

The Friends of the Kalderimi of South Pelion

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, OCTOBER 2023

On Saturday 21 October 2023, the Annual General Assembly of the members of our Association took place in the hall of the KEGE Argalasti. 42 people attended the meeting.

After the quorum was established, the President of the Assembly, Ioannis Iatrou, announced the beginning of the proceedings with the report of the financial management by the Treasurer and Audit Committee.

Financial report

The Treasurer, Julie Carpenter, presented the accounts for the previous year. Total income is €3,497, of which in subscriptions (€2,820), donations (€677). Total expenses of €3,183 euros were used mainly for signage, tools, materials, fuel, path maintenance. The financial reserve (assets) of the Association is €14,214 euros, while the reserve received last year from the previous treasurer, Liz Avramidi, was €13,905.

Then the President of the Board Kyriakos Stathakis took the floor and presented the report of the Administrative Council (AC) for the period Oct. 2022-Oct. 2023, as follows.

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL REPORT 2022-23

It is one year since the AC was elected in October 2022.

A. WHAT HAPPENED DURING THIS YEAR?

1. New trail opening and trail clearing.

The AC had decided not to do any clearing and maintenance on the trails that are included in the planned EU Leader Programme. However, the Programme is still delayed and we have proceeded with some clearing and opening work on local sections.

So the following new paths were opened, using volunteers:

- 1) Opening the path from Boufa via Panagiotiko and Neochori to Mega Sotiras.
- 2) Promiri to Rodias
- 3) Reconnecting the kalderimi from Trikeri to Kottes with the wells at Kolosouri with the cooperation of local residents.
- 4) 4 circular routes in Platania were opened and marked (with more than 200 signs) with the cooperation of the Environmental Association of Platania.

With volunteers the following paths were cleared:

- 5) Promiri to Platania.
- 6) Alogoporos to Theriakontas and Trachili
- 7) The path from Horto to the barrier in the Metochi stream.

Workers were hired to clear the following paths:

- 8) Chorevetra to Propan (Kalamaki)
- 9) Syki (Granitsa) to Aghios Eustathios (Neochori)

2. Meeting with the Mayor and opportunities for meaningful cooperation

On Wednesday 21 December 2022, we met with the Mayor of South Pelion, Mr. Mitzikos, at his office in Argalasti to discuss ways for meaningful cooperation with the Municipality. It was decided:

- To sign a memorandum of cooperation between the Friends and the Municipality defining the obligations of each side (not signed, the Municipality obstructed progress on this)
- To organise a workshop in the spring about the importance of walking tourism in the Pelion and the value of protecting the kalderimi and paths (finally planned for July 2023 due to the national elections but subsequently cancelled due to the spread of big fires in the region).
- To hold a meeting at the Municipal offices with the Leader Programme contractor and the participation of the AC as soon as the final contract is signed (this has not yet happened).

Other cooperation:

- Through our letters to the Municipality and other regional actors we managed to stop the asphaltting of part of the kalderimi to Aghia Sophia (subsequently Storm Daniel destroyed the new asphalt road at Agia Sophia and also cleared the gravel that had been laid over the kalderimi).
- We did the same for the section of kalderimi on the Syki-Xinovrisi road: it appears now that the contractor is seeking to leave the kalderimi at one side of the asphalted road.
- We asked the Mayor, and he agreed, to improve access to the kalderimi from Trikeri to Kottes at the point where it meets the asphalt. Deputy Mayor V. Manetas proceeded to get this done, but Storm Daniel completely destroyed access and it now requires a new intervention.
- We tried in vain to solve the problem of garbage and access at the beginning of the trail in Promiri. Now, after Storm Daniel the area is now a landslide and needs serious attention.

3. Other actions and activities

- 1) In December 2022, members of the AC and the Friends participated in the 5th Panhellenic Conference of walking tourism that took place in Kesariani (Athens). Constructive and useful conclusions about the current situation and prospects for walking tourism in Greece and how it is developed and exploited in other places.
- 2) In January, we cut our New Year's pie, after 3 years absence due to Covid, in Lafkos with the participation of many members.
- 3) In March, with the cooperation of the Syki Cultural Association, we participated in the annual memorial for the executed Greeks, which takes place near the stream at Potoki.
- 4) In April, on the initiative of Yannis Iatrou and in cooperation with the Deputy Mayor V. Maneta, students from the Kalamari school of Thessaloniki visited the island of Paleo Trikeri and cooperated in a clean-up of 2 beaches on the island.
- 5) In May we co-organised, with EOT in Volos, an excursion to Andros, which has an interesting model of path maintenance and walking tourism throughout the year. The participants walked the kalderimia of Andros, and also learned how trails are adopted by volunteers who record their condition, replace lost signs and mark points where intervention by workers with tools is needed.

A vote was taken to approve the Report and it was unanimously accepted with 42 votes in favour.

The President Mr. Stathakis then proceeded to present the Board's Action Plan for the coming year. In summary he mentioned the following:

B. NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

- The main priority in the coming period is to record the condition of the trails after the devastation of Storms Daniel and Ilias. To that end, we have created a new page on our website where anyone can report and upload photos about serious damage or disasters to the paths.
- Depending on the fate of the Leader Programme we will continue to maintain parts of the trails with volunteers and where the local community can be mobilised. We can also hire workers where necessary.
- We aim to restart and continue the Sunday walking programme, focusing on the routes which are known to be safe.
- We will hold an annual New Year pie cutting event in January
- We may again organise an excursion, such as the one to Andros, in the New Year.
- We hope to meet with the new Regional (Thessaly) Governor to discuss the progress of the Leader programme, the Municipality's proposal for additional trails, and the Regional Government's greater involvement with trails, such as securing funds for trail cleaning, repairing damage from bad weather, and overall interventions where the kalderimi and paths are interrupted by roads.
- We will participate in this year's 6th Panhellenic Trails Conference to be held in Magnesia.

This was followed by a discussion on planning, in which several members spoke on the need to quickly record and restore routes. They also discussed ways to digitally capture the situation, etc.

Other suggestions put forward by members:

- To include walks to sites of cultural, historical or environmental interest and to include a short talk about the site
- that representatives of the association could meet with tourism operators (e.g. hotels) in April to give a fuller picture of the state of the trails after the storm damage, in order to inform their planning
- that the Association could hold a meeting with local teachers to encourage them to include walking the paths and other activities with school children.

The Board recorded all views and will follow up realistic suggestions. A vote followed in which the Planning Board voted unanimously with 42 in favour.

There being no further business, President Iatrou adjourned the meeting.