

Monklands Ramblers – Treasurer Report October 2020 – Douglas Bryson

The Covid crisis which shut down the group and the country in March has impacted on the financial situation of the club. However the situation is one of more money than anticipated at the end of the financial year because of inability to spend funds rather than a funding shortage. This is not necessarily the welcome situation it would appear since there are Ramblers Association rules in relation to end-year balances – charities want money to be spent on their intended activity rather than accumulated. However the exact size of our end-year balance is not completely clear since a significant portion of the amount relates to a National Lottery grant received at the start of 2020 and still unspent. Please see details below.

Activity: The group only managed 10 walk days before lockdown rather than the normal annual average of about 25. All of the walks were in the winter programme during which time the bus hire charge is lower than summer prices by about £50 per hire. The reduced walk programme meant a reduced requirement for reces and only £144 was spent compared to the full £240 allocation. Similarly another significant expenditure item had been the “Fit for a Fiver” promotion which is financed in part from the Main account to compensate for the reduction in the full fare charge. With only 6 new walkers compared to an annual average 40 previously there was a significant reduction in the transfer to the bus hire account.

Rambler Balance requirements: The club operates two bank accounts 1) **Self funded** for bus hires and socials 2) **Main** for club admin and reces. The balance details are on **financial report page 1**.

The RA rules for year-end balances on the self-funded account are as follows “*The aim is for self-funded activities to break even, so those Areas/Groups with self-funded monies in deficit or in excess of a specified level (currently: above £1,500 and exceeding 20% of annual self-funded expenditure) are requested to take action to return their self-funded monies to within the target range.*”

The current balance is sitting at £2308 which is £800 above the “specified level”. Since our annual self-funded expenditure last year was above £9000 the trigger level on the end year balance was adjusted upwards to over £1800 which meant that last year’s balance of £1707 was not subject to review.

However this year’s high balance is only at this level because of the covid situation. On any bus hire restart the funds will be spent. We would anticipate that the RA would appreciate the exceptional nature of the current circumstances which had led to accrued “excess” funds.

The Main account also has a higher than normal closing balance of £499.85 due to reduced spending and this is discussed further in the next budget item.

Budget 2020-2021: This year we received £740 from the Ramblers Association to cover our expenditure outwith bus hires and socials. Spending is restricted to RA charitable objectives which in our case are mainly recce costs, Fiver promotion, map software, running of committee, programme production, website, computer and printing costs, AGM.

The Group was asked in July 2020 to complete a budget for the financial year beginning October 1 2020 on the basis of a “normal” year. It seems likely that the RA funding award will be modified in view of the possible reduced funding requirements as a result of continued restricted activity and the high carry forward balance of £500. However the new financial year runs through to end September 2021 so it might be hoped that some level of activity will have restarted before then. There are some fixed costs such as the website which must be paid anyway regardless of walk activity.

National Lottery: We made an application for an Awards for All National Lottery community grant in October 2019. We received news in January 2020 that we had been successful and were awarded £1000 to assist us with our transport costs over the summer period 2020 ending on September 30 2020.

Since we have not made any bus hires since March 2020 we have not spent any of the Lottery funding. We contacted the Lottery in September to inform them of the situation. We indicated that the uncertain nature of the crisis means we cannot give any definite time period of when the group will restart bus hire.

The Lottery responded: *“Thanks for getting in touch and keeping us up to date with your project. We can extend your project by 6 months at the moment due to the pandemic. All we ask is that you keep us up to date with the progress of your project when it is up and running again.”*

The time period by which the money should be spent is now rescheduled to end March 2021. Even with this extension it is not clear if we will be in a position to make bus hires by that revised date. It may be that the date will be continually pushed back until such time that the cash can be used. The terms of the lottery award indicate *“If you’ve not spent all of the funding we gave you – please speak to your funding officer and they’ll let you know what to do with it.”* However this guidance would normally only apply at the end of a project and at this stage it is still our intention to restart the walks and bus hire when the situation permits.

Quiz Night: The quiz night was scheduled for end-March 2020 just as the country entered lockdown. It was therefore cancelled till a later date. Ticket sales amounted to £160 and will all be honoured whenever a rescheduled date can be made.

North Lanarkshire Grant: For an 11th successive year we were successful in being awarded a Community grant by North Lanarkshire Council. It is likely that we will not make a funding request this year.

Our thanks to all members who contribute financially or otherwise to the group.

The accounts were examined and signed off by accountant Alex Gillies of Chapelhall.