

---

# 2014 Annual General Meeting



**Place** SYDNI Centre, Sydenham, Leamington Spa

**Date** Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014

**Time** 7.30pm

## 1. Attendance

Staff - 6; Board – 8; Volunteers - 10; Visitors – 13

**Staff:** M Smith, S Elvyhart, D Alexander, R Moore, L Ash, L Smith

**Board:** M Begg, D Hunt, G Randall, J Armstrong, C Pollock, G Davies, R Twiney, Mathilde Robert

**Volunteers:** G McGivern, J Webber, K Pattison, R Cleal, B Mattingly, C Bills, E Bills, S Moore, J Colledge, M Noonan

**Visitors:** Cllr J White Brunswick Ward, A Jeffrey Canalside, A Clark WCAVA, Cllr Mrs M-A Grainger Mayor of Warwick, Cllr J Knight Mayor of Leamington, M Partridge, I Wood, L Male, Mr & Mrs Noonan, S Dobson, Cllr J Childers, Cllr Barbara Weedy

### Apologies

N Surrage, Cllr S Syson, R Edwards, J Steer, K Niamo

John Armstrong (JA) welcomed all, particularly the Mayors John Knight and Moira-An Grainger. On behalf of Action 21, he thanked Louise Male for her significant contribution as former Manager of A21. He also thanked Paul Kennedy who left in April, and Sam Elvyhart, who will be leaving in August, for all their hard work.

## 2. Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM were proposed as approved by Mick Partridge, seconded by Louise Male and approved unanimously by the attendees.

## 3. Matters Arising

None

### 4.1 Trustees Report

JA reported that the key areas for development remain as identified by the Board of Trustees strategy group in 2011:

- Greater community awareness and engagement
- More training and skills development
- Greater financial and site security

Specific strategic activities and achievements include the Board agreeing and implementing a long term strategic plan and marketing strategy.

JA then introduced Sam Elvyhart (SE) to give details on volunteering and marketing

### Volunteers

SE gave an overview of the A21 volunteer programme for 2013 -2014 and emphasised that regular volunteers are essential to the successful running of the Re-Useful Centre, projects and events.

The team size has stayed the same over this year with 65-80 regular volunteers at any one time.

There are 25 active volunteer roles including the new roles of PAT Assistant, PR Assistant, Social Media Assistant, Blog Writer and Newsletter Writer

## Action 21 Annual General Meeting 2014

A screen of photos of many of the volunteers was shown and a big thank you given to all.

An analysis of the current volunteers shows that they are:

- Aged 14 – 70 and from many walks of life
- Have a variety of motivations including occupying spare time; involvement in the local community; boosting their CV/employment prospects; making new friends and having social contact.
- The most common life situations are retired; unemployed and seeking work; unable to work due to health problems or disability; employed and volunteering to help change career.

Between them, the volunteers have clocked up more than 12,500 hours in 2013-2014. This is 200 fewer hours than last year. There had been a drop of 1,300 hours in the bike workshop reflecting the drop-off in volunteers prior to recruiting a new Bike Shop Manager. The shop has shown an increase of 760 hours compared to 2012-2013, and nearly 2,500 compared to 2011-2012.

A pie chart of volunteer roles showed that there were 44 more individual roles and 24 more volunteers compared with last year. 50+ new volunteers had been recruited. Reasons for leaving included finding employment; other commitments; finishing a fixed term placement; ill health and moving away.

In summary, SE said that as a charity completely dependent on volunteers, this years figures showed:

- More active volunteers than last year
- A steady stream of enquiries from individuals and link organisations
- That their time at A21 had helped people to gain employment and take positive steps forward in their lives

### **Marketing**

As SE is also responsible for marketing, she then went on to report on the marketing and promotion activities for the year. This has been the first year A21 had a budget for marketing.

- The Re-Use Centre has continued to expand awareness and encourage donations and purchases
- There has been local advertising in Leamington Post Office, other local POs and newsagents and Warwick Uni.
- Peace Festival brochure, posters and fliers
- Footfall at the RUC has increased

Volunteer recruitment is healthy and has taken place through the A21 website, Uni volunteer fairs and websites such as Do-It. There have been visits from Job Centre Advisors and link working with organisations including Salvation Army, WCAVA and the Job Centre. Newsletters. Posters, Shop Displays and Social Media have all been used for recruitment, projects and events

### **Communications and the Website**

From February to August the website was down for restructuring after it had been hacked, so development of Social Media became a key focus:

- Creation of the Communications Team included article, blog and press release writers, a Facebook volunteer, two Twitter volunteers, a designer, a webmaster, events website uploaders, volunteers to distribute fliers and posters, and photographers.
- Social Media monitoring: Facebook 470 + likes, Twitter 800+ followers, blog – 1300+ views
- Press releases have featured in the local press and radio
- Mailchimp e-newsletter replaced Transaction and is sent to A21's 1000+ contacts.
- Volunteer Voice, for regular active volunteers, provides a light hearted look at volunteering at A21.
- The new website was launched in August 2013. It has been rewritten and restructured to give a clearer portrayal of A21 and the Re-Useful Centre

## Action 21 Annual General Meeting 2014

- There are volunteer profiles across the site and new features include integrated blog; events calendar, access to A21 Ebay and Amazon sites

In summary, SE said that Marketing and Communications activities had

- Contributed to the footfall in RUC
- Maintained an active and regular presence through various channels
- Launched a successful new website with monthly visitor numbers equal to the pre-hack website and rising

SE then introduce Martin Smith(MS) to talk about the Re-Useful Centre

### **Re-Useful Centre**

MS commented on the significance of promotion and other 'back room' work. He is now the General Manager but was reporting on the Re-Use Centre shop 2013-2014 from his previous role as Shop Manager

The RUC has succeeded in keeping 103.5 tonnes out of landfill (the equivalent of 15 double-decker buses in weight) including:

- 513 bikes saved from the scrap heap
- 856 electrical items kept from landfill
- 23,347 furniture and bric-a-brac items sold

All figures are up on last year due to a steady increase in donations – approximately £2,500 worth of goods comes in every week.

### **New Staff**

New staff include David Alexander, who will talk about the bike workshop below, and Shop Managers Ben Moore and Lorraine Ash. They have been focusing on clearing out the premises in preparation for the move. This includes breaking down, dismantling and where possible selling component parts of items to ensure that as little as possible is sent to landfill.

### **On line Sales**

RUC has continued to develop online sales through Amazon and eBay. Four new eBay volunteers have been recruited and there has been a turnover of £4,500 in online sales - a significant increase of more than £2,200 on the previous year.

### **Recycling**

- In house metal separation has lead to an extra one and a half tonnes of metals being recycled this year providing another £400 of income for metal sales and bringing the total to £1,000.
- Textiles and book recycling has saved 10 tonnes from landfill and contributed £3,000 income.
- Admin. volunteers keep detailed records of the quantity of various materials saved from landfill.

### **Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)**

- PAT enable top quality electrical items to be sold, including flat screen TVs, DVD hard drive recorders and hi-fi systems
- Retro and vintage items such as valve radios, stereo music systems, standard lamps and old fashioned telephones are also sold
- The work is done by a team of 10 volunteers and a new PAT assistant role helps keep the area tidy while training

### **Supporting other charities**

- Unwanted spectacles are given to Oxfam for Africa
- Old tools and hand sewing machines go to Self Reliance, also to be sent to Africa
- Toys were sold at very low prices to support Operation Christmas Child's Shoebox Appeal
- Blankets and Quilts are given to pet rescue charities and animal shelters

## Action 21 Annual General Meeting 2014

### **MP Visit**

In April 2013 Owen Paterson ( then Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural and Rural Affairs) visited along with Chris White MP and Sarah Windrum, County Council candidate for Leamington Willes Ward. They all showed great interest and talked to Volunteers, particularly in the bike and electrical areas.

MS gave a 'massive thank you' to all the volunteers for making all of the above possible. He also mentioned that the Dobson Lane Allotment Project, previously supported by A21, is being handed over to be run by the Allotment Holders.

He then introduced David Alexander (DA) to talk about the Bike Workshop

### **Bike workshop**

#### **Volunteers**

DA started by saying that since his appointment in November 2013, A21 has recruited and retained a high number of volunteer bike mechanics. The in-house training carried out by DA and experienced volunteers has been invaluable in introducing new volunteers to the skills required in the workshop, especially for those with no previous experience. One volunteer has since gained employment in a bike shop due to the skills and experience gained at A21 as prior to this role, he knew nothing about bikes.

#### **Increased sales**

Due to the increase in numbers and stability of bike volunteers, A21 has been able to supply a wide range of reconditioned bikes to the shop on a constant basis. Sales are healthy and continue to rise. DA commented that an estimated quarter of individuals in the UK were inspired to take up cycling due to the 'Olympic Effect' of 2012 leading to increased sales.

#### **Future Vision for the Bike Workshop**

DA would like to develop a bike service department that can promote sustainability and affordability for customers by providing a service and repair option. This would reduce the amount of bikes going into landfill. DA hopes to have a more efficient space to carry out these plans in new premises.

#### **Dr Bike**

This volunteer powered service offers free bike checks and low cost repairs to the public. Bikes bought to Dr Bike are often in very poor condition. Dr Bike attends local venues such as the Peace Festival and local schools offering a good community service and generating awareness of A21. DA would like to increase this service and have it completely lead by volunteers.

### **Community Ranger**

Laura Smith (LS) spoke about her work at Jephson Gardens. The role includes being a security presence, reporting maintenance issues, accommodating school groups, organising events, making people feel welcome, providing interpretation and undertaking customer satisfaction surveys. There have been 21 ranger – organise events over the last financial year, including the newly introduced Jephson Jungle Club which provides holiday activities for children. Monitoring last year showed that:

- 2700 people attended events
- 188 children visited from 9 schools
- Memorial mapping project started
- The Ranger office moved to the South Lodge
- Successful work with Warwickshire Police and CCTV reduced anti-social behaviour

For the coming year LA plans :

- 25 ranger –organised activities by December
- To update 12 school worksheets (12 school visits have taken place so far this year)
- New local history modules to be introduced
- An improvement of interpretation in the park with an upgrade of the signage and interpretation boards

## Action 21 Annual General Meeting 2014

- Introduction of the Summer History Trail – a self guided trail running through the summer holidays
- Installation of the WW1 sculpture – in collaboration with the Leamington History Group, to be completed by Remembrance Day in November.

### 4.2 Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014

Geoff Randal (GR) Honorary Treasurer referred attendants to the Report and Financial Statements provided, with details on pages 7 to 12.

- The Surplus of £21k generated in 2013/14 was mostly due to re-Useful Centre sales
- This was a significant improvement on the £6k deficit of 2012/13
- The grant for the Rangers contract ends in March 2015 when Laura will become a direct employee of WDC
- Expenditure has been reduced by about £2k
- With the surplus from 2013/14, A21 has increased its general reserves to £84k
- This will help support the need to transfer the Re- Useful Centre to a new location, as there will be costs involved in setting up new premises and a potential short term reduction in income.
- Sales were up for every month compared to 2012-2013

### 4.3 Questions from the Audience

There were no questions from the audience .

### 4.4 Adoption of the Trustees Report and Financial Statements

For the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 as proposed by M Partridge and seconded by R Twiney

## 5 Appointment of Independent Examiner

A proposal to Re-appoint the current Independent Examiners was put by G Randall and seconded by M Begg

### Issues

John Armstrong then returned to outline the current issues facing A21:

- Due to planned re-development, A21 need to vacate the Ramsay Road premises by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014
- The Property search group have looked at a number of sites. It is a difficult time to find property as the market is buoyant and the search continues
- Closure may be considered, but A21 is a vital part of the local community
- It will be challenging to re-locate the Re-Useful Centre but work is being done to reduce the stock
- Meanwhile A21 continues it's good work on all active projects

## 6 Election of Trustees

Margaret Begg and Gareth Davies stood down by rotation and were willing to stand for re-election. This was proposed by Louise Male and seconded by Roger Twiney.

Ruth Wallsgrove has stood down as a Trustee

Mathilde Roberts is to be elected as a new Trustee

## 7 AOB

- The Director of Community Energy Warwickshire thanked Dave for the loan of a bike stand during the Peace Festival
- Gareth Davies thanked the Ramsey Road landlord for supplying the premises rent free, which has been a great support to A21 over the past 5 years

## Action 21 Annual General Meeting 2014

- Is A21 looking for smaller premises if larger ones can't be found? One of the possibilities could be a railway arch, but the preference would be for one building to house both the shop and warehouse.
- A member of the WDC asked if A21 was getting help from the Councils. Neither WDC or WCC have suitable buildings available at present.

### **8 Date of Next AGM**

Will be announced in advance of the meeting date.