

SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 10th February 2014, 16.00-20.00
at Scottish Environment Link Office, Shore Road, Perth

01/14 ATTENDANCE

SCEC

David Thomson, Convener	Elizabeth Lawie
James Lawson, Vice-Convener	Alison Mitchell
Alistair Cant, Hon Treasurer	Vic Royce
Ben Douglas	

Staff

Benedict Southworth – Ramblers Chief Executive
Dave Morris – Director Scotland
Helen Todd – Campaigns & Policy Manager
Kareen Robertson – Communications & Finance Officer

02/14 WELCOME

David Thomson, Ramblers Scotland Convener welcomed everyone to the first SCEC meeting of 2014.

03/14 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ramblers GB Chair Jonathan Kipling and SCEC members John Andrews and Roy Keenan.

04/14 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2013 (App 1)

The minutes were proposed by Alison Mitchell and Ben Douglas subject to some minor changes in formatting.

05/14 REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS

SCEC member Alison Mitchell had carried out further investigation into holding the Scottish Ramblers Gathering at Mar Lodge. It has been organised from Friday, 12 to Monday, 15 September. She has been in discussion with Rangers employed at Mar Lodge who are going to co-operate with the Gathering and arrange various activities over the weekend. Alison agreed to send information to the Ramblers Scotland office for the Events section of the website.

AP – AM to send information for the website to RS office

AP 4 – National Park (NP) work. SCEC noted that, since the last SCEC meeting, the Scottish Government had announced that it had no plans to establish any further NPs in the near future. SCEC discussed the possibility of persuading the Western Isles Council to support a NP in Harris. SCEC agreed that the money allocated to this work at the last meeting should be kept in reserve until after further

discussions with APRS (Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland) and SCNP (Scottish Campaign for National Parks).

AP5 – The Devolution Committee meeting was cancelled. SCEC agreed this item should be included on the SCEC Agenda for the first main meeting after Scottish Council.

AP6 - Vision Statement – An updated document produced by Jim Lawson on the Vision Statement was distributed to all SCEC members on Sun 9th February. This is an Agenda item for later in the meeting.

AP 7 Scotland’s First Minister (FM) was invited to speak at Scottish Council but unfortunately he is unable to attend. SCEC noted that another government minister may attend in his place. Kareen Robertson is to get an update from the FM’s office.

AP9 – Ramblers Scotland Finance summary. This has been requested from the Finance section in London and will be distributed with other Scottish Council papers.

AP10 – Finance questions SCEC agreed that any finance questions at Scottish Council should be directed to the Chief Executive’s workshop at Scottish Council.

AP12 – Benedict Southworth (Ramblers Chief Executive) stated that the membership renewal process and the first year of members’ supported journey and welcome pack is being examined. Ramblers is also looking at the carrier sheet distributed with *Walk* magazine before the end of the financial year.

APs 3 and 11 (AP3: examine arrangements for providing expenses at training events and AP11: look into the Stanley Medal Route issue) are still outstanding but it is hoped to progress these in the near future.

AP 5 KR Devolution committee to be included on the Agenda

AP 7 KR Get update from First Minister’s office on his attendance at SC

AP 8 KR Distribute RS finance paper with SC papers

AP 3 Examine arrangements for providing expenses at training events (AP from previous meeting)

AP 11 KR Look into Stanley medal route (AP from previous meeting)

06/14 FINANCE REPORT (App 2, 2A and 2B)

SCEC noted the financial report produced by Alistair Cant, Honorary Treasurer. It was noted by SCEC that there has been a minor change in payment frequency from half yearly to quarterly. Only one meeting has been held since the new financial year so there has not been much activity.

SCEC noted the Brief Commentary (paper 2A) and RS Expenditure (paper 2B). Ramblers Scotland (RS) is on target for Areas and Groups and to date is in a good position financially. SCEC noted that the commentary paper provided by Nicky Russell (Management Accountant based in London) was very useful.

07/14 DIRECTOR’S REPORT (App 3)

Dave Morris highlighted the following points:

- 1) **RSPB** He and David Thomson had met with Stuart Housden (Director RSPB Scotland) and Professor Colin Galbraith (Chair of RSPB’s committee for Scotland) on 1 Feb at RSPB Scotland HQ in Edinburgh. The meeting had been

cordial and RSPB and Ramblers Scotland discussed a number of key issues for joint working. These included action on deer control to secure reductions in overgrazing, without the need for deer fencing; potential new liaison arrangements to ensure that outdoor recreation organisations had appropriate opportunities for involvement in RSPB nature reserve policies and activities; joint action on CAP reform, especially in relation to the delivery of environmental services, such as expanded field margins; cooperation on the hill tracks issue and action to bring these under planning control; cooperation over coastal protection and enjoyment, especially in regard to planning policy; joint discussion about closing down some tracks within nature reserves in ways which did not compromise access rights; wildlife crime and opportunities for Ramblers to assist RSPB and police in detection of poisoning, shooting and trapping incidents.

On Abernethy RS explained how long standing policies for Old Caledonian Pinewood (OCP) conservation favoured natural regeneration rather than planting for restoring and expanding the OCP. RSPB and RS agreed to disagree on this but anticipated that further discussion would be needed.

SCEC agreed that the RS Director should mention the meeting with RSPB at Scottish Council under the slot for the Annual Report. This would allow members to hear that we are in constructive dialogue with RSPB on a number of issues.

AP DM to mention meeting with RSPB at Scottish Council

- 2) **Royal Society Forestry Society (RSFS)** The RS Director attended a meeting in Aviemore about Abernethy on 5 February with RSPB regional and local staff. Reference was made to a prospective article about Abernethy in the journal of the RSFS. This had been suggested by the Historiographer Royal for Scotland, Professor TC (Chris) Smout, who had been following the OCP controversy, and thought it should be covered by the journal. SCEC noted that Prof Smout is presenting RSFS's inaugural Annual lecture – the History and the Myth of Scots Pine - at Edinburgh Zoo on 19 March and is supportive of the position being taken by Ramblers and its advisers on OCP conservation.
- 3) **Membership** of RS has been growing slowly during the period since October. In February 88 new members were recorded – a sign of an upturn, not just in Scotland but also in England and Wales.
- 4) **Walk Leadership (WL)** RS staff discussions had taken place on the subject and the RS Director asked SCEC for their views. SCEC felt there should be a standard and consistent approach across all Groups and across all three nations – England, Scotland and Wales. For example, there should be a register, a warm welcome, request for an emergency contact number – all this could be outlined in a simple document that all WLs could handle and would provide the base level of support across all Groups.

Ben Douglas emphasised that the *Walk Leader's checklist* card provides an excellent summary of what WLs should do. A further development could be advice for Back Markers since, when there are large numbers of walkers, they provide essential functions. David Thomson suggested that Ben should contact Karen Inkster, Led Walks Development Officer, with his ideas.

AP - BD to contact Karen Inkster (Led Walks Officer) with his ideas

SCEC noted that the RS Director believed a case could be made to **sportscotland** for delivering enhanced level leadership advice across Scotland

in view of the more rugged terrain and severe climatic conditions in our operational area.

The RS Director emphasised that, Ramblers do not have to arrive at a position where every walk leader is qualified through the various accreditation schemes. Walk Leaders could be fully competent on the basis of their experience of walking, without any need for certification. Nevertheless, the Group Walks Coordinator (GWC) is responsible for setting up the walks programme and also ensures that the Leader is competent for any particular walk, especially in the case of higher end walks. The GWC and the Group Committee would endorse that a particular leader is capable of leading a particular walk. This approach has worked well previously, particularly for high level, more difficult terrain walks.

Generally, SCEC agreed with what had been discussed but said that RS do need to recognise that there are currently leaders who are not capable of leading some of the more difficult high level routes.

- 5) **Paths for All (PfA)** The RS Director and Helen Todd (Campaigns & Policy Manager) held a meeting with the Chief Officer of PfA earlier in the day. The meeting included discussions about future funding from PfA and RS is reasonably confident that Jeannie Cranfield's post can continue beyond the end of March when funding runs out. However, it is expected that PfA would only fund up to 50% of her post from April 2014, which is similar to the current arrangement. Therefore, RS will need to make a case internally to the FOSC (Finance & Operations sub committee) of the Board of Trustees to potentially agree a 50% match funding arrangement from the 2014-15 budget. In addition, RS would possibly require Ramblers funding to cover an interim period during the 2013-14 financial year (April-May) until the grant application to PfA is confirmed.

AP – DM to submit request to FOSC for additional funding

08/14 SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2014 (App 4, 5, 6 and 7)

SCEC agreed the following in relation to this year's Scottish Council

- 1) **Action on Motions 2013.** Include an update relating to the Vision Statement from action on motions 2012 as this motion is still ongoing. The RS Director and Convener are to agree the wording on this as well as amending the wording on the action for the Cape Wrath motion.
- 2) **Motions 2014.** Ben Douglas (SCEC member for the Agenda Committee (AC)) indicated that AC Chair is not insisting that a physical meeting is held to discuss motions and it is expected that will be carried out via email.
 - a) SCEC agreed that they would oppose the Motion submitted by North Strathclyde Area. They also agreed that we should assist with the GB Vision process, as a priority, rather than diverting resources to the production of a Scottish vision, at this stage.
 - b) The draft Order Paper was accepted.
- 3) The SCEC agreed that the nominee for the 2014 -15 Agenda Committee would be Ben Douglas provided he is re-elected for SCEC at Scottish Council.

AP – DT/DM – Agree wording on Action on Motions 2013 for vision statement and Cape Wrath motion

09/14 GREAT OUTDOORS DAY

SCEC noted that this has not been progressed as Ramblers Scotland was waiting on what was happening with the Games Legacy Advisor post who would lead on this initiative. There is a possibility that we could float the idea with other organisations and piggy back onto what they are doing but the opportunity has not arisen.

10/14 DANGEROUS WILD ANIMALS ENCLOSURE – (Pitcastle Estate, Strathtay)

SCEC noted that Helen Todd and SCEC member John Andrews had visited the Pitcastle Estate where the animal enclosure is located. John is the footpath and access officer for his Area and requested that this issue was raised at SCEC in his absence. The enclosure has electrified deer fencing and is one mile across and three miles long and contains dangerous wild animals (bison etc). According to the local authority, the landowner does not need to apply for an exemption order but walkers do not have access rights to go inside the fence. The Local Access Forum is pursuing this with Perth & Kinross Council.

11/14 WALK DEMONSTRATION ON MEIKLEOUR ESTATE

SCEC noted John Andrew's request that Ramblers Scotland (RS) give support to a walk/demonstration on the Meikleour Estate between Perth and Blairgowrie some time during the summer in order to publicise the attitude of the owner towards would-be access takers. Although SCEC were sympathetic to this issue, they felt it was difficult to discuss without John being present. SCEC noted that Local Councils seem unable to solve some of these intractable access problems and after a recent reorganization in Perth & Kinross Council there appears to be no person with specific responsibility for resolving access disputes.

12/14 UDATE ON PROJECTS

1) Medal Routes (MR). Since the new Project Officer Rob Burns started in October, there are now over 70 walking hubs (amounting to 210 routes) so the project is on track to meet its target for October 2014. Rob has been linking with council employees to get things moving and plans to get every local authority involved. At present it is difficult to know whether future funding will be forthcoming from Paths for All from October onwards or from SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) as their funding is also being reduced.

The Medal Routes project entered the GeoVation Challenge, a challenge which asks for funding ideas that make the best use of Ordnance Survey data. The MR project put forward the idea of creating an App for MRs and has been successful in reaching the final shortlist of ten projects. Rob Burns and Jeannie Cranfield have been invited to a Bootcamp, sponsored by Ordnance Survey, at the end of February to further put forward their ideas.

2) sportscotland. RS is putting together another investment application for the next phase from April 2014 to end of March 2015. The Group Development Officer, Ben Glencross and Jeannie Cranfield (Games Legacy Project Officer) met with sportscotland recently and agreement was made that targets should be based on the number of new members rather than an overall increase in membership.

3) Path maintenance Jeannie Cranfield is working with Ed Wilson (Volunteer Support and Development Officer) to run a paths maintenance training day in Milngavie on 5 April. The aim is to set up a number of path maintenance teams in Scotland.

- 4) **John Muir Festival** Fourteen Ramblers Groups are involved in leading walks for the John Muir Festival which is due to take place during 17 – 26 April.

Other work in the promoting walking area includes:

- Jeannie Cranfield and Dave Morris presenting at the Holyrood Magazine's 2014 Legacy Conference on 26th February.
- Glasgow Group's short walks programme is starting on 6th March for 6 weeks.
- Walk leadership training in development.
- Outdoor Life – 2 pilots in development and interest being gauged at other schools.
- Tayside Young Walkers' inaugural walk is this weekend up Birnam Hill, near Dunkeld.

13/14 PATHS FUND (App 8)

SCEC noted that the proposed Scottish Paths Fund project had been in the business plan since October 2012. The business plan outlined that Scotland has one of the lowest path densities in Europe and as part of our legacy for 2014, RS would like to establish a Scottish Path Fund, administered by RS. The documentation outlined in App 8 included our thoughts on how the path fund may work and is open for discussion.

SCEC were asked to feedback any ideas on this fund. The paper is not for decision but only for comments or ideas. The RS Director commented that the experience of the Ann Gloag appeal in 2006 was a very good demonstration of how extra money can be raised in Scotland for RS but care would be needed in setting up this fund to avoid diverting contributions from Ramblers GB appeals to the RS fund.

AP SCEC to feed in with ideas on Paths Fund proposal.

14/14 CAMPAIGN UPDATE

SCEC noted the following updates on campaigns:

- 1) **Land Reform Review Group (LRRG)** We took part in National Access Forum discussions which have led to a paper being put to the LRRG on main issues relating to Part 1 of the Act.
- 2) **National Walking Strategy** We continue to be engaged in the stakeholder group and a draft strategy is currently being consulted upon.
- 3) **Hill Tracks** The campaign is still underway and we are now awaiting a response from the Minister. Advocacy work is ongoing.
- 4) **Core areas of wild land map.** As part of the review of Scottish Planning Policy, SNH has produced a map showing Core Areas of Wild Land. If adopted as policy, this map would afford a measure of protection against renewable developments, as it would give a useful steer to local authorities as to areas where developments are less appropriate. We have responded to the consultation.

- 5) **Community Empowerment Bill.** We submitted a response to this consultation, calling for NGOs (communities of interest) to be able to register an interest in strips of land to be used for paths, and to have compulsory purchase powers. Sustrans joined us in this submission, and while it is unlikely to happen, it is a useful airing of the difficulties experienced in negotiating with landowners.

15/14 AREA AGMS

SCEC noted that the RS Convener had spoken to Ben Glencross and Jeannie Cranfield about the Renfrewshire, Cowal & Bute Area and the lack of committee members. Comments from the SCEC included:

- Try and raise at an open forum at Scottish Council.
- Groups and Areas should look at success planning for committee members.
- Look for committee members outside the organisation.
- Members are very unclear about committee roles.
- Chair should have an idea of what he/she wants to achieve over the years they are in chair, eg, making groups feel good about themselves.

Benedict Southworth indicated that there was a governance review going on that will look at the Group and Area national picture, in the sense of what is the right balance for democracy within the organisation.

16/14 SCOTTISH NEWSLETTER

SCEC were asked to comment on the RS newsletter which is issued 4 times a year with *Walk* magazine and whether they thought this should continue. Benedict indicated that we had several choices and should consider what balance we wished to have between electronic communication and paper communication, and the number of communications throughout the year.

SCEC noted there was a technical problem with creating a specific e-newsletter for Scotland. Benedict said that he is currently in discussions with Walk magazine's publishers and there are various options with regard to regional content – one possibility is to have 2 – 3 pages devoted to Scottish issues. More money is required to make the Scottish e-newsletter viable which could possibly be carried out by RS staff rather than via London.

17/14 AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

SCEC noted that SCEC members Alison Mitchel had attended a recent North East Mountain Trust AGM.

18/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next SCEC meeting will be held on 8th March, pre Scottish Council.