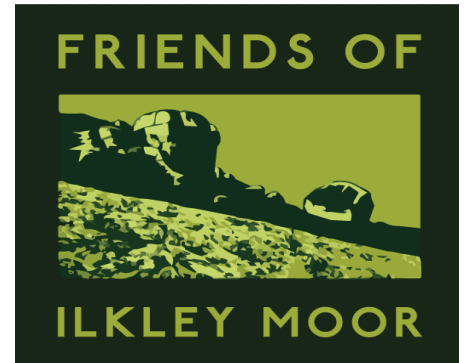


Friends of Ilkley Moor

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Friday 12 May 2023 starting at 7.30 pm

Held at the Clarke Foley Centre, Ilkley



Present

About 50 members of the charity.

Apologies for Absence

David Whitehead and Tracy Gray

Minutes of the 2021 AGM

These were agreed as a true record and approved.

Chair's report

Owen Wells reported that he was pleased that the White Wells toilets were to be reopened although a date for this was still awaited.

Professional dog walkers and for some of them their desire not to keep their dogs under control during the bird nesting season remained a real problem. We remain very keen to see a licensing scheme imposed and whilst Bradford's Countryside Service were pushing for this progress still remains slow

Bradford have agreed to apply for the closure of Keighley Road from just above Silver Wells Cottage to Whetstone Gate. The application cost will be £7,000 of which we will contribute £1,000. However, if sufficient objections are received it may be referred to the Secretary of State and a public enquiry for approval and the costs would be much greater. Bradford would not proceed so we hope that this will not be the case

Both our work party and litter picking volunteer groups remain very active and given this we are keen to have them represented on our Committee so a representative for the work party team, Frank Kew, and the litter pickers, Jolyon West, will be put forward at this meeting for election.

The key priority for FOIM over the next few years will be supporting the blanket bog restoration on Crawshaw Moss and Hebers Moss and we will contribute towards the costs of this.

Owen closed by thanking Tracy Gray, the committee and members for their input over the year.

Treasurer's Report

David Whitehead had pre-circulated the accounts. These had been approved by the Examiner. They were approved by the meeting.

Membership Secretary

Jon Copland reported that membership stood at 454, with 46 new members in the last year. An increasing percentage paid by standing order or Paypal and the good news was that our membership has grown 30% over the last 5 years.

The Events and Learning Programme for 2023 has been published and is also available on our website.

Jon's report was accepted by the meeting.

Publicity

Barry Wilkinson reported that we were looking forward to the start of our events programme on the weekend of 27 May and that the Ilkley Gazette remained very good in featuring our press releases.

Barry's report was accepted by the meeting.

Election of Officers and Committee

The following officers were elected.

Chair	Owen Wells
Vice Chair	Helen Kidman
Treasurer	David Whitehead
Secretary	Jonathan Guest
Membership Sec	Jon Copland
Publicity officer	Barry Wilkinson

Committee: Ian Condliffe, Catherine Smith, Nick Hunt, Alex Walker, Frank Kew and Jolyon West were elected.

Karen Shackleton remains the ex officio representative of Wharfedale Naturalists and Pauline Allan is the representative of Ilkley Town Council.

Owen Wells welcomed the new members.

AOB

A number of questions were raised from the floor.

What was our approach in relation to tree planting on the Moor? Owen Wells responded that our view is that in stream beds they can be an asset

especially if rowen or birch. Rhododendrons should be removed totally. We have tried to maintain the historic plantations of scots pines but all efforts in this regard had failed.

Why were the approaches of Bradford on Ilkley Moor and the owners on Bingley Moor different in relation to managing dog walkers especially during the bird nesting season? Owen Wells responded that whilst both Bingley Moor and Ilkley Moor were common land which restricted how much control could be exerted Bingley Moor was subject to a statute of limitations when sold which gives the owners additional rights to control the nature of public access. On Ilkley Moor education remains our best route to control activities. Danny Jackson, Bradford Countryside Service manager, reinforced this approach and said that they hoped to be friendly neighbours with the new owner of the Bingley Estate.

The meeting then discussed the open letter submitted by Nick Hunt and Alex Walker and the responses from Bradford Countryside Service and the Committee that had been circulated to all members. Nick Hunt stressed that the issue with footpath restoration is what it may lead to long term given increased public access with damage to wildlife and the nature of the Moor. Dog walkers (both professional and personal) walking their dogs off the lead at all times was the major issue. Were the consequences of major route reinstatement being sufficiently considered. Alex Walker was pleased with the clarification on Bradford's approach that Danny Jackson had provided in his earlier talk but greater communication and agreement on any future restorations was needed so that increased access to the higher wilder levels of the Moor was restricted.

In response Danny Jackson explained that major path restoration is a considered process overseen by Natural England, that it is actively seen to curtail general off-the-path access to the Moor and ultimately increased usage was occurring in spite of path works not because of them. It was therefore a question of how Bradford can best manage this increased usage and encourage sensible behaviour by those using the Moor. There were no proposals for any more major works in the next 5 to 10 years save perhaps for the route from Backstone Beck to the Poetry Seat which remained an open question as to whether it should go ahead.

Comment was made that the resurfacing of Keighley Road up to Silver Wells had exacerbated the problems of access by dog owners.

Owen Wells added that we should look at educating and controlling dog walkers more by openly recognising that bird nesting is severely limited on the lower slopes given the continual presence of dogs off the lead and that our focus should be on managing the upper areas where it was a fundamental problem. Educating people was the answer but how? Perhaps, very directly worded signage making this two-level approach very clear was needed. The only other path restoration worthy of consideration is from Whetstone Gate to the Buck Stones although there are differing views on this.

