

SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meeting held by video conference

**Minute of meeting held on
Tuesday 12 May 2020 from 16.00 – 18.20**

30/20 ATTENDANCE

SCEC

Alison Mitchell – convener
Douglas Tullis – vice convener elect
Alistair Cant – honorary treasurer
Bekah Cork
Beth Dickson
Elly Macdonald
Mike Morris
Andrea Steel – SCEC co-optee
Lucy Wallace - president
David Webb
Jay Wilson

Board of Trustees

Kate Ashbrook – chair, Ramblers GB

Staff

Brendan Paddy, director of Scotland
Helen Todd, campaigns & policy manager
Danny Carden, comms & engagement manager
Ruth Bowen, walk leadership officer (at 17.45)

31/20 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Alison welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked Kate and Lucy in particular for joining. She also thanked Brendan for putting the papers together and organising the video conference facility in Hildegard's absence. There were no apologies.

32/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33/20 IMPORTANT DATES (APP 1)

These were noted.

34/20 APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETINGS FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2020 (APPs 2a, 2b, 2c & 2d)

The minutes of the February meeting were proposed by Douglas and seconded by Jay and approved by SCEC.

There was one amendment from Douglas to the minutes of the post-Scottish Council March meetings to include the agreement to create a new Innovation Working Group. This was agreed and the minutes were then proposed by Jay and seconded by Bekah and approved by SCEC.

Brendan went through the action points. These had all been completed or otherwise included in the business plan for ongoing programmed action, with the exception of AP1 17/20 for Helen to discuss the possibility of Ramblers waymarks for signage with GB staff. It was noted that AP& 29/20 had been completed, and that while AP5 06/20 in relation to

getting Scottish survey results had not been completed, it was not possible to get these results, so SCEC agreed to close this action point.

AP2 – Helen to amend the post-Scottish Council minute to refer to the Innovation Working Group.

35/20 CONVENER'S REPORT (APP 3)

This was noted.

36/20 BUSINESS PLAN (APPs 4a, 4b & 4c)

Brendan introduced the business plan by explaining how we had started the year very strongly with activities on track, but the impact of the Coronavirus and subsequent lockdown had clearly meant the business plan needed to be re-drawn. The staff had accordingly gone through each line in the business plan and amended each activity in line with the new context. For example, the Introductory Walks programme had had to be postponed until at least October but this may need to be put back even further, despite a welcome response from groups to this initiative.

Bekah raised the issue of the need for new guidance to volunteers and groups given the changing situation around the Coronavirus. Danny responded that this was constantly being updated. Given the recent change in English guidance there was a mailing going out to all volunteers that day, to reflect the differences in each nation.

Douglas raised a concern regarding the rise in access cases that had occurred as a result of the lockdown and queried whether Helen had the capacity to respond. Helen said that the initial high number of cases had reduced but there were still more than usual. However, given the difficulty in doing any site visits, she was only able to give advice, and this seemed to be manageable at present.

Jay raised the issue of whether volunteering in some forms, such as path maintenance work, could continue, as long as social distancing was carried out. SCEC recognized that there was some dubiety as to the exact legal position, but the government/Ramblers guidance would not cover this work and therefore insurance wouldn't be available.

37/20 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE (APP 5)

Danny introduced his paper by saying that although some planned activities had had to changed or be postponed, nevertheless there had been a significant increase in communications particularly related to access queries and guidance and walking during lockdown. Mostly this activity was part of the #RoamSweetHome campaign, focusing on opportunities for individual walking close to home. Ramblers GB had also been running a series of online volunteer activities, such as a quiz. The #RoamSweetHome campaign would now be winding down in England given the change in guidance but it was still relevant in Scotland and Wales.

Danny explained that GB brand research last year had indicated there was a clear opportunity to reach out to individual walkers who were not likely to join group walks. This has been brought forward as one activity that could continue during this time and will be launched as a Joy of Walking campaign. This will at first be targeted geographically to the 40-60 age group through Facebook advertising, to highlight what resources are available to individual walkers as a member, and then it will be rolled out further, depending on the response. Lucy offered to be involved in this campaign if this would be useful.

Danny's time was now likely to move towards working on the Joy of Walking campaign and the complex communications required across the three nations around the relaxing of lockdown.

Planned training has been postponed but it was possible that this could be going online.

Brendan thanked Danny for his work especially given that his workload had increased so significantly.

38/20 FINANCE UPDATE (APPs 6a & 6b)

Alistair introduced the papers. In App 6a he pointed out that the £12.500 in the accounts was the result of a successful bid to GB for walk leadership project training. This funding would be re-allocated to the project fund if possible. Also, there was £350 for SCEC training which was aimed to support SCEC members to improve their skills and help them carry out their roles on SCEC. However, he recognized that training couldn't happen now.

Alistair noted that App 6b is a paper prepared by GB and included so SCEC is aware of the full range of operational activities carried out by the Ramblers in Scotland. Some of these are carried out without any control over them by Ramblers Scotland staff, including membership recruitment as shown in a graph.

Brendan noted that the graph shows that membership is no longer declining year on year, but growth is modest, and there had been a modest decline this year to date. The initial assumption was that membership renewals would be affected by the Covid crisis, but it wasn't yet clear to what extent this would happen if the crisis continued over the longer term and people can no longer walk with their groups. It was unfortunate that the work that had delivered a solid improvement in GB membership numbers prior to the Covid crisis had had to be put on hold. Kate mentioned that the Board would be having a session on membership at its May meeting, reviewing its plan for membership growth. They were very aware of the risks, but it was clear that the Ramblers is about far more than just group walking so they would be looking at new ways of working, celebrating the joys of walking and promoting all the work that the organization does on access and paths.

39/20 UPDATE ON WORKING GROUPS (APP 7)

Access Sub Committee - Douglas had circulated a note on the work of the committee prior to the meeting. The group had not met since February although there had been some email exchanges. This would be discussed in the agenda item on terms of reference.

Gathering Working Group – Alison reported that the Gathering had been postponed for a year to take place again in Bute on 30 April-3 May 2021. Most people had been happy to carry over their bookings. This brought some breathing space to think about the future of the Gathering and volunteers for the working group were sought.

40/20 KPMG AUDIT (APPs 8a & 8b)

Brendan introduced the draft KPMG audit report. One recommendation was to carry out a review of the constitution including tenure for SCEC members and this would be covered by the Constitutional Review Working Group. There were several other recommendations as well as some small errors in the report. The one significant error was the statement that Ramblers Scotland has no PVG policy, which is untrue.

The requirement to have a good range of skills amongst SCEC members was discussed, and it was noted that a formal process to update the SCEC skills audit had been started by Hildegard but was paused for now, although this would form the basis for the next steps.

There was a discussion around the recommendation to include independent board members, and whether there was an over-emphasis on getting independent people on SCEC rather than getting people with the right skills.

SCEC's views on the draft report were invited and a response to the draft report would be put together by Brendan with an action plan. It would be made clear who was responsible for taking each action forward, with some actions assigned to SCEC members. Alison asked Brendan if the actions required could be brought to the next meeting for discussion.

Kate said that the issues raised were familiar to the Board of Trustees too, so the report could be usefully circulated. General Council 2020 was due to discuss changes to the constitution relating to suspension of membership with a paper to be taken to GC 2021, but this had had to be postponed. Alistair reminded SCEC that WCEC was also due to discuss a paper at the cancelled Welsh Council on various governance issues like these recommendations. This could be discussed at the June 'state of the nations' meeting

AP3 - Brendan to produce an update on how the recommendations could be implemented for the next SCEC meeting in August.

AP4 – Brendan to share the final version of the report with the Board of Trustees and WCEC, after SCEC and management comments had been incorporated

AP5 – Alison to ask for these governance issues to be on the agenda at the June 'state of the nations' meeting agenda.

41/20 TERMS OF REFERENCE (APP9)

41/20/1

Access Sub Committee – Douglas reported that he felt that the ASC had become too large and unwieldy, though Alistair felt that the group worked well given some members didn't attend each meeting or join discussions and it was good to get strong input from non-SCEC members. He was encouraged that discussion had continued between meetings. It was noted that the original terms of reference for the group no longer reflected what the group did and should be refreshed. It was agreed that an ASC meeting should take place by video conference.

AP6 – Helen to schedule an ASC meeting shortly.

41/20/2

Gathering working group – other SCEC members were welcome to join this.

41/20/3

Co-option sub-committee – Elly raised concerns about whether SCEC was co-opting members for the right reasons and achieving what they wanted to achieve. This should be considered before attempting to co-opt any further members. Douglas echoed that. Alison felt this wasn't the year to bring forward more co-options, and Andrea has already been brought on to the committee in that role. Brendan pointed out that succession is also a concern and was raised in the KPMG audit, so early identification by SCEC of people with the right skills who could be encouraged to stand for the committee would be another useful function such a sub-committee could serve. SCEC agreed it was good to include people who were relatively new to the Ramblers and didn't necessarily have much or any previous Group/Area committee experience, so that there was a balance of internal experience and

new thinking. Staff could take lead in identifying people but better for SCEC to take a role in doing this.

Alison was reluctant to lose this working group so suggested it sits in abeyance for now.

41/20/4

Remote and rural membership group – Andrea confirmed agreement to be a member.

41/20/5

Constitutional Review Group – it was agreed that Alistair would chair this group. It was pointed out that Barry Pottle would only be involved for consultation in his role as chair of the Motions Committee. Alistair suggested that a meeting should take place as soon as possible so that proposals could be forwarded to the August SCEC meeting. This would allow for worked up ideas and options ready for debate at Scottish Council 2021. Douglas suggested that preparation for the meeting could be done by email to deal with the most straightforward points before the meeting.

AP7 – Alistair to set up Constitution Review Group meeting

41/20/6

Innovation Working Group – Jay explained that Scotland was already seen as an incubator of new ideas within the Ramblers so he felt it would be good for SCEC to have a forum for these new ideas. It was envisaged that this would run informally with Jay and Bekah as members, with Bekah acting as chair. Brendan felt there couldn't be staff secretariat support due to the nature of the group.

AP8 – Hildegard to add standing item on each agenda for updates from all working groups

42/20 SCOTTISH COUNCIL EVALUATION (APPs 10a & 10b)

Brendan reported that there had been an initial discussion with the hotel at Carnoustie about Scottish Council 2021, but no deposit had been paid yet. Douglas raised the issue that the Covid-19 crisis may still be running which could preclude the kind of Scottish Council we have had previously and a smaller AGM-only meeting may be required. SCEC agreed to discuss this at the August meeting.

In terms of Scottish Council 2020, the evaluation report was welcomed. There was a suggestion to have page numbers added. The discussion forums had been an innovation and as a result feedback was mixed. There was a query as to how to gather the many interesting points and ideas which arose from those sessions and consider them. David offered to share a framework on how this could be done. It was suggested that participants could be polled in advance so that they could suggest what they would be interested in discussing.

Alistair reminded SCEC that the constitutional review group outputs may be on the agenda for next year which may need discussion time under motions. In terms of the draft minute from Scottish Council, Douglas and Alistair had already submitted amendments.

AP9 – Jeannie to add page numbers to the evaluation report.

AP10 – David to share a framework for considering various ideas from discussion groups.

AP11 – Helen to add discussion of Scottish Council 2021 to August agenda.

AP12 – Hildegard to update SC draft minute using tracked changes.

43/20 WALK LEADERSHIP (APP 11)

Ruth joined the meeting and introduced the interim walk leadership project report. Her priorities now were to review the course content in partnership with the trainers and the Ramblers GB team and make it more interactive and practical, plus to carry out an evaluation of the mentor role. These activities can both be carried out during this lockdown period when no face-to-face training can take place.

It was recognized that the walk leadership training pathway hadn't really got underway for various reasons, but Ruth had ideas on how to simplify and improve this pathway to increase uptake. New approaches could include, for example, exploring the development of e-learning modules. Lucy offered to give any support she could. Alison felt geographic coverage of the project was an issue, but this could be planned for going forward. Ruth confirmed that the advisory board was now acting as an email contact group, but it hadn't met since December.

44/20 DATES OF NEXT MEETING

The next meetings will be on Tuesday 18 August and Tuesday 17 November. It is likely that the August meeting will again be by video conference.

45/20 AOB

There was no other business.

Alison thanked everyone for attending and for the way they had managed with the video conference system.

The meeting closed at 18.20

Minutes compiled by Helen Todd, campaigns & policy manager.

Action points

Pre Scottish Council SCEC meeting 7 March

17/20

AP1 – Helen to discuss the possibility of Ramblers waymarks for signage with GB

May SCEC meeting

34/20

AP2 – Helen to amend the post-Scottish Council minute to refer to the Innovation Working Group.

40/20

AP3 - Brendan to produce an update on how the recommendations could be implemented for the next SCEC meeting in August.

40/20

AP4 – Brendan to share the final version of the report with the Board of Trustees and WCEC, after SCEC and management comments had been incorporated

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APPROVED BY THE SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF RAMBLERS SCOTLAND – 18 August 2020
