

Redacted Minute

November 2020 Scottish council executive committee minute

SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held on Tuesday 17 November 2020, 4.00pm – 7.00pm
Meeting held via Zoom

62/20 ATTENDANCE

SCEC

Alison Mitchell – convener
Douglas Tullis – vice convener
Alistair Cant – honorary treasurer
Bekah Cork (joined after 4.00pm)
Beth Dickson
Elly Macdonald
Mike Morris
Andrea Steel
David Webb
Jay Wilson

Ramblers Scotland President

Lucy Wallace (left meeting at 5.55pm)

Staff

Brendan Paddy, director of Scotland (joined after 4.00pm)
Hildegarde Berwick, governance and events administrator

Chair Board of Trustees

Kate Ashbrook (joined after 5.00pm)

Vice Chair Board of Trustees

Rebecca Dawson

63/20 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Alison Mitchell, convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting, extending a specific welcome to Kate Ashbrook, chair of the board of trustees and Rebecca Dawson, vice chair. Alison also specifically welcomed Lucy Wallace, Ramblers Scotland president.

Rebecca spoke about her desire to know more about the footpaths in Scotland. She had recently completed the West Highland Way and felt inspired now to walk the Great Glen Way.

There were no apologies.

Alison noted the death of Bruce Riddell who died on 1st November and who had a long association of 65 years with Ramblers Scotland. Alison also noted the sudden death of

Owain Bristow in a climbing accident. Owain was a leading light in Aberdeen Young Walkers group. Alison thanked Elly for organising a sharing memories event.

64/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

65/20 IMPORTANT DATES (APP 1)

These were noted.

66/20 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SCEC MAY MEETING AND REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS (APP 2A AND 2B)

The approval of the minute of November's SCEC meeting was proposed by Alistair and seconded by Mike and approved by SCEC.

There were no comments on the Action Points.

67/20 CONVENER'S UPDATE ON BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS (SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER) 2020

Alison highlighted the main points of discussion at the Board of Trustees meeting over the period September to October. These included approval of the 2019 General Council minutes, the appointment of the auditor, president and vice president, the election of the committee to review motions. It also included the election of trustees following a postal vote and Rebecca Dawson, Richard May and Helen Tranter were elected. The annual report and accounts were approved. Motions that had been submitted would be discussed at a meeting on 19th November. The extension of the Devolution Agreements was agreed, as was the extension of the CEOs contract until April and the election of a vice chairman. The report on the Q3 business plan was discussed in October's meeting.

68/20 FINANCE UPDATE

Alistair noted that most of the funding in the 2019-2020 year was allocated to the Walk Leadership project. He also noted that there had been a cost saving in the hosting of SCEC meetings due to the number of meetings having been held virtually.

Alistair then spoke briefly about the management information account for the financial year 2019-2020.

Mention was also made of the Gathering Accounts for the year 2019-2020 and it was noted that a significant sum would be carried over to 2020-2021 which was the total of the deposits received for the Gathering which was postponed in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic.

There were no questions regarding either the Scottish Council accounts or the Gathering accounts.

69/20 CONSTITUTION REVIEW UPDATE

This item was taken in advance of items 5,6 and 7 in the agenda.

Douglas asked if SCEC was happy with all the amendments to the constitution as proposed. One member asked that if someone was interested in continuing as a member of SCEC, should they be forced out, particularly if this was only after a year as a SCEC member and there was no-one obvious who was keen to join SCEC.

Douglas re-iterated the background to the thinking behind the new time periods in office. He noted that the amendments were in accord with comments made by KPMG in relation to

good governance. The maximum of two terms of three years for honorary posts, being 6 years in total, is also in line with the Board of Trustees. Douglas also emphasised the importance of succession planning and actively seeking out potential new members for SCEC.

Douglas asked for two proposers on behalf of SCEC in relation to the proposed amendments to the constitution. He volunteered himself as proposer 1 and Alistair was noted as proposer 2.

Douglas explained the thinking behind the proposal that the eight proposed amendments would be composited into two amendments, to make the process simpler when being put forward at Scottish Council. The first two amendments relate to the maximum time period in office and these would be taken together as one motion. The remaining six amendments, numbers three to eight, would form the second motion.

Douglas re-iterated that he hoped that Barry Pottle, the current convener of the Motions Committee, could continue in his role now that his professional work commitments have lessened.

It was also mentioned that the guidance for submitting motions had been reviewed and a short guide had also been produced.

Approval was given by SCEC for all of the proposed eight amendments to the constitution to proceed and for these to go forward to Scottish Council as two motions compositing the eight proposed amendments.

AP1 Douglas to continue to work on any fine adjustments necessary to these two motions relating to the proposed amendments to the RS Constitution.

70/20 UPDATES FROM OTHER WORKING GROUPS AND SUB COMMITTEES

70/20/1

This item has been redacted due to its confidential nature.

70/20/2

Remote and Rural Working Group

Andrea explained the proposal of a year long pilot project to be reviewed in six months time, with the pilot project starting early next year. It is proposed to create a Regional Alliance model where the constitutions of Areas would not be changed but Areas would work in another way. The Alliance would assume responsibility for coordinating with groups where an Area committee was no longer functional. The Alliance could initially be informal, so as not to require any constitutional changes and could move, at a later date, to become more formal.

Concern was raised in relation to exactly how the Alliance would be constituted and how this fits in with our existing constitutional arrangements. During the pilot period, would the Areas be formally dissolved or put into abeyance, with most, but not necessarily all, of their functions being transferred to the Alliance or perhaps Groups or perhaps RS staff? Another concern was in relation to the way that Scottish Council works, where Areas are permitted to send two voting delegates each. Without constitutional amendments there would be the loss of representation at Scottish Council and, to a lesser extent, General Council.

Further specific detail in relation to the constitutional implications and possible amendments required to the Articles of Association and Standing Orders, is noted in the pre-SCEC November meeting comments document. The question was also raised in the pre-SCEC

November meeting comments document of the possibility of the need for a motion to be drafted for presentation to Scottish Council 2021.

Another concern was raised that developing such an Alliance would be akin to developing a model, a one size fits all, rather than a toolkit.

Andrea explained the role of the 'task and finish' group. This would ideally represent all 'stakeholders' and would involve consultation with RS staff. Andrea stressed that it is essential that this group is composed of individuals with the right set of skills.

Brendan stressed that RS staff would be able to support Groups in order to submit budgets, if there is no Area support. Brendan also said RS staff would work with the Task and Finish group and the Alliance(s) to help facilitate greater communication between Groups.

Alison thanked Andrea for her work in collating information and compiling the report. It was agreed that Andrea should continue to pursue this project.

AP2 Andrea to continue her work on the Remote and Rural working group according to the timetable defined.

71/20 BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES 2020-2021

Brendan outlined the RS objectives contained in the Business Plan. He noted that objectives are aligned to RGB objectives but they take into account specific issues related to Scotland. It was noted that objectives have been aligned to KPIs.

Brendan stated that one of the recommendations from KPMG was to align a SCEC member to each objective in the Business Plan. Brendan stressed that operational delivery remained with RS staff and noted that there is a clear distinction between operations and governance. Scrutiny by the aligned SCEC member would be a little more detailed than usual. If meetings are requested between the aligned SCEC member and the relevant member of RS staff, such meetings would be required to be mediated via Brendan. Brendan also noted that as Director of Scotland, he is accountable to SCEC.

Discussion then progressed in relation to individuals aligned to objectives. Elly noted that her name was not included in the list. Bekah stated that she had been allocated to two objectives and was happy to go down to one. In relation to the objective to 'increase public engagement with existing and new supporters', Bekah was happy to stand down in favour of Elly.

As Douglas will be standing down at the end of the SCEC year, it was proposed that David takes on the alignment to the objective to 'Improve the mapping of Scotland's path network and build the case for its systematic development'.

Brendan noted that the first report against these aligned objectives should be presented at the next SCEC meeting in February.

AP3 All SCEC members to contribute towards a status report on aligned objectives.

72/20 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

Brendan highlighted particular information contained in the narrative report. This included the extent to which RS staff continued to support Groups with information and advice in order to continue their walk programme during the restrictions due to the Covid pandemic. He noted that 86% of Groups are now walking, mostly in groups of small numbers.

The Walk Leadership programme is developing and adapting to the circumstances, with special online sessions held for walk leaders. There are fewer walk leaders coming attending in-person training sessions, which are currently focused on small group, outdoor-only, navigation training sessions. A very similar approach is being taken with our work on Young Adult Development and the Out There Award courses.

Brendan noted the significant spike over the summer months with more people across Scotland getting out of doors but this also highlighted the chronic underdevelopment in relation to amenities. A significant programme of work is being undertaken by Visit Scotland and others, including Nature Scot and the National Parks, to address the situation and new funding will be required. There are encouraging signs that RS is being consulted more in relation to such research projects.

A SCEC member noted his thanks in relation to the speed and quality of the RS updates in relation to the alterations in Scottish Government guidelines on outdoor activities. He also noted that the presentation given by Jeannie at the Area AGMs was very helpful, as well as Jeannie providing information in relation to questions raised.

Brendan equally pointed out that Groups and Walk Leaders have engaged very positively with the challenges presented by coronavirus and the related restrictions on our activities.

In relation to membership, Brendan noted how membership had dropped sharply during the early part of the year but there has been significant growth over the last three months in terms of attracting new members. RGB is measuring progress as a whole across the organisation, not only in terms of new members but in relation to the retention of members as well. During the months of September and October, RS exceeded the KPI target for new members.

One SCEC member highlighted that they have had 10 new members joining their Group this current year which compares to the same number over the past 10 years.

73/20 SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2021 PLANNING

It was noted that Scottish Council in 2021, even though it will be entirely presented electronically, will still focus on bringing people together to celebrate what has been achieved over the past year by all members, as well as RS staff. The specific AGM business will be limited to those who are voting delegates and then attendance will be opened out for the afternoon session on Saturday 6 March, to allow up to 500 to attend our successes of the year.

Brendan stressed that the technology, and the management of time and processes, will be tested in advance.

One SCEC member stated that it would be good to open out the AGM business to a broader number of people than just the voting delegates, if possible. Brendan stated that there required to be a balance between the complexity of managing the technological procedures of a virtual AGM open to delegates who had no voting rights and the number of people who would be interested in the official business of the AGM.

It was also asked whether Scottish Council would be opened up to RGB staff and also Ramblers Wales staff.

It was also noted that the Dick Balharry Memorial Talk was not the day before Scottish Council but the week before on Friday 26 February. It was confirmed that there will be the potential for interaction with the audience through the chat function and also through moderated questions.

A SCEC member also stated their appreciation of consulting early with SCEC members about the virtual hosting of Scottish Council 2021.

SCEC formally approved the draft Scottish Council 2021 programme.

Alison also noted in relation to the Highland & Islands Area AGM that the date was 1 December 2020 and not 12 January 2021.

74/20 SUCCESSION PLANNING AND RECRUITMENT

Alison emphasised the importance of developing links with other like-minded organisations. This would not only increase our profile with these organisations but opportunities may also arise to invite individuals to nominate themselves to stand for membership of SCEC.

Alison invited SCEC to consider whether they would be able to attend any of the AGMs listed. Hildegard explained that the AGMs listed in red text will be held before the end of the SCEC year at the beginning of March. The other AGMs in black text will be held beyond this date.

Alison asked that if SCEC members do attend one of these AGMs, that a few lines about the organisation are drafted.

Alison stated that this position has been noted by SCEC in relation to attendance at the AGMs of other like-minded organisations.

In relation to Equalities monitoring of the composition of members of SCEC, Hildegard noted that statistics had been compiled during the period 2016-2018 which had gathered information in relation to equalities and other details including:

- Male / female split
- Turnover (number of members who remained on SCEC and numbers who were new)
- Percentage aged under 40 years
- Numbers who were in employment and numbers who were retired

A member of SCEC noted that if such information was to be gathered, that confidentiality was crucial in terms of the storage of such details.

Brendan noted that work within RGB had started in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, and that there was the opportunity here for joint working in relation to gathering data. Alternatively, RS could progress with our own gathering of data.

Hildegard noted that there was no information that had previously been gathered that related to ethnicity. A member of SCEC asked what this actually meant and did it relate to what your passport stated. It was noted that ethnicity is not the same as nationality.

With the exception of Douglas, who has provided considerable advanced notice of his intention to step down, SCEC members indicated they were willing to stand again for election, including Andrea who would move from being a co-opted to an elected member.

75/20 SCEC SELF ASSESSMENT

There was some discussion around the four options listed, including whether the focus should be on the operation and effectiveness of individual SCEC meetings, rather than the effectiveness of SCEC as a committee. It was also noted that at the August SCEC meeting, it had been considered too onerous for the convener to undertake individual assessments.

Hildegard noted that the KPMG report of June 2020, stated that it would be best practice to implement an 'annual form of appraisal' in addition to the existing skills analysis, which was also noted by another SCEC member. It has previously been noted that the skills analysis is a self-assessment and not everyone necessarily submits evidence to back up their self-assessment.

Discussion then focused on 360° feedback. It was considered by a SCEC member that the element of a collective perspective would be useful in relation to the performance of SCEC. It was also noted that performance should also include the performance of sub-committees and working groups, who were undertaking valuable work and who were not necessarily all RS members. It was also noted that feedback from senior RS staff would be useful. Another point noted by a SCEC member was that anonymous contributions by SCEC members and RS staff could be accommodated through the use of an online format, such as survey feedback.

With the allocation of SCEC members to specific RS objectives, this needs to be addressed as well.

It was agreed that Mike, Beth and Elly would work with Alison to take this forward.

AP4 Date to be fixed before the Christmas break for a meeting to discuss the issue of the format of self-assessment. Hildegard to arrange Zoom meeting.

76/20 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next SCEC quarterly meeting will be Tuesday 9 February 2021 and will be held via Zoom.

The meetings after this will be Friday 5 March at 4.00pm, which will be the pre-Scottish Council SCEC meeting and Saturday afternoon 6 March after the close of Scottish Council business.

77/20 OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND NOTING

77/20/1

Name change for SCEC

It was noted by a SCEC member, that it was of little significance whatever the Executive Committee named itself. Feedback from last year's AGMs indicated that individuals don't know who SCEC is.

It was noted that if a name change appeared more attractive, then this could possibly lead to more members coming forward as nominations to the committee. SCEC could, in fact, re-launch itself on the back of a new name.

It was noted that any change of name would involve a change of name in the RS constitutional documents. If a change of name was required, this would have to be put forward in sufficient time to the BoT.

This proposition would require a proposer and a seconder if it was to be put forward as a motion at Scottish Council 2021, assuming the BoT had no objection.

The proposed name for the new executive committee is: Ramblers Scotland Strategic Board.

Brendan stated that technically SCEC is not legally a Board but noted SCECs thinking in relation to a change of name if this would contribute towards highlighting their role within Ramblers Scotland.

AP5 Douglas and Alison to continue work on this point with the view of presenting to the December Board of Trustees meeting.

77/20/2

European Ramblers Association General Meeting

A report had been prepared by Alison and also Chris Hodgson, an observer from RGB Board of Trustees, and was noted as an item of information.

77/20/3

SCEC Wiki

Hildegard noted that the Ramblers Wiki is no longer being paid for by RGB. Simon Kellas, Governance Manager, RGB, had informed Hildegard that there were no funds available to continue the funding of the Wiki.

It was stated by a SCEC member that there is no point in keeping the RS Wiki if this is costing RS money with no particular benefit.

Hildegard confirmed that documents related to SCEC business would be included in the SCEC Members group in Microsoft Teams. Hildegard also confirmed that she would check to ensure that all documents posted on the SCEC Wiki were contained in RS files and there would therefore be no loss of information.

AP6 Hildegard to check to ensure that all documents posted on the SCEC Wiki are contained in RS files and there would therefore be no loss in information if the Wiki was discontinued. Hildegard to inform Simon to cancel the subscription to the SCEC Wiki which RS has been paying from their own budget since the second half of September.

78/20 AOCB

There was no AOCB.

Alison thanked everyone for attending and also thanked Hildegard for supplying all of the papers.

The meeting closed at 7.00pm.

Minute compiled by Hildegard Berwick, governance and events administrator
30 November 2020

Action Points

AP1 Douglas to continue to work on any fine adjustments necessary to these two motions relating to the proposed amendments to the RS Constitution.

AP2 Andrea to continue her work on the Remote and Rural working group according to the timetable defined.

AP3 All SCEC members to contribute towards a status report on aligned objectives.

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09 February 2021

Signed..... Date.....
Alison Mitchell, convener
Ramblers Scotland