



First Link-up! Members' Meeting

THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2020

We were delighted that 18 people signed into the meeting and most people were able to stay for the whole session on Zoom. Members Gentian and Gillian hosted the meeting.

Everyone briefly introduced themselves and one positive outcome of holding our first meeting virtually was that we were able to get to meet some of our members far and wide, as well as those based in Exeter.

Mark Smith filled us in on our new volunteer, Murti, who is now living in Ethiopia and has initial funding to launch and monitor the impact of the new Bike Project - first phase, for 30 girls, living in two rural villages, and travelling to secondary school.

Trustee Ella Sadler presented an informative outline of EEL's current structure and active projects.

The members then divided into 3 break out groups to discuss their passions, ideas and ways forward.

Group 1 put forward a proposal for a run to raise awareness and funds for EEL. The Great Ethiopian Run takes place on Sunday 15th November. It is a 10k run. The plan is that individuals will run that distance in a place of their choosing. This is the average distance that a child might walk to school in Nekemte so the event will give people some insight into what that is like. Dawn Swettenham has offered to take a lead on this to make it happen this year.

Group 2 were interested in the bike project starting up, but concerned about the roads in Nekemte and the vulnerability of girls unless they were travelling in groups together. They came up with the idea of a virtual bike ride event in this country to link to the project.

Richard and Emilie Hayes were confident they could get support from the Mayor in Estepona, Spain and combine this event with their own Ethiopia charity work. 'Year Of The.....' next year could be 'Year of the Bike'.

The group also raised the issue of the lack of diversity in EEL membership and proposed that the question of how to attract wider interest and engagement should be seriously considered across the Membership.

Group 3. The members of this group have interests in the health and vision projects and also in education, literacy, libraries and inclusion. They expressed a general interest in

attending events, being involved and receiving updates. They would also be keen to visit Ethiopia, but with a purpose. They discussed the use of technology in Ethiopia and when this is and is not successful.

FEEDBACK

In group feedback it was decided that Dawn Swettenham would push forward with the running project to tie in with The Great Ethiopian Run.

The virtual bike ride has a similar structure and purpose so it might be better to wait with this rather than launch both ideas too close together – it could be a key project for our potential Year of the Bike

FOLLOW UP

No date has yet been set for the next meeting but it is planned to hold 3 or 4 Link-up! meetings per year to tie in with Trustee meetings, so information can flow between the two groups. At least one Trustee will always attend each Link-Up!

Due to the pandemic these will need to continue in Zoom format for now.

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 members of EEL.

We look forward to seeing you at the next one.

Please send your suggested topics for the next meeting to eelyearofthe@yahoo.com