



41st Annual General Meeting

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Hello and welcome to our 41st Annual General Meeting. Thank you for taking part as your views and participation are so important to us, to enable us to build an ever stronger organisation and grow the services and support we can provide.

A year like no other

When we began DSUK's 41st year, none of us could have imagined what a year we would all have to face. COVID-19 has forced us all to have to make enormous sacrifices and many of us have faced personal loss. We have all had to make big changes to how we do things, and DSUK has been no different.

As the global pandemic forced us all indoors, and closed our snow centres, we have had to put many of our activities on hold and our staff on furlough. We have had to press pause on the delivery of our strategy and had to rethink many aspects of our organisation.

Raising funds is critical

DSUK, like many charities, has been financially hit very hard by the pandemic. In order to help face the financial challenges posed by the pandemic, the team launched an urgent appeal. Thanks to you all for your generosity and support which meant we were able to raise over £35,000 to help keep DSUK running.

However, the challenge is by no means over, and we need to urgently raise funds to enable us to reopen safely and start delivering for as many people as possible.

Raising funds to run our activities remains of critical importance, so please do consider how you could support DSUK and help us raise funds, be that through our lottery, online shop, fundraising activities or donations.

Some people have let their membership lapse during the pandemic, and now is the time to renew. Please do get in touch – and the team are happy to help with any questions you may have.

An amazing staff team....

The dedicated DSUK staff team have responded to the many challenges this year with professionalism, imagination and diligence. They have reacted quickly to varying restrictions and have done all they can to minimise the impact on the charity wherever possible. They have also taken the opportunity to use this time to look at how we do things, what we can do better, and how we can be ready to meet the challenges ahead of us. I have been incredibly impressed how the team have tackled the immense and ongoing challenges they have faced this year, and I would like to record my thanks to them all.

... and a change of CEO

Mark Kelvin is sadly leaving us in April 2021, after three years leading the charity. Mark joined us at a significant transition point in DSUK's history. The departure of the para-snowsports team and the previous CEO were the impetus for major

strategic and organisational change which Mark has led with energy and enthusiasm. Three years on we can look back and see DSUK now has a clearer direction, a stronger team and culture, as well as major advances in operational management practices, member engagement, and media and digital presence. He shall be missed and we wish him every success in the future.

We have started recruitment for a new CEO and have attracted some strong candidates. Thank you to those members who took time to participate in the Open Session with prospective candidates. The response to these events was overwhelmingly positive and candidates specifically asked us to pass on their appreciation to you. First round interviews are underway and we hope to have concluded and made an offer before the end of April.

Trustee thank yous and fond farewells ...

DSUK is supported by a dedicated team of trustees who volunteer their time to ensure the organisation is well governed. At this AGM, we must bid a sad farewell to four Trustees: Gareth Roberts, Jess Brown, Helen Clatworthy and Fiona Fleming. Thank you to them all for their many years of support for DSUK and we hope they stay in touch!

... and a warm welcome

We welcome on board some new trustees who bring a new and exciting range of skills and experience to the existing trustee team, so please do join me in welcoming Lauren Henderson, Lesleyann Russell, Lisa Fox and Robbie King to the DSUK board.

Governance Review

We have recently completed a skills audit which informed the recruitment of our new Trustees. Alongside this we have established three new sub-committees to strengthen our governance processes and provide additional support to the organisation at this difficult time. We are also taking time to stop and consider whether our current constitution is fit for the future and will support the development of our service offering.

Our current Powers under the Charity's Articles of Association were set out in 1985, more than 35 years ago. Although these Articles were amended in 2006 the original template they are based on is now outdated and it has become apparent that these should be revised to be in line with the current model template for Charities that are also Limited Companies. This will enable us to make the governance procedures more suitable for the future and widen the scope of what we do whilst remaining true to our original Objects (purpose).

Working with Law Firm Lewis Silkin who are kindly supporting us on a pro-bono basis, the Nominations, Remuneration and Governance Committee are working to update the Articles of Association and will make a series of proposals. We intend to hold a series of consultancy events with members to refine this further.

In conclusion

So, we meet at a testing time and we should not underestimate the challenge ahead. Tackling the pandemic and its consequences continues to demand much from us all and it is not yet over. However, I believe we have the people, skills, ideas and imagination to tackle this challenge and to move forward. We have a talented and innovative staff team, a strong and diverse board, better management practices and systems and a real opportunity to try some new ideas and products for the organisation. This means we are now in the strong position to face this challenge and I look forward to working with you all during 2021 to make this happen.