



## Link-up! Members' Meeting

THURSDAY 11 MARCH 2021

**Gentian and Gillian hosted the third open meeting on ZOOM**

*Attended by: Gillian Dale, George Dexter, Gentian Dyer, Richard and Emilie Hayes, Cath Kiddle, Hilary Noakes and Peter Nickol, Penny Pullen, David Scarbrough, Mark Smith, Dawn Swettenham and Abi Williams.*

We started this time with a discussion about a short film most of us had been able to watch on-line, which highlighted the status and treatment of women in Ethiopia. It was agreed that there are good role models of empowerment of women in Ethiopian Government, education etc. But attitudes are still very different and out-dated in rural areas.

The major topic of the evening was around the previously circulated. **Membership paper:**

### Reasons to join:

- to support with funds, happy to pay
- to keep in touch, stay connected, keep 'warm'
- sense of belonging
- to discover opportunities to get involved
- to take an active role
- to simply support an organisation they believe in but don't wish to be active

### Agreed that:

- Could be different levels of Membership
- Annual renewal makes sense

**NB** Mark strongly felt that those volunteering should not be obligated to 'pay to volunteer' on ethical grounds (e.g. recent Steering Group recruits)

A wider discussion of the state of membership ensued with some feeling of discontent. Some members said –

- Don't feel connected
- Don't know what's going on
- Not pulling together
- Still don't understand the lines of communication

- There was concern that Trustee meeting Minutes have not been maintained on the private area of the website
- This raised questions of should there be more meetings or a different meeting structure but also the issue of who is prepared to organise and attend more meetings
- Tendency for new members to get drawn into administrative roles with EEL rather than find opportunities to contribute to actual project work

Abi and Dawn as Trustees responded :

Link-up! Meetings were designed to try a new way of pulling the membership together (but people need to attend them and contribute to keep in touch)

This structure is being tried and tested and will be reviewed at the AGM.

Abi reported that the current situation is serious – if more members are not prepared to play an active role the organisation will not survive. There are simply not enough people to fulfil all the roles and responsibilities it takes to run a charitable organisation. Abi is stepping down as Secretary after 2 years – there is no offer of replacement so far and there is no offer for Chair. The organisation needs people prepared to work on core policies etc. as well as project activity.

Steering groups did not attract participants from EEL membership so other professionals have been drafted – they are doing a great job but are not really accountable to EEL – this is not tenable.

Suggestions:

- Keep Link-up! meetings light hearted
- Would like more regular updates of what is happening in Ethiopia
- And specifically in EEL
- Success stories and vignettes of life – nothing too political
- Up-dates really interesting and important – should come first on Agenda

Proposals:

- Return to regular quarterly newsletters to follow up on news from Link-up and Trustee meetings – David diared the first of these for April. Richard and Emilie keen to contribute to content.
- Mark to ensure all news stories go to David for website and newsletter as well as to Dawn for social media coverage
- Dawn happy to provide an up to date outline of EEL structure to share with everyone

Up-date on Year of the programme ....

Unfortunately Year of the Tree is still on hold after a very successful launch. Gentian and Gillian are aware that Taste of Ethiopia event needs to be sorted but this must wait until wider get-togethers can take place, yet to be decided. There are already some good suggestions on the table for subsequent Year of the themes including: Water, Bicycles and Bees!

Mark gave a quick round-up of the current projects having great success in Nekemte including the continued work with Librarians, with Vision Aid Overseas running a mobile eye clinic and with Cheshire Ethiopia providing assistive devices to disabled people as part of our UK Aid Direct Project.

Some interesting case studies and good news stories area available on our Facebook page and will be on the website.

We were also involved in a very successful evening of Ethiopian cooking with Tigist and friends, working alongside other organisations - Hope International, Bees for Development, Hospice Ethiopia UK, For-ethiopia and Meketa. Over 100 viewers attended from all over the world. EEL raised nearly £300 from over 20 participants.

**The next meeting will again tie in with Trustee meetings, so will be early June 2021.**

Dawn and Abi were the Trustee representatives at this meeting to ensure discussions and suggestions are shared with all Trustees.

For now, as far as we know, Link-up! Meetings will continue in Zoom format.

**Thank you to those who joined us, it was great to see you. The meetings are informal and everyone is extremely welcome. Most of all we need your ideas, enthusiasm and participation to make Link-up! a rewarding and effective experience for all EEL.**

**We look forward to seeing you at the next one.**

Please send your suggested topics for the next meeting to [eelyearofthe@yahoo.com](mailto:eelyearofthe@yahoo.com)