

Saving Saints Rescue UK
Annual General Meeting on 8 August 2021
Minutes

Present: Rachel Wesley (RW) – Chair/Secretary
Marina Papas (MP)
Helen McGuirl (HG)
Chantelle Jago (CJ)
Marina Parha (MP)
Simon Grundy (SG) – Treasurer
Tracey Turnbull (TT)
Part attendance – Paul Bibby (PB)

1. Agenda

- Apologies
- Update on actions from AGM held on 16 August 2020
- Resignations and election of Trustees
- Financial return
- Summary of activities over the last 12 months
- Feedback from users of the service over the last 12 months
- Priorities and challenges for the coming year

RW welcomed everyone to the 6th formal AGM of the group.

2. Apologies

Abigail Bomford was unable to attend.

3. Update on actions from AGM held on 16 August 2020

All actions from the previous AGM had been completed apart from launching an online training programme which would be considered in the next 12 months.

4. Changes to Trustees as per Constitution

Tracey Turnbull was proposed as a Trustee by Rachel Wesley, seconded by Marina Parha. Tracey has worked alongside us over the last 12 months with our dogs from Greece, and advice re our dogs with special needs.

Trustees are now as follows for the next year as per the Constitution:

Chair/Secretary – Rachel Wesley

Treasurer – Simon Grundy

Rescue/Adoption/Fundraising Co-ordinators – Marina Papas, Rachel Wesley, Tracey Turnbull

Merchandising/Media/Fundraising – Abigail Bomford and Chantelle Jargo

General advisory/behavioural – Helen McGuirl

We also have voluntary support from Paul Bibby who has offered to work on our social media presence ie Instagram and the development of a YouTube channel.

5. Financial update

The Treasurer had provided each member with a copy of the Annual Statement of Accounts from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This showed an increase in reserves by £12,800. The majority of expenditure for 2020 to 2021 continued to be transport, kennel costs (due to partnership with Marsh Lea kennels) and vet costs. Whilst adoptions had increased, transport and vet costs had substantially risen. The grant received from ADCH had been utilised as per the grant rules on kennel costs to supplement fosters and difficulties due to Covid-19. An application to HMRC for last year's gift aid would be made in the next month.

The Treasurer confirmed that he was satisfied with the level of financial controls in place however expressed concern about the sustainability of activities at this level in 2021/2022. It was agreed that a review of strategy was required.

6. Summary of activities over the last 12 months

RW provided data relating to the following measureable activities in the last 12 months:

Adoptions – 143 (for both SS and as RBU for other charities)

Dogs in long term foster – 1 (Solo at Marsh Lea kennels)

Intensive behavioural intervention – 3 (Solo, Bertie and Goldie). HG provided an update on the work undertaken with 3 kill shelter dogs. Both Bertie and

Goldie have now been adopted and thanks was expressed to Helen along with Jo and Dave at Marsh Lea kennels. Solo remains at the kennels however is making excellent progress and is now learning to be a multi-handler dog.

Euthanasia – 0

The number of active fosters is currently 5 with no fosters available for emergencies.

Home checks conducted (including for other rescuers) – over 200, 5 failed (for SS). Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the majority of homechecks have been conducted online over the last year. However national groups are now restarting face to face checks from outside prospective adopters' homes.

Fundraising and raising awareness days – 0 due to Covid-19 restrictions. Plan to request fundraising day at Chill Factore again pre Christmas and to review restrictions to reconsider street fundraisers.

Media presence – appearance in Big Dog Britain, Channel 4 programme and article in The Sun newspaper.

Pat/companion dog sessions (in last 12 months) – 0 due to Covid-19.

Ebay activity – remained low with a profit of £31. This will remain open until our website shop becomes fully operational. Most popular items continued to be dog bibs and personalised cards.

Website shop – awaiting an update from AB re: dog box sales and progress with online shop which had a range of items now available including leather dog collars, dog beds and dog boxes.

6. Use of media / website / Facebook / Twitter / Instagram / YouTube

Media activity – PB explored the option of more targeted media on Instagram. Twitter and Instagram accounts were now being updated regularly. PB also outlined the potential for YouTube channel to generate income.

Website – updates remained slow due to lack of volunteer support at times. AB to provide an update on progress. Dogs remained out of date on the website with RW ensuring that Facebook remained up to date.

7. Merchandising

AB to provide an update after the meeting re: progress and the number of dog boxes sold last year and current stock. HG agreed to provide handmade dog biscuits for the Christmas stockings.

Discussion around campaigns and annual activity calendar drafted by RW previously. Christmas products and Remembrance Day campaign to be launched in October. Calendar support for 2022 offered again by Sonia Plevin.

We are again receiving support from Nicola-Jayne King to help personalise products such as dog bibs, bandanas. Personalised dog blankets were also an option for Christmas.

8. Feedback from users of the service in the last 12 months

Positive feedback has been received from adopters in the last year and also from our rescue partners. We have had difficulties with 3 fosters over the last 12 months due to lack of preparedness and lack of patience to integrating a rescue dog into UK life.

Discussion centred around how to tighten up on foster/adoption checks including reviewing the type of questions asked including specific focus on behavioural questions. HG to provide input on this. Focus on areas such as how to recognise distress in a dog, how to integrate a new dog into an existing pack etc.

9. Training needs /use of YouTube as training platform

Agreement that training would be undertaken by Trustees/Marsh Lea kennel staff on handling reactive dogs. HG will lead this and deliver before the end of October 2021.

RW/PB have discussed holding a series of online video interviews with fosters and adopters about learnings on their experiences of rescue. 9 adopters/fosters have come forward to be interviewed. These will be launched on YouTube platform. A section called 'So you think you want a St Bernard' will also be developed. It was felt important that behavioural videos were added covering areas

10. Future strategy and priorities for the forthcoming year

Fundraising for the 3 Chinese meat trade St Bernards (Amari, Kiaria and Fergus) was a priority. SJ was undertaking a sponsored walk up Mount Snowdon on 4 September and priority is being given to the promotion and fundraising of this event. Potential for Welsh TV channel coverage to be followed up. Current donations for the Saints is just over £2,000 and around £9,000 was required.

In view of the difficulties with fundraising, MP asked if the group could consider trying to attract the support of a TV personality/influencer. TT is to take this forward.

DEFRA guidance on importing non-UK dogs and documentation was being tightened up following confusion since Brexit. Difficulties with importing dogs from Greece remained due to problems with Greek vets issuing health certificates. TT and MP were progressing this with Greek rescuers.

Further UK legislation is proposed re: tail docking, ear cropping and changing the age of puppies entering the UK to >6 months. In addition there are ongoing changes re dogs entering the UK with a number of blood borne diseases eg leishmaniasis, heartworm, Lyme disease, Ehrlichia. We have reiterated to all rescuers that any dog over 6 months old is required to have a 4Dx test. RW had provided a detailed response to ADCH consultation in December 2020 concerning these proposals and the negative impact on rescue dogs. Due to difficulties with the availability of vets currently and those who are pro-rescue, it was important that consideration was given to bringing in dogs in a maintenance phase of disease to ensure a positive vet response. We have also received a query re testing for canine brucellosis and our policy on this due to concerns in the UK dog population due to infection from Romanian rescue dogs.

Scottish rescue work – due to changes in legislation in Scotland it will be necessary for us to have a registered base in Scotland if you wish to adopt more than 5 dogs from September 2021. RW to progress this.

SWoT analysis – Agreement to undertake a SWoT analysis for the charity prior to the end of 2021.

11. Any Other Business

MP requested that a specific focus was given to dogs from the Amyntaio pound in Greece. It was agreed that a post requesting donations for the dogs in need would be placed on Facebook would be written along with photos.

12. Date of next AGM

Agreed for August 2022 – date TBC. To be held at Helen's new centre in Darlington.