

HODGEMOOR RIDING ASSOCIATION

Minutes Annual General Meeting, 18 November 2019 at 8pm

Kim Dudko (www.3shiretherapy.com) gave a very interesting and well-received talk on Animal-Assisted Therapy. Here are the links for

"Horse Therapy ~ Peyo The Love Stallion Visits Sick People"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4HEuLn6Bdg> and the

"6 year old autistic girl Iris and her cat Thula"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1UcTZwP0v0>

1. **Welcome by Chairman.** The 2018 AGM minutes were approved and the list of apologies for absence was read out and displayed. At this AGM the chairman had suggested options for specific motions, pages 4-6 below, for voting at the AGM. All members may cast a vote in advance of our AGMs or give us general input. No advance votes were received.

2. Election of Officers and Committee

The new Committee was proposed and elected:

Marcus Bicknell (Chairman)

Geoff Gudgion (Treasurer)

Susie Bicknell (Secretary)

Shona Fraser

Francesca Jones

Dawn Fleming

Sarah Fisher and Miranda Thomas had resigned from the Committee and we thanked them for their help. The Committee is very happy to welcome Dawn Fleming who volunteered to join at the meeting.

3. **Accounts** prepared by Geoff Gudgion (Treasurer) (absent on vacation) were approved by the meeting. Funds currently stood at £7,201.29. A standing ovation was given to the couple who regularly walk in Hodgemoor who had started a £100 annual standing order, who felt they gained much more from their use of Hodgemoor than from the equivalent cost of their National Trust membership. Geoff wanted the meeting to know that PayPal, although convenient, did incur a cost. Sara Caley suggested adding to the subscription payment choices doing a direct transfer to the Association account which was perhaps less trouble than setting up a standing order. SB will also put the Association's bank details on the application and renewal forms.

4. **Membership subscription.** How to encourage all new arrivals at yards to join:

- Posters and membership packages at yards, and posters in wood.
- The following volunteered to chase up their respective yard memberships (rather than making it the responsibility of the yard manager and/or owners):

Shona Fraser

Oldefields

Sara Caley

Grove Farm

Juliet Booth

Waylands

Diana Bunyan

Highclere

Francesca Jones

Widmer (as owner/manager and a committee member)

We would be grateful to know who could be the rep for...

xxx

Willowcourt Stables

xxx

Manor Farm

xxx

Austens

xxx

Aescwood Riding School

5. Report on Events and funds raised last financial year and Future Event Plans.

Two events in last financial year: Curry night 19 November 2018 and TREC 27 April.

There will be a Christmas Dressage at Waylands Equestrian Centre on 28 December.

- **Social Events:** Francesca, Hodgemoor's star social event organiser, has yet again kindly volunteered to organise an evening at **Maya (on the A413 at St Giles) on Friday, 31 January 2020**. The meeting was encouraged to come to this in large numbers as it was a bigger venue than Miltons Restaurant where the successful curry nights had been held.
- **Le Trec:** Susie reported that this April's Trec had raised only £275 with fewer entries (19 as against 32 in 2018) and credits from postponed TreCs) and she wondered if this event was getting less popular. Diana Bunyan was of the firm opinion – and the meeting agreed – that Trec should continue to be done: it had been bad luck recently with weather delays and then the atrocious gale this April.

- **Cross Country:** Susie reported that the Cross Country field is very rarely rented. Is this because closed for hay from May to August? Are jumps not good enough? Events have to be low-key 'cos of cost First Aid presence? Is it worth Association maintaining jumps with so little use? The meeting agreed that XC course should be updated: Shona suggested taking out some jumps as too close together and maybe organise a working party to help renovate course. Francesca might also organise a XC event at Widmer (but she also found ;her course wasn't much used).
- **Photo competition:** The meeting supported idea for a photo competition, using Hodgemoor Facebook page perhaps, on e.g. Your horse in Hodgemoor, funniest, strangest pic of you and your horse, etc, to be judged possibly by Karen Wright, our local professional equine photographer. Winning photos to be used in printed calendar. This could also be linked in some way with the The Hodgemoor Wildlife Junior Photography Award in the Chalfont St Giles village show which we originated in September 2019. Marcus described what the Association had done...

The Hodgemoor Wildlife Junior Photography Award

- Sponsored by the Hodgemoor Riding Association and Southbank Photography
- Judged and awarded at the Chalfont St Giles Country Show, class J89.
- Under 18 years old on the day of the show
- Non-professional photographers living within 2 miles of Hodgemoor Wood.
- The photo must relate to wildlife, the countryside and to Hodgemoor Wood as an outdoor amenity for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and nature-lovers (subject to change 2020)

We agreed that the committee would think about how these two activities could feed each other and help promote the idea of the Association playing a role in a wider community. Lucinda Starling suggested advertising very early on in schools to promote the Wild Life Photography Award for its second year at the Chalfont St Giles Show.

- **Yard events: Appendix (b)** was discussed and will be acted on although a formal motion was not proposed. For the last two years, no yard has organised a sporting event although Widmer (Francesca) organised the Curry Night. We agreed to formalise our invitation to each yard owner to organise one event a year themselves, whether sportive or social. Rob Waine and Ben Franklyn had agreed to do a Dressage Demo this year, but in the end, couldn't find suitable date. Other yards could do Show-jumping Demos or competitions, hence the Christmas Dressage at Waylands Equestrian Centre on 28 December; we thank Lana Craker at Waylands for making her indoor school available. See also paragraph 4 above with the yard rep volunteers.
- Do we actually need more events, with so many others organised, satisfactory income and so little enthusiasm to do so? This perennial question remained unanswered. Anyway, the events are fun and provide a sense of community not just the financial benefit.

6. Trail Repairs and Relationship with Forestry England:

- Susie reported that 300 metres of trail repairs were done in October 2019 at a cost of £15 300 to the Association. The quote was for £29 000 for 290 metres, using contractor now imposed by Forestry England. Forestry England agreed to pay half: £14 500. The extra 10 metres done with our agreement was at the Association's cost: £800.
- FE paid half this time: would they next time? With income of £5 to 6K pa, it would take 4 years for the Association to save up £20 000 to do 250 metres at current rate of £80m2.
- The meeting agreed that the new contractor's work was of high quality, though Ewart Richardson said they really should have done a better job of making good the access routes they used, one of which has had to be barricaded off as it is impassable. The Chairman argued that nature will return the tractor paths to normal within weeks.
- **Appendix (c)** (re Forestry England restrictive practices) was discussed but a formal motion was not proposed. MB and SB to work in a more light-handed way on those issues, as follows. It was agreed that FE should pay half costs for future repairs. Sara Caley asked if our current agreement with FE could be altered to include this and to bear in mind that the better quality work of this contractor might make the repairs last longer and the extra cost therefore justified.. Lisa Mayhew suggested getting Agriwork approved when FE's next 4 year approval cycle is due.
- Francesca said a letter of thanks should be sent to FE for their contribution. The chairman has drafted such a letter and it will be submitted to committee for approval, then to members for info.

7. Suggestions on how to get Cyclists and Walkers more Involved in Hodgemoor:

Appendix (a) was discussion but no motion was proposed.

Members at the meeting reported having problems with cyclists, mostly with etiquette. Ewart Richardson said it was a matter of educating them on how to behave. Leaflets should be done on etiquette and he and Emma Baker suggested informing young cyclists through schools, for example. Francesca said just stopping and talking to the cyclists was a help. Charlotte Perry said why not

use the photo competition as a means of involving cyclists and walkers. Shona suggested cyclists who joined be given a tab to wear. SB to prepare leaflet and poster to encourage cyclists to join and on etiquette with horses. She would ask Sustrans if they had any official info on cyclists and horses. Members should look round the web site and note, for example, that the Forestry Commission Cyclists Code of Conduct is [there](#)

8. **Conflict of Interest, Bicknells.** After a discussion of the background facts, see **Appendix (d)** below, Lucinda Starling proposed and several members seconded the motion “Hodgemoor Riding Association members and executives have been informed of the potential conflict of interest facing Susie and Marcus Bicknell in the deployment of Association funds for the repair, by the Association with or without Bucks CC who are responsible for bridleway maintenance, to the north end of the Wickham Way on land belonging jointly to the Bicknells. The Association agrees to the deployment of the funds as decided by the committee in due course on the condition that committee members other than the Bicknells confirm in writing the decision(s) pertaining to these work and the arrangements for sharing the costs, and keep the membership informed.” The motion was approved unanimously.

Lucinda Starling also suggested the BHS bridleway department could perhaps help if the badgers proved a problem.

9. **The Environment.** The following motion was passed “Hodgemoor Riding Association members and executives agree to study our association’s objectives and a partial extension into environmental issues, green awareness and whether we can contribute, with a view to discussing and making a more formal decision at the AGM 2020.” See **Appendix (e)** below.

In this context Diana Bunyan proposed and other members seconded that the Association make regular donations to charities. It was voted to give £250 each to The Brooke Hospital for Animals <https://www.thebrooke.org> and Thames Valley Air Ambulance www.tvairambulance.org.uk, i.e. £500 total per annum. The recipient charities would be re-assessed at the AGM each year.

10. Any Other Business.

Holding more events and Raising Subs. Susie felt that although desirable, was there really a need to hold more events, particularly as so many were held in the area, and as Emma Baker pointed out, there were so few volunteers to organise them. Shona suggested that if holding less events meant less income, then maybe the time had come to raise subs again (not done since 2013). Julie Treacy felt Hodgemoor didn’t offer enough to raise it anymore, in comparison to other areas.

Motorcycles. Dawn Castle and Lucinda Starling reported their frightening confrontations with motorcyclists in the last year, but overall (reported the committee) there were less reported incidents than before. Ewart Richardson said calling 101 was useless. The chairman advised to call 101 only for non-urgent issues and stressed the need to call 999 if a crime is in progress or someone needs help. Members might also like to note the phone numbers for the Community Support Officers who have proved useful in the past, 07973 446504 (Mark N) 07800 703167 (Mark T) 07814 851731 (Matt Cumming) and 07800 702165 (Jennifer Shraga). Because employees and duties change please ascertain that you are talking to an officer in the Chalfonts, Seer Green or Jordans before launching into the issue.

Riding Etiquette in woods.

Juliet Booth, supported by Inske Allso, asked that members be reminded of riding etiquette in the woods. She had friends whose horses had been scared by others galloping up behind them and other similar unsociable behaviour. Angela Stallard said she would draft a note to be distributed and put on the website.

Remembrance Sunday Ride. The meeting supported Susie’s proposal for this ride, starting maybe at Waylands, going round the woods and back through the village for 2020, raising money for a suitable charity to so with animals in war.

Susie Bicknell, Secretary
24 November 2019

Appendices - Subjects for discussion or motions

In light of the marginally-autocratic running of the Association and the infrequency of committee meetings it is suitable that the membership have full information and decision-making powers on some issues. We propose for the first time for the AGM 2019 some topics not just for discussion but also for motions to be passed if the membership requires.

Having spent £15,300 of Association funds in October on the fabulous new trail surfaces, we have the opportunity and a platform to express our views and take actions on some old and some new issues, as follows.

a. Effort to get the cyclists to contribute and comply and encourage more walker members

Since 2017 the contract between the Hodgemoor Riding Association and Forestry England (we have the right to ride, we have the obligation to maintain the trails) obliges us to permit cyclists to use all the horse trails not just the bridleways.

1. Some anarchy has ensued, many cyclists using the footpaths, annoying the walkers, damaging nature, discouraging wild life, as if they had a right in common law to ride anywhere, all this despite clear postering from Forestry England.
2. We should say that very few complaints have been received by us or by Forestry England, and none with photos identifying the cyclist(s).
3. 11 walkers pay the modest fee (£5 p.a.) and are supportive of our efforts in maintaining the trails. One dog-walking couple, well known to Susie and Marcus but remaining anonymous, have made a donation of £100 to the Association and have set up a standing order for £100 every year. 5 cyclists pay £10 pa. for a cycling membership
4. Your Association's committee invites suggestions from members as to how to get cyclists and walkers to feel engaged with our Association
5. Your Association's committee invites suggestions from members as to how to get cyclists to comply with the regulations¹ prohibiting them from riding anywhere in the woods.
6. Your Association's committee invites one or more members to take on this task in coordination with the committee and follow up any decision taken.
7. A motion with the above wording can be drawn up and passed at the AGM.

b. Effort to get all Yard Owners and Managers to contribute

The Hodgemoor Riding Association has worked tirelessly since the late 1990s to make of Hodgemoor Woods a high quality facility which makes riding in the area so much more attractive and which therefore increase the earning potential of the yards in the area. The number of horses having access to the wood continues to increase (about 100 in 2005 and close to 300 now).

1. We argue that all yard owners and managers should oblige their clients to be members of the Hodgemoor Riding Association and deduct the annual fee from their payment method if necessary
2. We encourage all yard owners to organise one sporting or social event each year as a fund-raiser for the Association, to add to those done by Widmer Farm (Francesca Jones) and Grove Livery (Jenien and Rik Cunningham) and the proposed Christmas dressage at Waylands (Lane Craker).
3. Your Association's committee invites one or more members to take on this task in coordination with the committee and follow up with each of the liveries (list at <http://hodgemoor.org.uk/local-liveries/>).

c. Forestry England restrictive practices and abuse of taxpayers money

The committee of the Hodgemoor Riding Association has given some initial consideration as to whether to take a stance about restrictive practices and abuse of taxpayers money by Forestry England. The background is as follows...

¹ Forestry England has confirmed that cycling on their land other than on the horse trails is a trespass and punishable by law. Their initial stance, if an offender is identified, would be to ban him or her from the woods for a period of time.

1. Back in spring of 2018, with sufficient association funds available, we first proposed to Forestry England the resurfacing and maintenance needed to the trails in Hodgemoor. It was for 290 metres plus repair to culvert on Spring Link, work which has in the end been carried out 18 months late, in October 2019.
2. Our contractor over 15 years, Agriwork, quoted (back in 2018) £11 600, excluding culvert repair.
3. Forestry Commission informed us that their new protocol meant using their approved contractors. They now do this “to ensure quality work and to maintain standards of health and safety during the work”. The approval of contractors is on a 4 yearly cycle so it was too late to get Agriwork approved. This was additionally distressing to us because Agriwork had successfully worked on the trails in Hodgemoor on four occasions between 2001 and 2014 but had not been invited to apply for approval nor even informed of the change in protocol.
4. Forestry-England-approved contractors provided estimates which were more than twice as much as Agriwork. This smacks of corporate governance gone crazy, restrictive practices (reminiscence of the unions in the 1970s), jobs for the boys and abuse of taxpayers’ money (i.e. it is you and I as taxpayers who, through subsidies to Forestry England, who have to pay this unnecessary slush fund).
5. In the end, Forestry England agreed to pay half the total in our to ensure the works went ahead. The contract total of £29,000 (which is comparable to the Agriwork estimate of £11,600) was paid half (£14,500) by Forestry England and half by the Hodgemoor Riding Association. We paid an additional £800 to the contractors for 10 extra metres added after the works had started. It should be noted that the work by Neil’s Plant of Stamford, and the materials they used, were of a high quality.
6. The Hodgemoor Riding Association can decide either a) to ignore this issue or b) to make plans to complain more vocally to Forestry England, to lobby them to modify and make the process more open, to write to MPs and/or to release information on social media and the press. The effect of our hard-earned funds is halved, and thousands of pounds of taxpayers’ money is wasted. On a national level the wastage through such procedures must be staggering.

We propose to encourage input from, and discussion by, our members on Facebook in advance of the AGM and at the AGM itself. If the issues are clear and supported by a landslide majority we would note and vote a motion at the AGM. The possible motion would be along the lines of

A) The Hodgemoor Riding Association decides to ignore the issue of Forestry England’s approved contractors and the resulting “corporate governance gone crazy”, restrictive practices (reminiscent of the unions in the 1970s), jobs for the boys and abuse of taxpayers’ money

Or

B) The Hodgemoor Riding Association decides, in the context of Forestry England’s approved contractors and the resulting “corporate governance gone crazy”, restrictive practices (reminiscent of the unions in the 1970s), jobs for the boys and abuse of taxpayers’ money, to complain more vocally to Forestry England, to lobby them to modify and make the process more open, to write to MPs and/or to release information on social media and the press.

Note that, if a motion like B were passed, the chairman and secretary would invite a suitable volunteer to lead the campaign, do the paperwork and handle the social and classic media.

The committee puts this forward to membership as a matter of courtesy without having a clear opinion on which course to take.

d. Work to the north end of the Wickham Way: potential conflict of interest

1. Work to the north end of the Wickham Way where a single file trails goes over and round lumps of sandy soil were not undertaken in October because a) the land is not Forestry England's and b) we were informed a badger licence might be necessary because of a potential badger set in the woods a few metres north². The Hodgemoor Riding Association committee proposes, as with other work, to get quotes from contractors and proceed with the repairs. Sufficient funds are available.
2. This trail is a key access route to the woods from several stables and its value to the Association and to the wider public including cyclists (who have a right in law to ride on bridleways) warrants the expenditure.
3. If Bucks CC were to agree to the principle of 50/50 funding of the works we would commit to joint funding of the repairs. If not, then we would proceed anyway and bear 100% of the cost.
4. The bridleway is on land belonging jointly to Mr Lawrie and Mrs Jo Read, Poplar Farm, Threehouseholds, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks HP8 4LW and to Mr Marcus and Mrs Susie Bicknell, Homefarm Orchard, Kirby Close, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks HP8 4FF. Because the Bicknells are elected representatives of the Hodgemoor Riding Association whose funds would be used in contribution to these works and also joint owners of the land on which the works will be done, we are mindful of the potential conflict of interest. It is clear that the Wickham Way is permanently dedicated as a bridleway in which case no value accrues to the landowners from the works, and that the landowners have made available the land without any charge or conditions.
5. We will propose a motion to the AGM of the Association of 18th November to confirm the members' agreement and understanding of the issues, as follows

Motion proposed for 2019: "Hodgemoor Riding Association members and executives have been informed of the potential conflict of interest facing Susie and Marcus Bicknell in the deployment of Association funds for the repair, by the Association with or without Bucks CC who are responsible for bridleway maintenance, to the north end of the Wickham Way on land belonging jointly to the Bicknells. The Association agrees to the deployment of the funds as decided by the committee in due course on the condition that committee members other than the Bicknells confirm in writing the decision(s) pertaining to these work and the arrangements for sharing the costs, and keep the membership informed."

e. Environmental issues and our association's objectives

On our website and membership application form you can read "The Association exists to raise funds for maintaining and creating riding trails in and around Hodgemoor. It does this with membership subscriptions and organising fund-raising events such as dressage, cross country and Le Trec." However, we have evolved from just an association of riders into a force for regeneration of the woods and trails around here, a voice for walkers, cyclists, nature-lovers and others, and potentially into an environmentally-conscious group. Making an award for junior wildlife photography at the Chalfont St Giles Show has been a step in this direction. We embraced the idea that speakers could be on subjects which are more about environmental issues than just about horses, even though we decided on Kim Dudko (Animal Assisted Therapy) not Paul Kemp (Green talks). Or should we keep our activities well focussed, driven by the limited human resources we have in the management? I would propose that we open this issue up for discussion at the AGM and signpost it by email and Facebook in advance. Do you agree? What do you think the objectives or mission statement of the Association should be?

Motion proposed for 2019: "Hodgemoor Riding Association members and executives agree to study our association's objectives and a partial extension into environmental issues, green awareness and whether we can contribute, with a view to discussing and making a more formal decision at the AGM 2020."

end

² We think the holes closest to the bridleway are rabbits not badgers. We are encouraging Bucks CC, responsible for maintaining bridleways to arrange a site visit and to apply for any licences which might be necessary