

**SCOTTISH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013, 16.00-20.00**  
**at Scottish Environment Link Office, Shore Road, Perth**

**60/13 ATTENDANCE**

**SCEC**

David Thomson, Convener	Elizabeth Lawie
Alistair Cant, Hon Treasurer	John Andrews
Alison Mitchell	Roy Keenan (part of meeting only)
Ben Douglas	Vic Royce

**Staff**

Benedict Southworth – Ramblers Chief Executive  
Dave Morris – Director Scotland  
Rob Burns – Medal Routes Project Officer  
Kareen Robertson – Communications & Finance Officer  
Helen Todd – Campaigns & Policy Manager  
Caroline Wheeler – Executive Governance Officer (Ramblers London)

**Board of Trustees**

Jonathan Kipling, Ramblers Chair

**61/13 WELCOME**

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting on such a beautiful Scottish day. He was delighted yet again to welcome Jonathan Kipling and Benedict Southworth and also extended a special welcome to Caroline Wheeler Executive Governance Officer based in London and Rob Burns, Medal Routes Project Officer who started employment with Ramblers Scotland on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

**62/13 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Jim Lawson, Vice Convener.

**63/13 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes for the SCEC meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> August were approved subject to the following amendment:

Item 47/13 –(5) – after ‘don’t walk’ add: ‘in groups’.

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Ben Douglas and seconded by Elizabeth Lawie.

**64/13 ACTION POINTS AND MATTERS ARISING**

All points had been dealt with apart from the following:

**AP2** – BG to discuss with Ramblers GB mailing arrangements to members in Scotland. Ben Glencross is to advise of any action.

**AP 7** – AM Breakdown of tasks for organising Ramblers Gathering. AM apologised saying she did not have time to take this forward. The future of the Gathering is still in the balance. AM's view is that we need to change what the Gathering is and have something else added on. SCEC discussed various options but considered that holding the Gathering at Mar Lodge on 14 September 2014 would be the best option and could include some educational events, such as a guided tour around the estate or discussion on deer management, rather than just social walking. AM felt Mar Lodge would be supportive of this and indicated that she would be willing to organise the event and move it forward.

**AP** - AM to investigate holding the Ramblers Gathering at Mar Lodge in September

SCEC also discussed:

- 1) The possibility of getting our Groups involved with the John Muir Festival in 2014. SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) are developing a long distance route from Dunbar (JM's birthplace) to Helensburgh using existing paths. Groups along the way could put on a special walk in festival week (28<sup>th</sup> April). SCEC noted that Ben is already liaising with SNH on how to involve our Groups in the festival activities.
- 2) DM reported on a suggestion from our President, Dr Andrew Murray that Ramblers Scotland might like to promote

a day for getting everyone outdoors, linking this to the delivery of physical activity benefits from the Commonwealth Games. SCEC recommended that this could be approximately one month before the start date for the Games to secure maximum impact.

## **65/13 FINANCE REPORT**

SCEC noted the finance report compiled by AC. The general fund included a table for the full year. At the August SCEC meeting it had been agreed that there should be a reduction in the main grant to help with general economies. The following items were also discussed:

- 1) AM was concerned about the £2K budgeted for volunteer development not being used. She pointed out that at the recent training day event volunteers had not been reimbursed travelling expenses centrally but could claim from their Area or Group. They also had been asked to provide their own lunch and she felt that Ramblers should have paid for these as a 'thank you' to volunteers. BS indicated that 9 volunteer development days have been organised within England & Wales. Members receive travelling expenses for these days but lunch is not provided. SCEC agreed that there is a need to have more general discussion around this issue.
- 2) SCEC agreed that up to £6k, available in the campaign fund, could be allocated to the National Parks work that the Ramblers Scotland office is taking forward to promote Harris as Scotland's third national park. SCEC agreed the details of this work would require agreement between DM and DT and AC.
- 3) *Scottish Ramblers Gathering Report*. This was for noting only and AC thanked AM for producing this.

- 4) SCEC also noted the draft financial report and commentary for the overall Ramblers Scotland (RS) spend, ie Office, Areas, Groups, and Scottish Council. All the project work has a definitive time scale dictated by the funding bodies which does not necessarily follow the Ramblers financial year. The day to day management of the RS finance is carried out by staff at the RS office. AC thanked Central Office (Christine Grant, Director of Services and Nicky Russell, Management Accountant) for preparing this information.

**AP** KR to examine arrangements for providing expenses and lunch at training events and to make recommendations to SCEC.

**AP** DM to agree details of national park work with DT and AC.

## **66/13 DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

SCEC noted the draft report as set out in App 3. This has been prepared as a draft report for the Ramblers Board meeting in December and covers progress of the Ramblers Scotland Business Plan for the 12/13 financial year. It is based on the report prepared for the May Board meeting, with updates. SCEC agreed the report, subject to a couple of minor edits on Pages 3 and 9 of the report.

DM noted that items within the report were on the Agenda and would be discussed later. However, he did highlight the following points:

- 1) Jeannie's contract is funded until March by Paths for All. Discussion will take place in the near future to seek an extension to this contract.
- 2) The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) have become increasingly concerned about intimidatory behaviour by landowners who are resisting public access. Ramblers Scotland and MCofS issued a joint news release about this, recommending that the police should be contacted if access takers felt threatened by such behaviour.
- 3) Work is progressing very well with the Macmillan Walking for Health contract with the Ramblers in England. SCEC noted that Macmillan funded a Development Officer post with Paths for All and discussed possible support from Macmillan for health walk promotion in Scotland.
- 4) We have received an invitation to speak at the Holyrood Magazine Legacy 2014 conference in February where Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Commonwealth Games & Sport will be a keynote speaker. SCEC noted that DM and JC will speak about the opportunities to deliver physical activity benefits from the Games, especially in terms of major increases in walking and cycling.

## **67/13 DEVOLUTION COMMITTEE**

The Treasurer reported that he had attended the Devolution Committee in August along with the Convener. He said it had been a very useful to have an overview of activity levels between GB, Wales, and Scotland and it had been a good exchange of information between the various parties. The next item for the committee is to organise a service review of activities carried out at the London office for Ramblers Scotland (RS) and the services provided by RS and the linkages between Central office and RS. This will be started after Scottish Council and General Council is over, in late Spring 2014.

The following was also discussed:

- 1) AM stated that she had received her membership renewal and felt it did not get sufficient Scottish branding and therefore did not sell the membership well in Scotland. BS agreed that more could be done on this issue providing specific Scottish material delivered an appropriate Return On Investment (ROI). SCEC agreed this should be taken up with the Devolution Committee
- 2) SCEC discussed Scottish Council and agreed to invite the First Minister to speak on the Friday evening.
- 3) SCEC noted that the Scottish Vision action point is still uncompleted from SC 2012. Progress will need to be reported to SC 2014 and SCEC agreed that JL should speak about this at the next SCEC meeting.

**AP** – DT to raise branding issue at Devolution Committee.

**AP** – JL to speak about Scottish Vision at next SCEC meeting.

**AP** – DM to invite First Minister to speak at Scottish Council

### **68/13 SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2014**

**Venue for SC.** SCEC noted that SC would be held next year at the Glasgow Caledonian University on Sat, 8<sup>th</sup> March. This will be preceded by an informal dinner on Fri 7<sup>th</sup> March at the nearby Holiday Inn. Accommodation will be available for those wishing to stay the night.

**Draft Agenda.** SCEC agreed to the following:

- 1) Reduce the number of items listed under official business in the first session with the aim of completing this within one hour and increasing the time for motions by 30 minutes.
- 2) Members should be asked to provide the text of any financial questions that might require research in advance of the SC meeting.
- 3) Remove First Aid and Latest Walking Gear suggestions for workshops. Look at the possibility of including a workshop run by BS on 'How we shape RGB Services for Scotland.'
- 4) DT should work with staff to finalise the Agenda.
- 5) Include a 'Brief Summary of Finance for Ramblers Scotland (RS) as one of the papers under Finance.

**AP** – DT & RS staff to finalise Agenda for SC

**AP** - AC/KR Include Finance summary as one of the papers for SC

**AP** - DM/KR – ask members to provide text for any finance questions ahead of SC

### **69/13 MEDAL ROUTES PROJECT OFFICER - ROB BURNS**

Rob Burns, Medal Routes (MR) Project Officer introduced himself saying he had now been in post for 6 weeks. Previously he had worked with Fife Council as the Travel Plan Coordinator and said it was a smooth transition to come into this post. He indicated there were now 43 walking hubs completed, primarily in the central belt and 35 are now in the final stages of completion.

As part of the MR evaluation, the project is encouraging people to walk a MR and complete a short survey. This will then enter them into a prize draw to win a mini iPad.

Rob is trying to encourage all Ramblers Groups to create a MR saying that it was an excellent way to market the Group.

John Andrews mentioned there was a slight problem with one of the paths on the Stanley Medal Route and Rob agreed to look into this.

**AP** – RB to examine Stanley MR issue.

## **70/13 AREA/GROUP AGMs**

SCEC discussed the problem about lack of committee members coming forward at Area AGMs. It is a concern if there is no obvious replacement as each Group or Area requires a Chair and Secretary. SCEC felt that members should try to talk to people about the committees and the way they are structured, to make it more attractive.

SCEC also had a general discussion around the Ramblers falling membership. There is no short answer on this subject but it was felt that we need to be transparent about the problems and hope that the membership would eventually go back up. BS agreed to provide a summary of the reasons why people should renew their membership, and what works for groups. It was also noted that there is evidence across the charitable sector that the more members are involved with their organisation, the more they are likely to stay.

**AP** – BS to provide membership renewal information.

## **71/13 EVENTS**

**Volunteers' Training Day Evaluation** SCEC noted the low attendance at this event and discussed the various reasons why this happened. Some of these are: (1) we need to look at something that is different, this year's programme was very similar to previous years; (2) topics don't really attract existing office bearers of the group; (3) fatigue has set in; (4) we need to deliver what we say we will deliver.

BS suggested that the event could be lapsed and become part of the GB programme AM said that the strategic plan workshop was not relevant and was not shown as part of the programme which could be off-putting for members who may have thought of returning the following year.

It was noted that a Leader Training Survey has been produced and information about this will be distributed to all members via the winter edition of the Ramblers Scotland newsletter. In addition, information is available on the members and volunteers section of our website.

SCEC agreed that we should have a brief discussion at SC about what members wanted for next year's event.

**Feedback from 50+ show** Staff reported that the event this year covered 3 days and the RS stand was extremely busy. Many people who visited the stand were already in walking clubs (mainly health walks) and were not interested in walking more widely. Because of the staff commitment over the 3 days and the preparation involved, we may not attend next year. BS indicated that the only event Ramblers GB attend is the Outdoor Show as other events give no Return on Investment. He felt it was more worthwhile to speak at an event rather than having a stall.

## 72/13 REFERENDUM PAPER

SCEC noted the Referendum paper as it was thought Ramblers Scotland would be drawn into some discussion about the referendum in the future. SCEC agreed to make the paper available at Scottish Council and it should also be made available on our website subject to the change in the last para.

**AP** – KR Referendum paper to be included as paper at SC and upload paper on website

## 73/13 SCOTTISH VISION

This Agenda item was not discussed as Jim Lawson was unable to attend the meeting.

## 74/13 CAMPAIGN UPDATE

- 1) **Scottish access strategy.** DM flagged up to SCEC that we may find ourselves in a discussion as to what Scotland's access strategy should be over the next 10 years as the work progresses with the National Walking Strategy and the 2014 Legacy. He recommended that part of the effort to deliver physical activity benefits, particularly promoting walking and cycling, would require path infrastructure changes in our major cities which would provide walking/cycling opportunities as good as the best European cities, such as Amsterdam or Copenhagen. He recommended that we should try to get the government to make a commitment to this approach during the run up to the Games. SCEC agreed to this approach.
- 2) **Forestry and Deer issues.** There is an increasing range of issues surrounding deer management and forestry, which includes problems of planting versus natural regeneration, control of deer numbers and fencing, including electrified fencing. Some of these issues are now being considered by the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee and Ramblers Scotland has been making representations.
- 3) **Land Reform Review Group (LRRG).** The review process is on-going with a report to government set for April. We have been disappointed that LRRG has refused to meet recreation user groups, but they have now asked the National Access Forum (NAF) to consider its response to the access issues raised in the consultation. The NAF sub-group meeting will be in December, and DM will be there. SNH is calling for investigation into the use of arbitration to resolve access conflicts without going to court (as we had also advocated), and the updating of the local authority guidance. HT felt that land reform is rising up the political agenda, which includes issues of interest to us, such as deer management, hill tracks, etc, as well as access. In addition, the recently launched Community Empowerment Bill consultation gives us an opportunity to push for greater use of compulsory purchase powers for matters of public interest, such as developing new paths on land where the landowner resists this use.
- 4) **Scottish Law Commission report into level crossings.** This report was finally published in September and generally it doesn't contradict our position. Network Rail will not be happy at the proposal to create new level crossings where the need arises. We are now awaiting a response from the UK and Scottish Governments on what they intend to do with the report. In the meantime, the issue of walkers crossing the line to climb Ben Lui continues with

no advice to train drivers to sound their horns to warn walkers of their approach, or other guidance for walkers regarding how to cross the line safely.

- 5) **LINK hill tracks campaign.** The campaign report should have been launched on 13<sup>th</sup> November but it clashed with two other environmental stories which came up at the last minute, so we are now launching on 28<sup>th</sup> November. HT will be going up to Achnasheen with the BBC to film a track for the launch. DM, HT and others took, Derek Mackay MSP, the Planning Minister for a walk to view a track from the report in the Pentlands at the end of October. SCEC agreed that there was an increasing opportunity to raise issues relating to wild land in the run up to the referendum, as the SNP government was giving the impression that it has done little to protect wild land since it came to power in 2007.
- 6) **Scottish Paths Fund** HT reported that we had handed back £5k to Central Office from last year's budget as work had not yet started on this project. Ideally it could be linked to the launch of the National Walking Strategy. Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Deputy Justice Minister is visiting the office shortly, as a Constituency MSP, and we hope to raise this with her.
- 7) **National Parks** There was a debate in parliament on national parks and our briefing was mentioned several times, and also attracted some publicity around the proposal for a third national park in Harris.
- 8) **Alladale** Paul Lister's plans for setting up a large enclosure on his estate for wolves have resurfaced, but it appears his position has not changed in 5 years, and he still pursues the dream of enclosing wolf packs within a 50,000 acre fenced enclosure.

#### 75/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of SCEC will be held on Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at the Link office in Perth.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Thomson  
Ramblers Scotland Convener

DATE : \_\_\_\_\_