

SLINGSBY WEBSITE AND NEWSLETTER GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

Wednesday 25th November 2020 at 7.30pm

By Zoom

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

1. Introduction

The Slingsby Website and Newsletter Group is now in its tenth year of operation. It started this reporting year in good health. We had ideas for the future development of our joint communication projects and recognised the need for some new team members. Any optimism we had as the new decade started was soon dented severely by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The unprecedented situation caused major difficulties and unpredictable challenges for virtually all individuals and organisations. Our Group was by no means exempt from these problems.

On the 23rd March, when the PM announced the full lockdown, we had no idea if we could get The Triangle printed, and if it would be safe to deliver it. Collecting money was out of the question. Flexibility and a little agility were required. We managed to get the issue printed and, with the help of key residents, delivered to our readers. By its nature, the website was better placed to weather the early storm. We hope and believe that our readers and website followers saw no interruption in services. Throughout, we have done our best to offer continuity, and an ongoing sense of community in spite of the lockdown and ongoing restrictions.

This report will give a brief overview of key aspects of the Group's activities, and then look ahead to 2021.

Separate reports will be presented to give more detail about our Group's financial position, The Triangle and the more technical aspects of the website.

2. Finance

The outlook was very uncertain in the Spring, both for advertising income and reader subscriptions. We decided to defer collection of all subs and most advertiser fees indefinitely, until the situation became clearer. We were able to do this because, over the years, we had been following previous financial advice and had built up healthy reserves to cover at least one year's operating costs. Simple contingency planning paid off. When the unexpected happened in a big way in the form of Covid-19, we were confident we would not run out of cash. By August, income was coming in again pretty much as normal. Viewing the picture at year end, balance has been restored and we see financial stability. Our Treasurer, Caroline Edwards, has drawn up the detailed End of Year accounts, and they have been subject to independent inspection. Caroline has produced a Financial Report which analyses and summarises the accounts. Along with all our AGM reports, this is available here at the AGM and will be published online.

3. Website

Perhaps the main contribution of the website this year was to get important news and information out quickly, from the last week in March and throughout lockdown 1. This included key messages

concerning the Slingsby Support Group, other local sources of support, local food deliveries, The Grapes Inn's takeaways, and more, along with occasional photographs to bring some cheer in the darker early days.

The website came out of the winter up-to-date and stable, and the team were able to carry on providing support to the community without encountering any major obstacles.

Between us, we published 208 news and event posts over the course of the 12 months to 31st October. This represents a major increase of 46% compared to the previous 12 months (142 posts). We intensified our efforts as the circumstances demanded it, and managed to find more time to seek out the news.

Our long-standing commitment to update the website at least twice weekly was this year far exceeded, with daily posts often the case.

There has been a lesser focus on the website's static pages this year, but as always, we try to keep them under review and update them as required. We continue to hope that local community group leaders (e.g. the Parish Council, the churches, the sports club, the Local History Group) will take ownership of the information we carry on their behalf.

Facebook, Twitter and email subscriptions continue to deliver news and events to people who prefer these methods.

The underlying technical structure of the website is maintained by our Webmaster, Richard Flint. It has been stable and secure, and there have been no interruptions to website service this year.

From his County Durham base, Richard has made regular visits to the website's engine room, typically implementing security updates and other software upgrades, dealing with plug-in issues and doing other trouble-shooting. He also gets involved in performing other more technical tasks which are beyond the website editors' capabilities. This year he also helped considerably with content posting, especially during March and April when the team was one man down. He deserves our thanks for the continued, loyal support he gives the Slingsby website.

More information of a technical and statistical nature is given in the Webmaster's report, which Richard has written.

4. The Triangle

The difficulties encountered by the team this year were mainly around collection of subs and delivery of The Triangle. Our advertising and distribution manager, Jo Breckon, bore the brunt of these challenges. Uncertainties over the printing and delivery of The Triangle in Spring were resolved quite quickly. Subs were not collected until August, when it was felt safe to do so.

Our co-editors David Thornley and Gill Baker have alternated to produce six full and very interesting issues, despite the lack of events to report on for much of the period.

We are very grateful to the delivery team and to all contributors.

The Triangle editor's report will give more information.

5. The Group

The Group's membership has been stable over the reporting period, a reason to be thankful given the uncertainty and instability of the period.

However, things are now set to change. Dave Wilmore, the website's deputy editor, has recently stepped down in preparation for an imminent house move away from Slingsby. I thank him for all his good work and wish him and his wife all the best in their new home.

6. Outlook

The future of both The Triangle and website seems to be reasonably secure in the shorter term.

The longer-term outlook for the website is less sure at the moment. Part of our success rests upon the size of our team and the strength of our team structure.

My immediate goal as website editor is to find a new deputy to share the load with me. The role will

centre on handling news and events posting. A separate social media editor remains very much a requirement, as that side of our offering merely ticks over. The time I have available will reduce as society returns to normality and other major demands on me as a volunteer return, so I estimate that website content updating, along with communication and coordination will begin to suffer from March, unless a volunteer is identified.

We recognize that any of our team members' situations change, so we still welcome further offers of assistance of whatever kind.

In spite of the strains placed upon our finances over this period, they remain strong, so there will be no need to raise The Triangle subscriptions in the foreseeable future.

To conclude, I wish to thank the committee members and, as always, we thank everyone out there who has helped make the website and Triangle a success in the past year, and we look forward to cooperating with even more residents in the coming year.

Jon Boots
Chairman

24 November 2020