

August 2020 Scottish council executive committee minute
SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Minute of meeting held on Tuesday 18 August 2020, 4:00pm – 7:10pm
Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

46/20 ATTENDANCE

SCEC

Alison Mitchell – convener
Douglas Tullis – vice convener (unable to re-join electronically after 6.00pm)
Alistair Cant – honorary treasurer
Beth Dickson (left meeting at 6.30pm)
Elly Macdonald
Mike Morris
Andrea Steel
David Webb
Jay Wilson

Staff

Brendan Paddy, director of Scotland
Jeannie Cranfield, delivery officer
Hildegard Berwick, governance and events administrator

Interim Chief Executive

Tanya Curry

Board of Trustees

Sophie Clissold-Lesser (left meeting at 6.30pm)

47/20 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Alison Mitchell, convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting, extending a specific welcome to Jeannie and Hildegard who had both come off furlough at the beginning of July. Alison also welcomed Tanya Curry, the interim chief Executive and also Sophie Clissold-Lesser from the Board of Trustees.

Alison noted the death of John Foster who had long associations with Ramblers Scotland, including holding the posts of honorary president and vice honorary president.

Apologies have been received from Lucy Wallace, president and Bekah Cork, SCEC.

48/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49/20 IMPORTANT DATES (APP 1)

Alison noted that it had not proved possible to proceed with the Walk Leader Essentials courses at various locations across the country.

50/20 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SCEC MAY MEETING AND REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS (APP 2A AND 2B)

The minute of May's SCEC meeting was proposed by Douglas and seconded by David and approved by SCEC.

Brendan discussed costs and briefly noted the difference in styles of the Ramblers Scotland plaques in relation to the two quotations received. It was stressed that it wasn't just a matter of cost but that there were other implications if RS plaques were to be used to signpost paths. Permissions from landowners would need to be obtained and would it be assumed that RS was responsible for path maintenance. After some discussion it was decided to pursue the better quality plaques and orders could be taken from RS Groups.

AP1 Guidance to be produced by RS in relation to the use of RS plaques.

51/20 CONVENER'S UPDATE ON BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2020

Alison highlighted the main points of discussion at the Board of Trustees meeting over the period April to June. Issues discussed included business planning updates, the extension of Tanya's contract as interim CEO and the recruitment process being underway for a new CEO, the postponement of General Council and taking legal advice in relation to delaying GC which will now be held virtually on 15 September, 5.00 – 6.00pm, reports on Area AGMs, successful funding bid to PPL and funding application to Climate Action Fund, review of working groups and interest shown by Catherine Watt in relation to RS Remote and Rural Membership working group and discussion of constitutional changes as part of the State of the Nations meeting. General Council for 2021 is planned to be held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham on Saturday 17 April.

52/20 PRESENTATION BY INTERIM CEO TANYA CURRY

Tanya noted that she joined as Interim CEO mid February and will remain until the end of December. No-one could have foreseen the impact of coronavirus, and another significant issue was the Black Lives Matter movement. Tanya spoke on two topics and the first was the importance of Ramblers as an organisation engaging with the Black Lives Matter movement. Tanya stressed that she did not want the Ramblers' response to be tokenistic and she and Kate Ashbrook shared a detailed response with staff. Ramblers is looking at diversity and inclusion running through the organisation as a whole and we have engaged a specialist to ensure that there is a culture change across the organisation. There are many things that we can do ourselves, including ensuring that we extend invitations to people from all backgrounds and that they receive a warm welcome. Tanya highlighted the success of the Young Adult Development work being run by RS in terms of inclusivity. It had exceeded its target in relation to gender and will continue its work in relation to attracting even more involvement from BAME communities.

Tanya then spoke about the updated Ramblers GB business plan. Tanya noted that the business plan was very ambitious. The 24 objectives had been narrowed down in order to concentrate on priorities and ensure that these are delivered well and in an engaging way. Three priority areas include: 1) growing awareness and engagement 2) growing income and membership 3) beginning a culture change to ensure that we are an inclusive, engaging and diverse organisation.

Tanya invited questions and it was noted by a SCEC member that there are a large number of walking groups in the northern areas of Scotland who are not members of RS. Individuals

come from a diverse range of income levels. Tanya stated that she would feed this point, in relation to economic challenges, back to the Board.

Alison thanked Tanya for her presentation and stated that she was welcome to remain for the rest of the meeting. Tanya confirmed that she would remain.

53/20 PRESENTATION BY BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBER SOPHIE CLISSOLD-LESSER

Alison welcomed and introduced Sophie Clissold-Lesser. Sophie noted her work background with IBM and also her extensive experience on the Board of various charities. Her presentation focused specifically on her volunteer role as Chair of the charity Street Doctors. Many young people have no experience of first aid and what to do in a critical situation. Sophie explained how medical staff started to undertake training with groups including Youth Offenders. The importance of Trustee roles and how they fit with staff roles was noted, as well as the importance of a good working relationship between the CEO and the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Sophie then discussed the importance of the management of risk, including assisting Trustees to interpret documents, such as financial reports, by including accompanying notes alongside spreadsheets.

Alison thanked Sophie for her presentation and stated that she was welcome to remain for the rest of the meeting. Sophie confirmed that she would remain for as long as she could.

54/20 REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON RS INCLUDING COMMUNICATION PLAN

Brendan noted that he would speak about three main areas: 1) route map produced by the Scottish Government, 2) Ramblers GB restart guidance to volunteers and members 3) communication and engagement with members and volunteers.

Brendan noted that the routemap produced by the Scottish Government was well worth reading. It does not just note the risks but also the importance of the balance of activities that can be eased out of lockdown and also the broader social impacts. Despite RS being optimistic that we would be moving into Phase 4 of the easing of lockdown, the Scottish Government has been emphatic that it is likely that we will remain in Phase 3 for some time to come. Brendan noted that the next Scottish Government announcement of the review of lockdown would be on 20 August. Brendan was not overly optimistic about further easing of restrictions due to the focus on schools and the need to let this 'bed in'.

Brendan noted that currently there is a restriction for walking groups to limit the numbers to 15 people but the individuals must come from a maximum of 5 households. 12 RS groups are currently running a walks programme of one sort or the other, whether this is running the same walk two weekends in a row or two days in a row. The guidance is different for England and some individuals and groups are raising concerns about the numbers of individuals on walks which can be up to 30 people.

In terms of engagement with RS members, in addition to the usual channels Zoom session have been organised for Area and Group volunteers and two sessions have taken place to date with the possibility of a third if there are significant easing of restrictions announced on 20 August.

A SCEC member noted that sports bodies had been asked to submit plans to sportscotland regarding the resumption of their respective sports. The question was asked if RS could do the same. Brendan noted that until the number of different households who were able to

meet together increased, any proposal would not be accepted. Brendan also noted that RS were continuing to make the case that walking groups are low risk and have many health benefits. He also emphasised that RS is working closely with other organisations such as sportscotland and mountaineering groups, sharing advice and strategies.

55/20 FINANCE REPORT (APP 3A and 3B)

Alistair noted that Walk Leadership monies had been re-apportioned to RGB and could now be accessed directly by the Walk Leadership project. Alistair was not anticipating much spend between now and the end of the Ramblers financial year in September. There were no questions regarding the Scottish Council Accounts.

Alistair proceeded to discuss the Management Information Accounts, stating firstly that this is a reforecast budget taking into account the effects of Covid 19 and other factors. The spend is very close to predictions. He also stated that, in future, the Scottish membership report could be excluded from the Management Information Accounts, as Brendan will be providing a membership report as a separate standing item in the agenda.

56/20 UPDATES ON WORKING GROUPS AND SUB COMMITTEES

56/20/1

Constitution Review Working Group

Alistair enquired if there were any further comments in addition to those included in the comments documents issued in advance of this SCEC meeting and whether everyone was happy with the proposed changes to the RS constitution.

Alistair worked through the comments that had been previously received dealing firstly with the comment in relation to the time limit stated for proxy votes. Douglas stated that the guidance of 48 hours reflects RGB advice and would allow someone to appoint a proxy at short notice should this be required. A second comment noted that the constitution requires RS to provide a 90 day notice period of the date of Scottish Council and there should be flexibility to hold Scottish Council electronically at any practically realistic time close to or soon after that 90 day period or, indeed, decide to cancel. This was agreed.

Regarding the point in relation to affiliated organisations, Douglas stated that this would be looked at in more detail next year. He considered that Recommendations 9, 10 and 11 could wait and be carried forward to Scottish Council in 2022. This was agreed.

A further comment in relation to a formal statement regarding a review date of the Constitution was not considered necessary. It was also considered that version control was secure and therefore no action was necessary.

Hildegard to draft a consultation document for comments on the amendments to the Constitution, noting the 15th October as the deadline to receive comments from Groups and Areas.

AP2 Hildegard to draft a consultation document for comments on the amendments to the Constitution and send this document plus the proposed amended Constitution and the report on the recommendations to membership secretaries of Groups and Areas.

A member of SCEC noted the actual name of 'SCEC' was less than appealing and this is an important issue when trying to engage members or external individuals to join the Executive Committee. Another member stated that SCEC is the name used in the Constitution but another name could be used informally if it helped make the role and importance of SCEC clearer.

A possible change in name was to be considered in the future and Alison offered to work on the possibility of a new name, suggesting 'Ramblers Scotland Strategic Forum'. The views of Groups and Areas should also be sought on any name change.

AP3 Consideration to be given by Alison to a proposed name change for SCEC and the views of Groups and Areas also sought, as well as the views of Simon Kellas, Chief Executive's Office.

Brendan noted one of the recommendations from the KPMG audit related to the lack of formal procedures for dealing with complaints against SCEC members. It was noted by a SCEC member that any grievance procedures need to align closely with RGB procedures. It was also noted that this point will not be addressed within the Constitution and, indeed, does not need to be included in the Constitution.

The issue of a complaints procedure in relation to the safeguarding of children was also discussed and it was noted that Jeannie has a draft document in hand.

Douglas stated that the final amended Constitution would be included for presentation and approval at the November SCEC meeting before then being presented to Scottish Council in March 2021.

56/20/2

Access Report

An 11 point paper regarding the Meikleour Estate in Perthshire had been drafted by Douglas for discussion. There were no comments, questions or concerns raised by SCEC and approval was therefore given to proceed with the sending of a re-drafted solicitor's letter from Harper Macleod which will articulate the arguments. Douglas and Helen will continue to discuss the matter and how it may be possible to proceed further using the resources available in the RS Legal Fund.

Alistair pointed out that the minutes of the Access sub-committee are available to SCEC members in Microsoft Teams.

56/20/3

Remote and Rural Membership, Area and Group Support Review

Andrea invited comments on her paper, drafted with Alison's assistance. The paper described the issues that rural committees face, not just in relation to Ramblers Scotland, but other national volunteer led organisations as well. Options were noted in relation to changing area governance structures focusing on improving communication and engagement of rural groups.

Brendan noted that he was happy to discuss in detail about what RS can do to support both Groups and Areas, without imposing anything. Andrea emphasised that this was an open process and the importance of gaining feedback from Groups and Areas in relation to the three options proposed.

Jeannie noted that Richard Sharp was working on similar ideas in relation to RGB and that she would put Andrea in contact with Richard.

AP4 Brendan to ensure Andrea was put in touch with Richard Sharp.

Comments from SCEC included highlighting structures used by other organisations such as the 'hub and spoke' model, where administrative and finance tasks are undertaken at 'central level', so that holding and maintaining bank accounts at Group level would not be

necessary. The importance of presenting options as part of this review was stressed, in order to take into account the wide differences between Groups.

In relation to the posts of Training Officers within Groups and Areas, it was noted that this worked well initially for some Areas where there were willing volunteers but once training was overseen via the RS office, the Training Officers had very little to do.

Andrea proposed to work up the four options in more detail and these options would be considered within an options appraisal process. A timetable had also been noted in Andrea's paper. SCEC approved this approach.

AP5 Andrea to work up more detailed options and begin the appraisal process within the timetable proposed.

57/20 SKILLS AUDIT RESULTS AND OUTCOME

Alison noted that this was the first time that RS has specifically looked at the skills audit in detail and also noted that Hildegard had worked on this as well.

Douglas noted that he had already mentioned his intention to stand down from SCEC at SC2021. This would leave SCEC without a member with a legal background. It was suggested that the identification of suitable individuals, and the encouragement of these potential candidates, should commence sooner, rather than later, for standing at SC2021. It was noted that Scotways has a reputation for being strong on legal matters and they may be able to suggest a member who could be interested in co-option to SCEC.

AP6 Alison / other member of the Co-option Sub-committee to approach Scotways to seek their opinion in relation to individuals from their organisation, with the appropriate legal background, who may be interested in possible co-option to SCEC. This approach to be considered alongside other means to bring forward applications from suitable individuals to maximise and maintain the right balance of skills for SCEC.

There were a number of comments around appraisal of SCEC members and the specific detail of how this would be implemented. These included 1) benchmarks for appraisal 2) action points after appraisal 3) timing of appraisal: formative, normative or summative 4) the considerable time that would need to be allocated to the appraisal of all SCEC members if this is undertaken individually 5) the training of the appraiser and the fact that the appraiser would need to be assessed as a SCEC member and also as an appraiser 6) alternatives to individual appraisals ie 360 degree assessments 7) skills assessment is a self-assessment with no validation.

It was noted that BoT had not progressed appraisals. A member of SCEC noted that OSCR states that it is good practice to conduct appraisals and the importance of both clarity and transparency in objectives. It was also noted that it would be important to seek information from other voluntary organisations regarding their appraisal processes.

Brendan noted that RS would be happy to support this through seeking out training opportunities related to objectives for SCEC individuals. It is important that SCEC members understand what is expected of them in relation to assessing and monitoring the Business Plan and also for the organisation to reflect best practice. It was also noted by Tanya that NCVO talk about a review of 'contribution' rather than using the word 'appraisal'.

AP7 Training plans to be formulated by Alison for SCEC members with support from Hildegard to identify appropriate training providers.

AP8 Appraisal process for SCEC members to be fully detailed and presented at the November SCEC meeting by Alison.

58/20 PLANS FOR SCOTTISH COUNCIL

Jeannie highlighted the various points to consider in relation to holding Scottish Council in 2021. SCEC was in agreement that it should be one day Saturday event on 6 March, non-residential if it was to be a physical meeting and a central location selected such as Glasgow or Edinburgh. Business would be limited to the formal AGM and whatever else could realistically be included in the time available.

The importance of consulting with RS members was also noted if there is a reduced format for the AGM and to gain an idea of how many members are likely to attend.

Some members of SCEC noted their concerns about holding the AGM as a physical meeting, including highlighting the uncertain outlook and the fact that a significant number of RS members are in the high risk group in relation to the Covid pandemic.

A back-up plan would be necessary if the meeting had to be held electronically and this may have to happen at short notice.

Brendan noted the need to limit our financial liability with any plans that are made. There is also a reputational risk if there were difficulties in relation to the holding of the AGM which would reflect poorly on the organisation.

Jeannie suggested that it was desirable to make a decision now to minimise potential costs and wasted effort.

It was decided to plan for an electronic only Scottish Council focused on essential AGM business. The detail of an electronic meeting, including technical details such as how voting could proceed, the possibility of having presentations as well to make the AGM a little more 'exciting' and the possibility of recording the meeting or making it available in real time to also be considered for those unable or unwilling to attend.

It was noted that unless the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 is extended beyond the end of September, then technically it wouldn't be correct to hold the AGM electronically.

AP9 Jeannie to start working on proposals for an electronic only Scottish Council to be presented at November's SCEC meeting.

59/20 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

Brendan highlighted the status of a number of the projects in the Business Plan. In relation to the Young Adult Development project, there had been a successful bid which focused on the aim to attract more under-represented groups. The bid will cover 50% of the costs of the project over two years and there are a number of other bids in the process of being drafted to secure the remaining 50% of costs.

In relation to Mapping Scotland's Paths project, Brendan noted the background that fewer than 50% of paths appear to be marked on OS maps, making it harder than it should be to find places to walk across Scotland. Following a successful trial collating path data from partner agencies in the west of the central belt, the Project Manager, Luke Phillips, is investigating which platforms to use to support volunteers who will be 'sense checking' the paths on the ground.

In relation to Walk Leadership, there is some level of activity taking place including the practical testing of small training groups outdoors as part of the Young Adult Development project. RS is continuing to explore ways in which Walk Leader training can be delivered remotely.

Brendan also noted the wide-spread media coverage in relation to irresponsible camping. RS in its communications have not focused on the negatives but focused on the lack of outdoor infrastructure in the countryside. RS has had productive conversations with the national parks and other stakeholders. RS distinctive contribution to this debate could be commissioning a desk research project engaging with individuals who are new to accessing and camping in the countryside.

Brendan highlighted the trends in RS membership and comparisons with RGB as a whole. Both organisations saw similar growth in membership at the end of the planning year in March 2020, relating primarily to the recruitment of new members as opposed to the retention of existing members. In July, there was a significant increase in RGB membership after the decline across the months of April to June. This increase in July was primarily due to new member recruitment, which was true also of RS membership, although it did not improve by as much as RGB as a whole.

Only Alison attended the electronic pre-SCEC meeting to discuss the Draft Business Plan for 2020-2021.

The planning assumption that underpins the Draft Business Plan is that all projects will continue in some form as part of a 'new business as usual' but they will of course be stood down if they prove not to be practical even as the current restrictions evolve. The Draft Business Plan focuses on new activities and major projects and is therefore not inclusive of all work which will be undertaken. These new activities will be measurable in terms of their progress and success and additional work will be undertaken in relation to KPIs.

Brendan also highlighted one of the KPMG recommendations which noted that individual named SCEC members to have a particular responsibility for the delivery of a particular RS objective but this does not mean that named SCEC members would be line managing RS staff. The effectiveness of this approach will be through a formal reporting process.

It was noted that there was the danger that the temporary restrictions on access to the countryside due to the Covid pandemic, could become permanent. Brendan stressed that access work was being planned to help lessen the prospect of this happening.

The Introductory Walks project will now be delivered in Spring 2021 and through this project RS will be able to target groups under-represented in our membership.

The Draft Business Plan follows the structure of the RGB Business Plan but the activities and objectives in the RS Plan reflect the circumstances and opportunities relevant to Scotland.

No comments were made on the Draft Business Plan which was approved.

In relation to the budget, Brendan noted that it is not sustainable to rely on PPL income to fund core work and this money needs to be used for discrete and time limited projects, such as Mapping Scotland's Paths. There is growing concern that the unrestricted funds available for core activities are now very tight, as membership has not grown as quickly as expected, particularly after the coronavirus lockdown took effect. RS proposed budget for 2020-2021 is a broadly flat budget but we will be able to proceed with the Introductory Walks. RS did request a new temporary post related to the Covid situation to assist with access to the

countryside but this year is not the year to be applying to increase RS's capacity. Building up our volunteer base may be a way to assist with increasing access.

There were no questions on the 2020-2021 budget.

60/20 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next SCEC quarterly meeting will be Tuesday 17 November and will be held via Microsoft Teams.

The meeting after this will be Tuesday 9 February 2021.

61/20 AOCB

61/20/1

Alison noted that Area AGMs are traditionally held towards the end of the year or the start of the New Year. The decision will be made at BoT level whether individuals from the BoT find it useful to attend Area AGMs in Scotland.

Jeannie noted that a guidance document is being prepared by Mark Crosby and Richard Sharp in relation to holding Area AGMs, including how to hold a virtual AGM, addressing the practical issues involved. The guidance will cover Scotland as well.

61/20/2

In relation to guidance regarding restarting walks as restrictions are being lifted regarding outdoor activities, it was stated that the main communication with members is via the newsletter. It was pointed out by a member of SCEC that members don't read the newsletter in detail and therefore miss things.

Jeannie noted that there was detailed guidance on restarting walks on the RS website and that this was now much easier to find since the RS homepage had been restructured as one of the main topics highlighted at the right-hand side of the page. Jeannie also noted that guidance had been sent out last year to Area secretaries in relation to producing a written report for their AGM and also liaising with the guest speaker/s.

61/20/2

Mention was made of the Coul Links decision by the Scottish Government earlier this year to refuse planning permission to build a golf course at this location seemed only 'half' a victory. The SCEC member stated that a management plan was now needed and organisations like Scottish Natural Heritage would like people to contribute to this plan. Brendan agreed the importance of following through on this Scottish Government decision and that RS would like to support such a plan and to be seen to be contributing.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm.

Minute compiled by Hildegard Berwick, governance and events administrator
28 August 2020



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

18 November 2020
Date.....