

SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 28th August 2013, 16.00-20.00
at Scottish Environment Link Office, Shore Road, Perth

41/13 ATTENDANCE

SCEC

David Thomson, Convener	Roy Keenan
Jim Lawson, Vice Convener	Elizabeth Lawie
Alistair Cant, Hon Treasurer	Alison Mitchell
John Andrews	Vic Royce
Ben Douglas	

Staff

Dave Morris – Director Scotland
Helen Todd – Campaigns & Policy Manager
Ben Glencross – Group Development Officer

Board of Trustees

Jonathan Kipling, Ramblers Chair

42/13 WELCOME

- 1) David Thomson welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the newly co-opted members, Roy Keenan and Vic Royce, and new staff member Ben Glencross. He particularly welcomed Jonathan Kipling (Ramblers Chair) and thanked him for taking the trouble of travelling such a distance to join us again.
- 2) David expressed condolences to Dave Morris, on behalf of SCEC, on the recent death of Dave's daughter, Esme. DM thanked members of SCEC for their messages of support. He explained that he was still on compassionate leave but expected to resume normal work by the end of August.

43/13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dr Andrew Murray.

44/13 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the SCEC meeting on 23rd April were approved. Approval of the minutes was proposed by Jim Lawson and seconded by Ben Douglas

45/13 ACTION POINTS AND MATTERS ARISING

All points had been dealt with apart from the following:

AP (4b) – HT reported that she had raised the issue of Ramblers' involvement in A9 dualling consultations at a Scottish Government transport meeting. SCEC noted that the Cairngorms National Park Authority is keen to upgrade the cycle path running parallel to the A9, and agreed that Ramblers Scotland should express support for this initiative. DM also reported that Transport Scotland had plans to erect deer fencing along both sides of the A9. This

would have serious implications for walkers crossing the road, so we should insist that there are gates in the fencing at regular intervals. JA added that Transport Scotland had given a presentation to Luncarty Community Council about crossing the dualled section on a core path and had been told that no pedestrians would be allowed to cross the road. AM said this would be the same on the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road. Any crossing points on the A9 are likely to be created for agricultural use rather than any which are primarily for walkers/cyclists.

AP (5a) – Discussions had taken place between Alistair Cant and Barry Pottle regarding future constitutional changes particularly relating to emergency motions. SCEC agreed to let the new constitution bed in before proposing further changes and the issue of an emergency motion, if it arises, could be dealt with next year through the existing constitution.

AP (5b) – SCEC agreed that there was no need to take further action on the motion relating to the Scottish National Trail since the MoD had pulled out of their attempt to buy Cape Wrath, at least for the time being

AP (6) - DM reported that he had discussed Walnut Grove with the local landowner who is planning to create a new path between the river and railway line, and JA and DM had plans to meet this landowner. SCEC agreed that it was best to wait for these negotiations between the landowner and Network Rail to be completed before pressing further ahead on access across the railway line. At Ben Lui, DM had spoken to the British Transport Police who appeared to agree with our position about the need for Network Rail to put in safety measures such as signage and use of train horns.

AP (5) – DM reported that a committee of the United Nations, based in Geneva, had just ruled against the UK and Scottish Governments regarding the process for considering windfarm applications and energy policy, indicating that local communities were being treated unfairly in this process. The implications of this ruling were not yet clear.

46/13 FINANCE REPORT

SCEC noted the Scottish Council financial report and particularly noted there was a small underspend. The reason for this was funds allocated for training had not yet been used so it was intended to carry forward and reduce the 2013-14 budget accordingly.

Vic Royce queried the minus £6,050 figure in the budget column. AC explained that as there were lower Scottish Council costs, and the carried forward sum from last year had been higher, we adjusted our budget mid-way through the year to contribute to cost savings requested from Central Office finance. We were able to reduce our allocation from the Board of Trustees by half to save them £4,000.

47/13 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director apologised for the lateness of minutes being produced which was due to his absence from work on compassionate leave. He agreed the minutes for this meeting would be circulated much earlier in future. The Director highlighted the following points:

- 1) RS was now in a much improved position from where we were after the 2009 redundancies. We now had 3 core staff, plus 3 staff who from Oct onwards would be mainly externally-funded from sources originating from the Scottish Government (**sportscotland**, SNH and Paths for All). In addition Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust make a contribution to the Medal Routes project.
- 2) Jacqueline Ferguson, Medal Routes Project Officer, left her post earlier in August for a permanent appointment with LANTRA. Interviews were taking place for her replacement

that day and it was hoped that funding for the project would continue beyond October 2014. Ben Glencross' post was funded as an investment from **sportscotland**.

- 3) Paths for All has given RS £25,000 funding which will cover Jeannie Cranfield's post until 31 March 2014 as well as a small activity budget, to deliver our promoting walking work. DM and HT had met the Scottish Government's new Walking and Cycling Officer the previous day, and it was hoped that there may be funding opportunities following the publication of the National Walking Strategy.
- 4) Due to budget constraints it was doubtful that RS would receive additional funding for more campaign and policy work within RS. DM was covering various key campaigns while HT was keeping a watching brief on other policy and operational areas. Membership within each of the three nations was continuing to decline but last month saw a slight rise in RS membership from the previous month's figures. Alison Mitchell requested a copy of the Area breakdown of membership be sent to all SCEC members.
- 5) SCEC had a general discussion about Groups. According to a recent RGB survey approximately 25% of members walk regularly in groups, 25% walk irregularly and 50% don't walk in groups, so the organisation was trying to engage across the spectrum with a variety of measures. It was noted that many new members joined through health walks, and through the internet. The Out of Doors radio programme had been helpful in promoting a local group. Ben Glencross asked if RGB could find out how new members had heard about the our organisation and then the key methods could be targeted. AC asked for e-newsletters to be written for Scottish members, rather than being sent the GB newsletters as at present. BG agreed to follow up this points with RGB.
- 6) It was noted that TAKE 30 posters had been sent to every health centre in Scotland in order to promote this project.
- 7) SCEC discussed various controversial cases that RS were involved in, including access disputes and problems with forestry projects in the Cairngorms. SCEC noted that many access disputes were very difficult to resolve and these points had been made by RS in its submission to the Land Reform Review Group. SCEC also noted that many controversial cases often involved a robust dispute at the beginning, but this eventually led to a harmonious resolution. SCEC noted the OSCR referendum guidance and agreed that a paper should be produced for the November meeting outlining which issues are going to be relevant to the debate, such as energy policy, MoD, and Network Rail. SCEC also agreed that the statement would need to be compliant with OSCR guidance but should not include a recommendation on whether to vote "yes" or "know" so as to avoid internal controversy within the RS membership. SCEC also noted the proposed lobbying bill in Westminster (App 3 Ann B) which might affect activities in Scotland.

AP – KR to organise membership figures to be sent to SCEC. (4)

AP – BG to discuss with RGB mailing arrangements to members in Scotland. (5)

AP – DM/HT/DT to produce referendum paper for next meeting. (7)

48/13 GROUP DEVELOPMENT OFFICER – BEN GLENCROSS

The Convener asked BG to speak about his planned activities within RS. Ben explained that he would be meeting Groups, both Ramblers and other organisations, to learn best practice and promulgate new ideas to boost membership. In addition he would also be looking to establish new groups, provide training, hold events and improve communication but his main target was to increase overall RS membership by 250 each year.

SCEC discussed various issues surrounding new groups. The issues included: (1) evidence for how new groups can attract numbers; (2) concern that Ben may face hostility from existing

groups; (3) 'closed' groups who didn't want any change, and that the Ramblers' bureaucratic approach put lots of people off; and (4) we should target various groups of people, not just young people's groups and that newly retired people were a big potential market.

49/13 TRAINING DAYS

SCEC noted the two RS training days on 21 September for Path Maintenance and our Walk Leadership Training day on 2 November. Area and Group secretaries have already been informed of these training days through our Scottish newsletter but Ben will email all Group/Area secretaries within the next week outlining the Agenda and giving them details of the venue and location.

AP: BG to email A/G secretaries with training days information.

50/13 CONSTITUTIONAL AND STANDING ORDERS

This item was covered under Matters Arising, Item No 45/13 (AP5a).

51/13 FEEDBACK FROM CPC MEETING

DT reported back on the Constituent Parts Committee meeting held in July, and referred to issues of disagreement on the interpretation of the devolution agreement. He hoped these could be resolved during meetings in Sept involving DT, AC, DM and BS. He also stressed the need for the Director Scotland to be a full member of the SMT, as was the case before the redundancies of 2009. The SCEC noted that the CPC is now to be known as the Devolution Committee, and meetings will be more frequent. AM pointed out that there are still materials coming out of Central Office which have not been adapted for Scotland, and this is a sensitive issue which should be resolved.

AC stated that the robust discussions over several years during the Devolution Working Party process had resulted in an agreement in Sept 2011, but the next steps in its implementation would be through the staff so it was important to sort out any differences of understanding asap.

52/13 SCOTTISH COUNCIL

- 1) Action on motions 2013 – No outstanding actions required. AC reminded SCEC that the Scottish vision was a motion from 2012. JL indicated that this was progressing and RK requested that it be put on the agenda next time.
- 2) SCEC expressed a preference for Scottish Council being in one venue all day but would delegate authority to KR and DT, based on visits to the venues.

AP – KR to add vision to the SCEC agenda

AP – KR/DT to visit potential venues

53/13 SCOTTISH RAMBLERS GATHERING

Alison Mitchell apologised for the lateness in the circulation of her paper but she had been involved in humanitarian activities in Aberdeen for the previous few days following the recent helicopter crash off Shetland. AM spoke to the paper and asked for SCEC's guidance in dealing with various issues which have arisen with regard to running the Gathering.

The Director congratulated AM on her success with organising the Gathering over the previous 26 years, which generally had more attendance than Scottish Council yet with no staff input. SCEC agreed that a new organiser should be found and that there should be no staff input in the future, mainly because of time constraints already on staff. However, there was another option which would be to have Scottish Council and the Gathering at the same

time in one area. AM felt that the organisation of the Gathering would involve six people and she could break down the tasks accordingly. SCEC also agreed that if AM stood down, it might help to galvanise support from others and DT felt that to obtain new volunteers, we could publicise this on our website.

AP – AM to provide breakdown of tasks for Gathering organisation and publicise this on the Ramblers website to ask for more volunteers to come forward.

54/13 CORE PATHS

JA raised the issue that aspirational paths on core paths plans were not being progressed due to lack of funds and/or lack of landowner cooperation. DM recognised the weakness in the legislation which would mean a difficulty in implementation of the LRA. BG mentioned that individual groups may be able to apply for funding to get better access provision, and training would help members to influence factors on the ground. HT said that the Land Reform Review Group had passed access issues over to the National Access Forum, and this would give Ramblers Scotland an opportunity to raise problems like this and possibly effect change. DM pointed out that the National Walking Strategy was also a good opportunity to press for improvements to path infrastructure.

55/13 RAMBLERS SCOTLAND BUSINESS PLAN

SCEC noted that the current two year RS and RGB Business Plans ran through 2013 to 2014 and were not expected to undergo substantial change during this time, but it was unlikely that all parts of the plans would be delivered. SCEC agreed to delegate input to the budget process to DT and AC.

56/13 UPDATE ON PROJECTS

- 1) Medal Routes – HT reported that an offer had been made to a candidate that day after interviews for a new Project Officer. Not much progress was being made in the absence of a Project Officer, but Jeannie Cranfield and office volunteer Judith Dobson were dealing with inquiries.
- 2) **sportscotland** – it was reiterated that BG's relationship with **sportscotland** would be vital for any future investment into Ramblers Scotland.
- 3) Paths for All – HT outlined the new relationship with Paths for All in terms of funding for Jeannie's post from October to March, and the proposed outcomes were noted by SCEC.

57/13 AREA AGMS

HT and JK explained the Board of Trustees had decided that all Areas would receive an update on the Vision process from a member of senior management or Board of Trustees, so the schedule of attendance and programmes for Area AGMs would need to be organised to take account of this.

SCEC noted that an Area Chairs Forum was taking place in November in Perth and that this process had been set up to address the lack of engagement in terms of delivering the mission between Ramblers and Areas. DM said that one key issue had been lack of volunteers at an Area level but BG's work may strengthen Groups and this could bring forward new volunteers to operate at Area or Group level.

58/13 CAMPAIGN UPDATES

- 1) Abernethy forest expansion. SCEC discussed the dispute which had arisen between Ramblers Scotland and RSPB over planting plans for their Reserve in the Cairngorms. SCEC noted that there were problems with the Forestry Commission Scotland grant aid schemes which favoured planting instead of natural regeneration and these were causing

concern for staff in both the RSPB and other land owning NGOs and were potentially affecting other Old Caledonian Pinewood areas as well as Abernethy. SCEC noted that the Statement of Concern, by Basil Dunlop, Dick Balharry and Adam Watson, had been produced after efforts to resolve the dispute with RSPB Scotland had failed. SCEC agreed that RS involvement in promoting the public enjoyment and conservation of the native pinewoods was an important part of the Ramblers' mission and efforts should continue to establish a constructive dialogue with RSPB Scotland and other organisations with an interest in this issue.

- 2) Hilltracks – HT updated SCEC on the LINK campaign which she is coordinating. Photographic evidence had been received and good publicity gained, including an article under the Friends of the Scotsman scheme.
- 3) LRRG – HT had already updated SCEC on this issue.
- 4) Walking for Health – HT reported that she had attended a meeting in London with staff from Ramblers England and Ramblers Cymru, as well as JK, and the aim was to run a campaign which would result in Ramblers being seen as the main organisation in GB for walking and health, and this had been endorsed by the Board of Trustees. JK outlined the Board's thinking in terms of getting new members and influencing the policy agenda. HT felt that while the overarching campaign was a GB message, any materials would need to be written separately for the 3 nations as health is a devolved issue and, because of the role of Paths for All, Ramblers Scotland does not run health walks, unlike in Wales and England.

59/13 RAMBLERS CHAIR REPORT

JK outlined progress in developing the 2013-14 budget and stressed the need to establish a balanced budget, along with an improvement in the membership position. He noted that General Council appeared to have gone well and there had been good feedback from members, indicating that the organisation was more together and operating more cohesively than previously.

60/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of SCEC will be held on Monday, 18th November at the Link office in Perth.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____