

Digswell Lake Society

AGM Minutes of Friday 5th September 2025

Started 19.30 @ Digswell Village Hall, Harmer Green Lane

Attended by 21 members

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from 14 members.

2. 2024 AGM & EGM minutes were approved

Minutes, agenda, accounts summary and all related documents for AGM were distributed to membership and were available online via the DLS web site (AGM tab).

3. Matters arising from 2024 EGM

Remote attendees' question was raised – no practical solution has yet been identified but hybrid meeting options will continue to be reviewed.

4. To receive the formal Directors' Report and Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2025

Accounts were attached to AGM Notice and a full presentation was given under item 7. Approval is not required for the accounts but are presented to Members.

5. Chairman's Report

A review of membership from marketing @ Welwyn festival indicated a more elderly membership. An increase in social media presence may help lower the age profile and input from members was sought. During Covid, membership increased as the area provided an opportunity for the Lake to be used as a community asset, by dog walkers and as a nature reserve. An open question was asked of membership regarding how they saw the priorities?

Ongoing tree maintenance works are required, mainly to Ash but also other species. HMWT's Heidi Mansell has visited the site a couple of times with the aim of identifying and improving the Mimram valley habitat, specifically the river. We have some overshadowed sections of river and Himalayan balsam, with both work parties and Maydencroft working on them with funding from Affinity Water. Japanese knotweed will be treated in the next few weeks.

Dogwood which is not native on the river and Lake margins has been cut back with the hope that native species will recolonise.

Lake water quality and silt removal are still being investigated. A question was raised by a Member present about trapping American Crayfish as a non-native. Unfortunately, there are no plans and native White-clawed crayfish have not been observed locally.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

Membership remained broadly constant (currently 371), with new members joining via Welwyn Festival and online. New members are encouraged both for the Society in general and also to stand on the committee.

Enquiries are made of those that have not renewed their membership either intentionally or by omission. There has been electronic communication to all database members where valid email addresses are held.

Membership fees are to stay at £10 per family for the time being.

A proposal was made to use social media and possibly hold an open day to increase membership.

Members asked about the possibility of outdoor "wild" swimming possibilities to increase membership appeal. This has always been ruled out based on the principles of the area being a nature reserve for the benefit of wildlife and due to silt and other health & safety issues associated with such an activity.

Fishing had been observed at the weir despite the presence of no fishing signs. Increased fish populations have been observed in the river.

Considerations to encourage membership / reasons to join.

- Dragonfly visits
- Cost of membership to be displayed on main gate

Consider doubling membership fee while at the same time promoting Charity status.

7. Treasurer's Report

A summary of the accounts was presented by David White. Overall, the Society was in a very healthy financial position.

No interest was received on the Barclays instant access account. Income = Membership subscriptions, donations & Interest. Interest rates on term deposits were reviewed at maturity and money moved as appropriate.

New bench seating and tree surgery were major expenses.

8. Election of up to seven Directors

No nominations had been received from the membership so Paul Valente & Simon Stebbings (who retire in rotation) were the only nominations. They were both re-elected on a show of hands, proposed by Shirley Dobrin & Lindsay Bruce-Smith & Lindsay Bruce-Smith & Leighton Colgrave respectively. There are still 5 vacancies on the board

9. Appointment of Reporting accounting

It was agreed on a show of hands to reappoint the existing reporting accountant (Steve Vine).

10. Questions suggestions & any other business

Question from the floor;

- Gary Dobrin asked if the island path could be moved away from the river or a boardwalk built due to high water levels.

Suggestions to encourage membership

- New entrance sign was proposed
- DLS Road direction sign was suggested
- Consider electronic newsletter to schools / parents
- Option to hold an Open Day
- Enhance DLS through Digswell Residents Association.
- Door to door leaflet drops
- Estate Agents
- Welwyn Horth Station Notice board
- Post a wildlife inventory; Birds, plants, bats, dragonfly's, water voles etc. It was noted that Wildlife was generally not reported on at AGM Should it be?
- It is planned that 4 Water Vole toilets be installed in the coming months to identify their presence.

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 20.50