

Nearly Wild Camping Club 2022 / 2023 Annual report for Members

for the 10th December 2023 AGM

Whilst the accounts cover the period 1st June 2022 to 31st May 2023, this summary will attempt to bring you up to date with progress to date following from my last report which brought us up to the end of 2023.

During the winter of 2022 / 23, Meg Elliot helped us develop the idea and trialling of a Newsletter and winter Zoom talks. Meg left us to take a long trip to New Zealand where she worked while travelling. To help support the administration and take the developments forwards, we recruited the support of OurVA, a call-off administration company. With their help and driven by an increased input from myself on the organisation's development (I started by increasing my hours to 2 days per week for the organisation, which has now increased to 2.5 days a week), I have been able to continue to develop the breadth and depth of the Nearly Wild Camping offer. So, while Lee - who works full time for us - has continued to manage the day to day running and marketing of the Club, with an ever-expanding membership to service, I have been able to focus on our range of services and activities, whilst also developing opportunities in line with our mission and purpose. The sheer scale of work Lee covers to 'keep the wheels oiled and turning' should not be under-estimated.

In financial terms, the organisation is trading positively, and our reserves continue to grow. However, it's difficult to see this when you read the accounts; as a member-owned co-op, the accounts need to be prepared in a way that shows the membership shares. This means that some of our money is held in shares and so does not show as assets. However, since our shares are not redeemable, this money is still fundamentally part of our asset base. So, in short, we have plenty of money in the bank to help with the next stage of our development.

We are registered for VAT which adds a little to our membership charge, but we still feel that the fee we charge is more than fair, allowing us to run and develop the organisation without grants whilst still keeping our membership fees low enough for most people to join. In fact, we have been able to run quite a few events and activities which have been free to members, using some of our savings.

We attended a limited number of shows in 2023 as we decided to focus on strengthening the member-specific aspects of our work. We did attend the Bushcraft Show, who have been a strong supporter of our work for years, and it was a good opportunity to meet some of our members. We ran a number of workshops, Steve gave a main stage talk on wilding and ecology (very well attended) and Irene kept the stand busy whilst introducing people to the joys of 'wild weaving' with the help of two Board members.

Whilst we have done a few visits to locations as a way of informally monitoring how we are developing and trying to ensure we remain on mission and fit for purpose, much of our efforts have been focused on developing member only activities.

This focus has enabled us to:

- Produce a monthly newsletter / update on progress and activities.
- Trial and support the running of 4 experience camps with professional trainers in different parts of the country.
- Develop new partnerships with experience providers enabling us to give a big boost to learning opportunities for members.
- Develop a full schedule of Zoom presentation talks and supporting materials through the winter of 2023 / 2024 which are now well up and running and starting to attract a growing number of members.
- Continue to develop the website's member Community Page with lots more information and access to all the past talks, plus we have started to produce information and downloads for members (such as the *Nearly Wild Camping passport* and *Activity badges* for children).

We are now following this up with:

- Phoning location members to help us further assess progress and specific location needs. This helps us to check we are staying true to our mission, ensure that we better understand landowner needs and that we can start to try and understand how best to develop future support.
- Starting to develop next year's activity programme by following up on feedback from our call to members (see Community Page and past newsletters) for social and experience providers.
- Developing some short films to help members explore the countryside and natural world and give advice on some of the 'hot topics' which have been coming up.
- Running the Zoom presentations for this winter season, including all the necessary preparation with our speakers.
- Reviewing the website and future development options.

Also, I have spent time to support the development of an increasingly strong Board, which is an important part of how our organisation works. We now have 6 Board members, each bringing different useful skills and ideas, all of whom are playing an active role in Board meetings. We are grateful for their time and effort. Anyone interested in becoming a part of the Board is encouraged to get in touch to find out more about what's involved. We are particularly keen to recruit one or two more location owners to the Board.

So, despite the fact that I am still recovering from long covid since mid 2022, we have not been slacking!

Please do keep an eye on the Community Page and Newsletters for more information.

So, all round, it's been another positive year for the organisation, and whilst it has kept us all busy, Lee and I are very proud of what is being achieved and we are looking forward to helping the organisation continue to develop and deliver for our members.

Thank you all.

Steve Evison

Founder, Chief Executive and Chairman of the Board.