



**Minutes of the 106th Annual General Meeting of Kent County Scout Council
held on Saturday, 28th September 2024
at Lower Grange Farm**

Present: County President Bill Cockcroft DL, County Lead Volunteer Nirav Patel, County Chairman Desmond Harris, County Treasurer Jamie Lucas, County Secretary Tony Hogben and members as recorded.

1. Introduction and welcome

The County President, Bill Cockcroft DL welcomed everyone.

The County Chair followed by saying

"I'd just like to add my welcome to Bill's. The year 2023 to 2024, which you will see a review of shortly, saw many excellent events for Scouts in Kent. The Explorers had the Big Weekend, there were the ever-popular Beaver and Cubs Days, the growing Squirrel section enjoyed their second 'Go Nuts' event and, of course, we had young people at the World Scout Jamboree in Korea.

There was a positive response to the Grow 50 campaign last autumn and the number of Scouts went up across the county by more than a thousand. Financially we ended the year in a good position and I'd like to thank our treasurer and trustees for keeping our governance in order.

The year ended in a way none of us could have foreseen and I'd just like to take a moment to give my heartfelt thanks to all who willingly stepped forward to help when, at the end of February, we lost our County Lead Volunteer, Dean Harding.

Specifically, I'd like to thank Neil Gearing for taking on the role of Acting County Lead Volunteer for the last 7 months. Neil's calmness and composure were exactly what was needed and who knew he would be so good at delegating?! I must also thank the leadership team of Craig, Nirav and Mel, who all immediately took on extra responsibilities. Thanks also go to our staff, both in the county office and the team at Lower Grange Farm; thank you for your hard work and support over the last 12 months.

I must also thank those involved with Dean's send off, including the district representatives who formed the guard of honour at the crematorium, and everyone involved with arranging the celebration of Dean's life at Lower Grange Farm.

Finally, I must thank all our volunteers whose unwavering dedication makes it possible for Kent Scouts to deliver Skills for Life. Thank you".

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and had been recorded.

3. Governance

- i) The minutes of the AGM held on 7th October 2023 had been reviewed by the trustee board at their meeting on 22nd November 2023 and they were made available via the County website prior to the meeting.

**The Chair proposed that they were accepted as an accurate record.
Seconded by Craig Worcester.**

**KCSC members approved.
The Chair signed the minutes.**

- ii) The Chair invited members to approve the outgoing trustee boards' proposal that in line with the recommendation of Scout Headquarters the constitution as per chapter 5.6 of Policy, Organisation & Rules is adopted.

**Seconded by Michelle Kagan
KCSC members approved.**

- iii) Members were reminded of the charity's financial year being 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024
iv) The County Lead Volunteer proposed that the following may be co-opted to the County Scout Council.

The County Commissioners of the three Guide Counties within the county of Kent.
The Senior Officer of both Kent and Medway Council Youth Services.

**Seconded by Nigel Rainey.
KCSC members approved.**

- v) The Chair invited members to approve the outgoing trustee boards' proposal that there should be a maximum of 12 people appointed to the board.

**Seconded by Pam Mead.
KCSC members approved.**

- vi) The Chair invited members to approve the proposal of the outgoing trustee board that the quorum for KSCS meetings should be set at a minimum of 50 members.

**Seconded by Steve Jones.
KCSC members approved.**

4. Review of the previous year

- i) The Acting County Lead Volunteer, Neil Gearing presented a review of Kent Scouts.

*"The year ending 31st March 2024 was not my year, it was Dean's year, and much of what we are about to be reminded of, had Dean's influence.
The year started, as always, with great anticipation & promise for the huge array of County events, National events, and of course the World Scout Jamboree. Sadly, the year ended tragically with Dean's sudden passing.
When I was asked to hold the fort, the idea of standing-in for Dean was not as daunting as you may think, and that was due to Dean, because ...
He had already built teams, teams to deliver youth events and activities; teams to support our adult volunteers; teams to recruit; teams to manage and operate Lower Grange Farm, the County office team, and a team to Lead the County.
Dean will forever hold the distinction of being Kent's LAST County Commissioner, and it's FIRST County Lead Volunteer.
The last 6 months has had its interesting moments as we got to grips with filling the massive hole Dean left, keep Kent Scouts both active & motivated, and getting our minds around Transformation and Sub-Teams.
There were also many opportunities to enjoy the fun element of Scouting, in particular lots of 'openings' – such as opening scout halls, opening boat houses, opening Squirrel Dreys & Cub Packs and of course opening our own water facility here, which we know as the POND.
I will take this opportunity to thank Dean's Team of Amy, Craig, Des, Melvin & Nirav for all their help and support. I could not have done this without you.*

Both James Palin, our Regional Lead Volunteer, and our brilliant team here in the County office, also deserve my sincere thanks.

So, without further ado, let's sit back and enjoy the review of last year.

Video shown

Wow, what a year. Give yourselves a round of applause.

And now we come to, what for me is the most exciting point of this AGM, when I officially hand-over the responsibility of Kent Scouts to our newly appointed County Lead Volunteer – NIRAV PATEL.

I wish him every success in this role, he has the full support of Dean's Team. We HQ announced Nirav was the chosen one, we knew this was right because this was part of Dean's succession planning".

The Regional Lead Volunteer, James Pallin invited the new County Lead Volunteer to renew his Promise.

The County Lead Volunteer, Nirav Patel addressed the meeting

"I'm going to start by talking about something that I believe holds a special place in all of our hearts, and that's the memories we create through Scouts. Whether it's a Squirrel Scout gaining their first ever badge, or Explorer Scouts completing a self-led expedition, it's the memories we create that shape who we are.

When I think about Scouts, my mind immediately fills with images of adventure, fun and excitement. Scouts is about the experiences we share with each other. The first time you pitch a tent, you're not just learning a skill, you're creating a memory. When you hike through the woods, or set off on a weekend camp, you're writing a story that will stay with you forever.

As Scouts, we are constantly encouraged to push our boundaries, to step outside our comfort zones, and to embrace the unknown. In doing so, we collect memories that go beyond just stories, memories that teach us skills. Scouts is a treasure trove of memories, and the time that our volunteers put into Scouts, provides young people with memories that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Someone I have many memories of is our former County Lead Volunteer, Dean Harding, who made an incredible contribution to Scouts. We all knew Dean for his passion and enthusiasm, and kindness to inspire us all. Dean was not only a fellow Scouter, but also a close friend that I could always turn to for advice and guidance, not just about Scouting, but also about my professional life too. Dean took a genuine interest in supporting me, and he was also a good laugh too. Dean's legacy will continue, and I will ensure that young people up and down the County, continue to have a Scouting adventure, gaining skills that will serve them a lifetime.

Neil Gearing has been our Acting County Lead Volunteer over the past 6 months, and I would like to say a huge thank you to Neil for everything he has done to support the County. Neil stepped up to the role at very short notice and has ensured that processes and teams have continued to operate effectively. Neil does a tremendous job in supporting Kent Scouts and I am delighted that Neil will be supporting me closely moving forward.

On behalf of Kent Scouts, I would like to present Neil with a gift for all his hard work, leadership and dedication. Neil, if you would like to come forward, we have got you a 3-course dinner for 2 at the Ritz in London.

Kent Scouts is one of the largest Scout counties in the UK, covering 22 Districts, almost 17,000 young people and a team of around 6,000 adult volunteers, that's over 30,000 volunteer hours each year based on just 2 hours a week!

As we move forward, there are a number of priorities that we need to be considering. The first is transformation of our volunteer experience. There's been a lot of effort gone into preparing for transformation, so thank you all for your continued support in this.

Transformation is going to ensure that adult volunteers are better supported and that together we're proud to help young people step up, speak up, dream big and gain the skills they need for life. We're going to do this through a new warmer welcome for volunteers, more engaging learning, and new teams and roles. All of this will be underpinned by new easy-to-use digital tools, but transformation is not just about process changes, it's also about changing our volunteering culture. A shared understanding for what we do and say as volunteers in Scouts, supporting each other, following our values and being at our best, while acting as role models for young people.

Safety is also a key priority, alongside safeguarding, it is a golden thread throughout Scouts. It is important that we all remain safe when delivering programmes for young people. UK Headquarters are providing more support with safety, and there will be changes to processes and procedures in due course. Over the past year, we grew by 1,000 new young people and continue to have a team to support with Growth across the County. We also have dedicated Growth support with IMD 1-3 areas and under-represented communities. Growth will continue to be a priority for us, and we will continue to provide funding for new sections with start-up grants.

Programme is at the heart of what we do, and our County Programme Team will continue to run County events for our young people, with subsidised events taking place here at Lower Grange Farm. I'm also delighted that we will soon be able to provide external recognition for our Young Leaders through a nationally recognised qualification, more to follow in due course!

In order to achieve our plan, I am restructuring our County Team to align with transformation. In doing so, I am forming a County Senior Leadership Team, namely SLT that will form part of the wider County Leadership Team to support me with the day-to-day oversight of the County.

I am delighted to share that Mel Wilson has agreed to carry on leading our Programme Team as the County Programme Team Leader. Mel's team will oversee and support the delivery of quality programmes for young people. This includes promoting and supporting Top Awards and delivering County wide activities and events for young people. Mel's team will include a number of Sub-Teams, a 4-14 Sub-Team, a 14-24 Sub-Team, a Visits Abroad Sub-Team, a Top Awards Sub-Team, an Adventurous Activities Sub-Team, a Nights Away Sub-Team, a Jamborees Sub-Team, the Kent International Jamboree Sub-Team and a Community Impact Sub-Team. It's a big team!

I have also appointed Neil Gearing to lead our Support Team as the County Support Team Leader. Neil's team will give tools and resources to help Scouts run smoothly in the County. Neil's team will also include a number of Sub-Teams, an EDI Sub-Team, a Media, Communications & Data Sub-Team, a Fundraising Sub-Team and the Lower Grange Farm Sub-Team.

The third team as part of our wider County Team is the Volunteering Development Team. I am pleased to share that Craig Ward has agreed to lead this team as the County Volunteering Development Team Leader. Craig's team will make sure that all volunteers in the County have a fantastic volunteering experience and making it easy for people to join and learn new skills. Our previous DC Support Team, will now be rebranded as the District Mentors Sub-Team, which Craig will lead to ensure District Lead Volunteers continue to be supported effectively. Craig's Volunteering Development Team will also include a Learning Sub-Team and an Awards & Recognition Sub-Team. Jane Lambert, our Lead Growth & Development Officer now support Craig as a Volunteering Development Officer, supporting the tasks of the Volunteering Development Team.

In addition to Mel, Neil and Craig being part of our newly formed County Senior Leadership Team, Amy Childs, our County Youth Lead and Des Harris, our soon to be re-appointed County Chair will also form part of the County Senior Leadership Team.

I've already talked about transformation this afternoon, and we all know that transformation is on the horizon, with the expected launch of our new digital tools later this year. I am pleased to share that Craig Worcester has agreed to take on the role of County Transformation Lead, to continue the work as we prepare for go-live of the new digital tools, along with supporting the wider Skills For Life strategy.

Lower Grange Farm, our activity centre is continually growing and welcomes thousands of young people each year. I am delighted that Des Harris has agreed to take on the role as Lower Grange Farm Sub-Team Leader to look after the day-to-day operation of the activity centre, supported by a wider team.

More appointments will be announced in due course. I am determined that together, we will continue to ensure young people gain skills for life, providing them with a foundation that will last a lifetime. This is our plan to engage, inspire and grow. We need to ensure that we continue to develop inclusive growth, as well as allowing young people to continue to shape Kent Scouts, having a greater impact in our communities. Thank you all for your continued support!"

- ii) The County Treasurer, Jamie Lucas presented the Annual Report & Accounts for the year 2023-24.

"The financial year 2023-2024 showed a total income of £1.98m compared to £1.53m in 2022/23. Much of that increase of income can be attributed to the sale of the land at Chalk as well as increases in income from Lower Grange Farm and other large-scale events that took place throughout the year such as the World Scout Jamboree in South Korea.

Lower Grange Farm has maintained a great growth in business as reflected in its income which, for the financial year 2023-24 was £439k. A large chunk of that income has come from school residential which have grown exponentially in number over the last couple of years and now represent the most important aspect of business at LGF. The staff worked incredibly hard to offer an exciting and enticing programme for young people and also ensuring diversity of income through promoting and marketing activities and events other. Other activities still remain incredibly important to the continuing growth and success of LGF such as climbing, archery and weddings.

Kent Scouts was boosted at the beginning of the financial year by the sale of the land at Chalk which was £475k. This money, along with other money, was put into a high interest account to enable Kent Scouts to take advantage of the good interest rates during the financial year and, ultimately, to benefit the young people at the heart of scouting.

There were a number of different events during 2023/24 such as the World Scout Jamboree. From 1st to 12th August 2023 the 25th World Scout Jamboree took place in South Korea with a sizeable contingent from Kent Scouts attending. The event suffered a number of serious issues due to flooding, heatwave and poor preparation leading to health issues amongst attendees. Furthermore, due to Typhoon Khanum, the participants were evacuated from the site and a program of visits to cultural and historical sites, as well as other activities, was improvised for them.

Overall, it was a great year for both Kent Scouts and LGF. However, I must make mention of the untimely passing of Dean. His impact and legacy within Kent Scouts, and scouting as a whole, cannot be measured and his vision and great leadership are direct causes and reasons for the success of LGF and Kent Scouts that I have discussed especially over the past few years and the challenges that all faced. Kent Scouts will continue to build on this and cement his legacy for years to come".

The Chair invited questions from members, there were none.

5. Making appointments

- i) The County Lead Volunteer invited members to approve the recommendation of the trustee board for the appointment of **Des Harris** as County Chair for a period of 3 years.

KCSC members approved.

- ii) The County Chair invited members to approve the recommendation of the trustee board for the appointment of Jamie Lucas as County Treasurer for a period of 3 years.
KCSC members approved.
- iii) The County Chair invited members to approve the recommendation of the trustee board for the appointment of Alex Bates, Neil Gearing, Tony Hogben, Jim Martin, Daniel Everest, Janice Grant, Cath Kirkpatrick and Ken Ridgway as trustees for a period of 1 year.
KCSC members approved.
- iv) The County Chair invited members to approve the appointment of Bill Cockcroft as President, Peter Barnes and Kelvin Holford as Vice Presidents for a period of 1 year.
KCSC members approved.
- v) The County Treasurer proposed that Robson Laidler are again appointed as auditors.
Seconded by David Wraight.
KCSC members approved.
- vi) The County Chair asked members to consider the nominations of Des Harris and Neil Gearing as representatives of KCSC to represent the County on the Council of the Scout Association.
Proposed by Daniel Everest.
Seconded by Martin Thompson.
KCSC members approved.
- vii) The County Chair asked members to consider the nomination of Amy Childs as a representative of KCSC to represent the County on the Council of the Scout Association.
Proposed by Janice Grant.
Seconded by Linda Waring.
KCSC members approved.

The Chair closed the formal part of the meeting, thanked everyone for attending and outlined the arrangements that followed.

6. Adult Awards

The following National Awards were presented by Neil Gearing

Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award – Elizabeth Wright, Ellie Wilson, Zack Conner and Ellie Curtis

King's Scout Award – Zack Conner and Ellie Curtis

Chief Scout's Length of Service Awards

30 Years – Debby Pearce (4-14 Sub Team), Ron Wells (Warden LGF) and Stuart Barron (MCD Sub Team)

20 Years – Janice Grant (Maidstone West & County Trustee)

Award for Merit – Adele Govett (Weald & County Inclusion Team)

7. Gone Home

There was a short tribute recognising those that had sadly died during the year.

Mick Mills, Ken Dulson, Brian Fridd, John Hunt, Peter Taylor, Adrian Bond, Ed Chessman, Bryan Welbourn, Bryan Parlett, Iris Wynne, Dean Harding, Nigel Gillett, Helen Harlow, John Hamilton, Ray Horton, Ken Levy, Peter Bryne, Terry Annable, Christopher Appleby.

8. **The Regional Lead Volunteer**, James Palin addressed the meeting.

9. The Chair reminded everyone that the County Awards Presentation would follow the refreshments.

COUNTY AWARDS

Community Project of the Year: 5th Sheppey Scout Group
Highly commended: Staplehurst Squirrels Community Fridge

Young Leader of the Year Award: Megan Jones – 5th Northfleet Scout Group
Highly commended: Ed Curson – 5th Sittingbourne Scout Group

Adult Leader or Supporter of the Year: Megan Collins (38/40th Strood Sea Scouts)
Highly commended: Kate Shuttleworth (Williams Warriors ESU, Malling), Robi O'Neill (Leeds & Kingswood) and Steph Manktelow (5th Sittingbourne)

Media Award: Beckie Ingelbrecht (11th Folkestone Group)
Highly commended: Rosie Larchet (Malling Scouts)

Trustee of the Year: Wendy O'Kill (Maidstone West District)
Highly Commended: Robin Plane – Roger Davey (1st Swanley Hextable Group)

Growth & Development Award: Steve Hill (1st Allington Scout Group)
Highly Commended: Matt Paramore (Malling District)

Fundraiser of the Year: Staplehurst Beavers
Highly commended: 1st St Lawrence Group, Sheppey District

Youth Shaped Award: Tom Llewellyn (Malling District)
Highly Commended: Jonathan Atkins (Maidstone West)

Young Person of the Year: Evan Tyson (Watlingbury Group)
Highly commended: James Body (21st Medway), Jorja Campbell-Walters (Thanet Rams ESU)

Scouting in Adversity
Harry Moore (5th Sheppey), Travis Maben (1st Repton)

Skills for Life: Alan McGill (WSJ Unit 65 Leader)
Highly Commended: Louis Cassidy (Boughton Monchelsea Group), Liam Harte (Thanet Rams ESU), Kent World Scout Jamboree Team

President's Award:
Megan Collins (38/40th Strood Sea Scouts)