

Chair's report

It gives me great pleasure to be able to present such a positive report at our first AGM following a very successful year. In September 2015 we set ourselves a number of targets for our first year of operation and to date we have managed to achieve all but one.

Membership – Target 50. Since our formation a year ago with 29 members transferred from Heart of Scotland LDWA we have more than doubled our Primary members to 61 this month, even before those with family membership were invited to be identified as individual members. It is also good to have 23 Associate members, i.e. those from all over the country who are interested in what we do; some of whom even join us on occasions when they are in the area.

Participation – Target 50%. Over the year we put on a range of walks to try and offer something for everyone. We aimed for half of our members to participate in at least one event. To date 59% of our Primary Members have attended at least one walk – this rises to well over 60% when individual members are counted. Some individuals have managed to get to almost two-thirds of our walks and over the year over 250 people have been walking with us. Not bad for a new group.

Walks – a range. Over the year we have put on walks in all regions of our main geographical area from Loch Ness to Aberdeenshire and the Moray Coast to Drumochter. One member even claimed their first Munro. We also succeeded in having shorter options for families and newcomers as well as at least one walk over 25 miles – which was actually nearer 40! Our initial programme was for one walk per month, however we formed an early association with the Moray Mountaineering Club to join them in their Bus Meets from March 2016 giving us an additional event each month, with high level options, often outwith our main area. This is something that promises to grow in the future as more people become aware of it. Another positive was the link with the Moray Walking Festival where the group was very involved with the Moray Way 5-day Challenge, which was a very successful event and likely to be even more popular next year.

Social Media – 100 Facebook likes. Early in our formation we decided that to spread the news of our existence we would need to do more than depend on the LDWA website and therefore started a Facebook page. We hoped to get up to 100 likes during our first year. As I write this we now have over 300 likes and this number grows week by week. We also aimed to have at least one new post each week to keep it fresh as well as keeping our LDWA website up to date, which we have more or less achieved.

LDWA Strider – 1 article per issue. There have only been 2 issues of Strider since we began (the first deadline was the week we formed and we just about managed to get our walks programme in on time!) and we have managed to get either an article or a walk report published in each, complete with photographs. Given that there is limited space and 43 local groups we are quite proud of that.

Finance – a positive balance. As our Treasurers' Report will show from the very beginning when the Committee were paying for rooms out of their own pockets, the group now has a small but healthy bank balance which will enable us to consider a wider range of options for events in the future.

We have also been successful in achieving some things that were not even our targets in the first place. Other groups struggle with attracting women and young people – not so for us where our photographs always show a good mix of walkers.

And the missing target? The Committee! The target is to have a Committee of at least 5 by the end of the 2016 AGM! Will you help us get there?

It has really been a fantastic year for us and thanks must go to the current Committee Members: Pete Mitchell, Secretary, for his tireless work in keeping our meetings organised and recorded and also the additional liaison work he does with other local walking and outdoor groups, especially in the organising of the Moray Way 5-day Challenge; Tracy Davidson, Treasurer, for keeping on top of the finances as well as organising sponsorship and publicity; John Henderson, who joined us as a Committee member during the year and who is our main link with the Moray Mountaineering Club. All of us also take responsibility for planning, organising and leading walks during the year. This on top of full time jobs and family commitments.

Which is why we are seeking your help. You may not wish to be a formal Committee Member, though we only meet every couple of months for a couple of hours, but we are also on the look out for anyone who may be prepared to help out with the odd walk during the year, or take on a particular task such as publicity or Minutes Secretary to help share the load.

We hope you can help us meet our final target!

However, we wouldn't be where we are without you, our members. If there were no members in North West Grampian we wouldn't have a local LDWA Group to be proud of – and our colleagues throughout the country are proud of our progress too. There are not many local groups who are not aware of us and if you ever join any of them in their walks you will hear how our name has gone before us. There was some reluctance in some parts about the formation of a new group so far north when others were struggling, but I think this year we have seen off any dissent and we are well established for the future.

But we must not be complacent and to continue the success we want to hear from you what you think would help to improve the group and make us more attractive not only to our current members, but also to new ones. Please let us have your suggestions at any time.

Thank you for your support.

Julie Cribb
Chair NWG LDWA
September 2016

NW Grampian LDWA
2016

AGM