powerpoint Presentation outlining Trailblazer achievements over the last 12 months:

- **Trailbuilding** – 383 volunteers had helped build mtb trails at Hamsterley over the year, including 100 students from New College Durham and people from Hamsterley Riders in addition to HTB members. As a result, two new red trails – Pike's Teeth and Oddsox – had been built. Special thanks was given from Trailblazers to Beamish Oddsox for their help in raising funds for the new trail and it was noted Oddsox trail would be formally opened on 16 May at 2pm. Work in progress included an extension to Boneshaker and work on Two Wheels and a Troll.
- **Volunteer Trailbuilding Sessions** had continued to be held on the 3rd Saturday of each month and would continue throughout 2015. New College, Durham – through Alex Talks, had sent 100 students during 2014 to help with trailbuilding and it was hoped to hold further sessions during 2015. Many thanks were given to Alex for organising this.
- **Future Trailbuilding Plans** – to complete the Blue route from Pike's Teeth to Metcalfe's House; to build an outbound trail from Oddsox to Transmission as per Pete Laing's original trail map; to build a Pump Track for children near the cycle centre.

- **Chrome Gnome Trophy for Trailbuilding** – went to Mat Clark! Many congratulations and thanks. Mat was leaving for New Zealand in the summer and members wished to thank him for all the help he had given over the years to Trailblazers - particularly in respect of trailbuilding, organising and helping at numerous club events, handling membership and acting as Assistant Treasurer – to name but a few of the things he had been involved in. Mat and Emma would be much missed and the very best wishes of all members was given to them both and to their family for their new life in New Zealand.
- **Youth Coaching** – Shaun reported that Trailblazers now had 5 qualified coaches. 12-15 children aged 6 to 14 attended the monthly Saturday morning coaching sessions (which cost £2 per person.) Feedback on the sessions was extremely good. A summer coaching school for children would be held in August – thanks to Paul Stockdale. Special thanks were given to all the coaches and to Kathryn and Kaye who helped organise them and who provided refreshments, transport etc. Special thanks also were given to Darren Best for organising the classroom facilities (including the much appreciated wood burning stove!)
- **Club Rides** – continued to be held and were planned for 2015. In 2014 these included a Swaledale ride in June led by David Holmes; a Peak District ride led by Simon Rhodes; a ride across Northumberland led by Ted Liddle, IMBA as well as monthly Sunday rides at Hamsterley.
- **Tour de France Weekend, Reeth** - many members camped at the Dales Bike Centre for the weekend of the Tour de France in July 2014 – a great time was had by all.
- **North East XC MTB Race Series** – Hamsterley hosted the first and last race in this series and many members of Trailblazers took part, including a number of children who had attended coaching sessions. 4 of the top 10 overall senior men were from Trailblazers. Another series, starting at Hamsterley, would be held in 2015.
- **Intensive Interval Training Sessions** – continued to be held weekly on Tuesday nights by Dan Small – all welcome!
- **Trailblazer Club Clothing** - was available directly from the supplier – no minimum quantity – see website for details.
- **Wednesday Night Club Rides** – continued to be held, courtesy of Mat and Gary.
- **Thursday night Intermediate rides** had been held once a fortnight, courtesy of Lindsay Talks.

- **Duck Race & BBQ** was held on 13 July 2014 raising some £250 for Trailblazer funds after all prizes had been awarded and expenses met. Another Duck Race and BBQ was planned for 6 June 2015.
- **Formal Meetings** – were held bi-monthly in Cross Keys Pub, Hamsterley

5. 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.)
- Fully maintained website and Facebook page containing a wealth of biking information.
- Discount on holidays, skills courses, weekend breaks, instructor courses, cycle shops (including HTB member, Gary Ewing's new shop – Inspiral Cycles – in Bishop Auckland.)
- Opportunity to be part of a social group of like-minded riders on organised rides and social activities.

6. Future Plans

- **Continue to build and improve trails!** Trailbuilding every 3rd Saturday 10am
- **1st North East XC MTB Race Series, Hamsterley** – Sunday 10 May 2015 (plus further series throughout the region)
- **Opening of Oddsox Trail** – 2pm May 16 – food to be provided.
- **Duck Race Saturday 6 June 2015.** Meet 10.30am for brief bike ride with Duck Race afterwards. Bring the family! **PLEASE OFFER TO SELL AND BUY TICKETS!!!!**
- **Reeth Away Weekend – 27 & 28 June 2015** – Mat and Emma Clark, who are leaving to live in New Zealand, would like to invite all members of Trailblazers to join them at the Dales Bike Centre, Reeth for a weekend of camping, riding plus BBQ and beer on Saturday evening. David Holmes will lead a club ride around the Reeth area on Sunday.
- **Children's MTB Coaching Summer School** – August – to be run by Paul Stockdale. More details later.
- **Away ride led by Ted Liddle, IMBA** – Sunday 13 September 10.30am – more details later.
- **Club Rides every 2nd Sunday** 10.30am start from the Bike Centre Car Park.

- **Children's Coaching Sessions** – 1st Saturday each month 10am – 11.30am, Hamsterley Forest Information Centre (£2 per session.)
- **Night rides every Wednesday** – 7pm outside the Information Centre with a pint at the Cross Keys Pub afterwards
- **Intermediate Fortnightly Club Rides** – Thursday 7pm – more details later from Lindsay Talks
- **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, DEFRA, Forestry Commission, New College Durham, Cummins, Pete Laing Cycle Trail Designer, A D Engineering, Dunhouse Quarry and Beamish Oddsox.

7. Annual Accounts 31 December 2014 and Independent Examiners Report

Due to the unexpected absence of Olly and Emma Graham owing to the serious situation in respect of Kaye, it was not possible to receive the Annual Accounts and it was therefore **AGREED** these be considered and if satisfactory, accepted, at the next meeting of Hamsterley Trailblazers on Thursday 7 May 2015.

8. Election of Trustees

The following appointments were made:

- Chair – Neil Gander (proposed by Geoff Morson and seconded by Ian Tate)
- Vice Chair – Olly Graham (proposed by Kath Gander and seconded by Dan Small)
- Secretary – Andy Keaveney (proposed by Dan Small and seconded by Shaun Rogers)
- Treasurer – Emma Graham (proposed by Alex Talks and seconded by Kathryn Gander)
- Assistant Treasurer – Shaun Rogers (proposed by Vicky Chilcott and seconded by Fiona Ewing)

9. Election of Committee Members

Rob Myers was standing down as Membership Secretary, but would continue to handle membership forms in the interim. Many thanks were extended to Rob for all his work. Andrew Walker was also no longer standing as a committee member because of work commitments and thanks were extended to him for all his work.

The following members were elected to the Committee: James Dods, Gary Ewing, Kath Gander, David Holmes, Geoff Morson, Dan Small and Alex Talks. Nigel Watson would continue to provide website services.

9. Kaye Graham

Neil Gander reported that just after the start of the meeting, Kaye had sadly passed away. Neil asked for Minutes Silence to remember Kaye and to think of Olly, Emma and all Kaye's family. After the silence, members gave a round of applause in tribute to Kaye for all the work she had done for Trailblazers over the years. Kaye had worked tirelessly in helping out at numerous club and forest events and had done much to ensure the children's coaching sessions were successful. She would be greatly missed by everyone.

10. Close of Meeting

Neil Gander thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.