

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MAY 30 2009

Communication

- After discussion on the Friday evening, and in response to a number of comments made at General Council, the trustees decided on a new communications initiative with volunteers. Each trustee would take responsibility for 3 to 4 Areas and hold a briefing/dialogue with the Area chair at least after every board meeting. The Area chair in turn would cascade the briefing to their Area management and groups. The board would review the feedback on the scheme at its September and December meetings.
- Surrey Area had written in with various points including communication and consultation. It was hoped the new initiative would answer some of these and Rodney Whittaker would be attending the Area Council meeting to give a fuller response.
- There would in future be a single Board meeting, rather than separate meetings for confidential and non-confidential items. Board minutes would accordingly no longer be posted on the website but volunteers would continue to receive the same account of the non-confidential items discussed at the meeting. This will avoid the situation where volunteers had previously received two accounts of the same items, one soon after the meeting in a circular and a second in the more formal language of the minutes several months later after the minutes had been formally approved at the next board meeting.

Announcements

- We welcomed the new vice-chair Tom Fisher, treasurer Jonathan Kipling and the newly elected trustees Eleanor Harris, Kate Ashbrook, Gus Halfhide and Len Banister. All except Tom and Kate were attending their first full board meeting.
- We noted with sadness the deaths of Harry Comber, a long standing footpath campaigner in East Sussex and the first East Sussex Area footpath secretary; of Larry Paul, the president of the Herts and North Middlesex Area and former president, chairman and access officer of Leicestershire and Rutland Area; and of Rosemary Archer, the Hammersmith, Fulham and Wandsworth group programme organiser and walks leader.

Chief executive's report

- We received an update on the CRM system which showed that major progress had been made and the level of complaints from members reduced. The board thanked volunteers from the Rambler's Metropolitan Walkers group, who had been helping with various tasks. Important work

was continuing on the accuracy of the membership analysis information and also on automatic bulk uploads. The backlog had been reduced to 4 weeks and was expected to be reduced further.

- The board meeting took place on Get Walking Day and 150 groups had organised walks of 2 miles or less. The board itself managed a 30 minute walk in Kensington Gardens during its lunch break.
- Every opportunity would be used to publicise the Walking 09 event which was taking place in Sheffield on September 5. The agenda had now been agreed and the latest Walk magazine contained a flyer for the event.

Finance

- There was a lengthy discussion of the financial position since the latest monthly figures had shown that, in common with nearly all other charities, commercial organisations and governments, Ramblers income had been badly affected by the worldwide recession. It was necessary for the trustees to authorise significant expenditure cuts in order to balance the budget in 2009 /10. The board agreed (with three trustees those from Scottish and Welsh councils voting against) a package of measures including the replacement of paper circulars with electronic communication (which would save about £120,000 a year), the deferral of the next issue of the Walks Guide, and a reduction in Area, Group and Council funding. Consultations with staff would be necessary as to the means of achieving other reductions in expenditure.
- The board also decided on a modest subscription increase though the individual subscription (up £2.50 to £29.50 from October 1) would still be under £30 which compared us well with other similar organisations. The last increase was two years ago. We have asked for a further report on other aspects and types of membership in September.
- The board agreed to a new system for Area and group funding which had been the subject of extensive consultation with the Area and group treasurers. This would change the timing of the funding exercise and would no longer require budgets from groups.

Sub committee matters

- Most major matters are now reviewed by the three subcommittees of the board which then makes recommendations to the full board meetings. We noted the minutes of the 3 subcommittee meetings and agreed minor changes to their terms of reference.

General Council

- The intended venue for General Council Keble College Oxford had unfortunately made a double booking so we would need to find another

venue. It would again be a two day event and we agreed to try it this year on Saturday and Sunday.

- We discussed the results of the board skills, diversity and experience audit and agreed on a statement for board candidates to be used at GC in 2010. The board would also be considering possible co-options.

M&A working party

- The board asked the chairman to write to the Memorandum and Articles working party (John Esslemont, David Hunt, Sylvia Popham, Barry Pottle and Brian Reader) to thank them for all their work and particularly for the report which they had submitted to the board.

Led Walks

- The board considered a report on an incident which had arisen on a mountain walk and which would be publicised in due course to emphasise the lessons which had been learnt.
- The Led Walks team is keen to support our volunteers in improving the quality of our led walks. Voluntary training for walk leaders is one aspect of this, and there has been a very encouraging level of interest. However it is important to emphasise that the focus for required training is only on the very top level of walks (mountains, or high ground in winter), and even here, as for all walks, full account will be taken of existing knowledge and experience of leading in such conditions.

Reports

- We received and noted reports from Ramblers Worldwide Holidays and from the Scottish Council, and also noted the Scottish Vision statement.