

Minutes of the 29th Annual Meeting of Welsh Council

8th & 9th April 2017

Stackpole Centre, Stackpole, Pembrokeshire



wrth galon cerdded
at the heart of walking

Mae Cymdeithas y Cerddwyr yn elusen cofrestredig, (rhif Cymru a Lloegr: 1093577, rhif yr Alban SC039799) ac yn gwmni cyfyngedig trwy warant, wedi ei gofrestru yng Nghymru a Lloegr (rhif cofrestru'r cwmni 4458492). Swyddfa Cofrestredig Cymdeithas y Cerddwyr: Ail lawr, Tŷ Camelford, 87-90 Glannau Albert, Llundain, SE1 7TW. **Croesawn ohebiaeth trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.**

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ATTENDANCE LIST

President

Denis McAteer

Vice Presidents

Richard Lloyd Jones

Jane Davidson

Welsh Council Executive Committee

Chris Hodgson (Acting Chair)

Gwyn Lewis (Vice Chair)

John Cook (Treasurer)

Diane Davies (Secretary)

Max Grant

George Allingham

Ramblers Scotland

Alison Mitchell, Scottish Convener

Board of Trustees Representatives

Des Garrahan (GB Chair)

Kate Ashbrook

Area/Group Representatives & Visitors

Appendix A

Staff

Van Griffiths (Chief Executive)

Angela Charlton (Director Ramblers Cymru)

Kate Marshall (Ramblers Cymru)

Rebecca Brough (Ramblers Cymru)

Victoria Baldwin (Ramblers Cymru)

1. WELCOMES

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all, and explained housekeeping arrangements. Delegates were urged to complete nomination forms for the elections to WCEC by the deadline of 11.30am.
- 1.2 The Pembrokeshire Area Chair, George Allingham, welcomed members and guests to Stackpole and Pembrokeshire. He thanked local members for support in arranging Welsh Council.

2 INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

2.1 APOLOGIES

No apologies were given.

2.2 APPOINTMENT of TELLERS & SCRUTINEERS

Tellers and scrutineers were appointed

2.3 MINUTES of WELSH COUNCIL 2016

The minutes of Welsh Council 2016 were proposed seconded and passed.

Matters arising:

Consideration is being given to the use of an Area report to feedback to WCEC.

Wales Coast Path as a National Trail: this is being taken forward by Ramblers' Cymru's Rights of Way and Access Group

2.4. **REPORTS FROM ALLIED BODIES**

Reports were noted.

3. **ANNUAL REPORT: WC ACTING CHAIR, CHRIS HODGSON**

The Chair outlined the charitable objectives of Ramblers and praised the summary of these used in the North Wales Walks Programme. He stressed the need to engage with all walkers who aren't members, offering various lengths of walk and encouraging the positive benefits of walking for social mental and physical wellbeing. He also encouraged people to share the other work Ramblers does on paths maintenance and campaigns. The Chair introduced various delegates who spoke about the positive impact Ramblers has on them and on people across Wales. He also encouraged more sharing of positive news across the organisation and beyond. He thanked the Director and staff in Wales for their work over the year, and encouraged female delegates to consider standing for election to help achieve a more gender balanced Welsh Executive Committee.

4. **ANNUAL REPORT: DIRECTOR WALES, ANGELA CHARLTON**

The Director Wales spoke of the achievements of the past year as joint achievements between members, volunteers and staff. These include the re-establishment of the Rights of Way and Access Group which is providing invaluable support to staff. She reported on the successful vision launch on St David's Day, with the support of Huw Irranca-Davies, and encouraged members to consider how their activities can support efforts to realise the vision.

The Director updated council on the Welsh Government's recent decision to grant a six-month extension to the Let's Walk Cymru programme, with a requirement to prepare a further proposal on the future direction. How Ramblers fit into the health agenda is part of ongoing conversations. Reflecting on advocacy, the Director highlighted Ramblers Cymru's success in securing prominence for access in the debates on agriculture support post-Brexit; ongoing awareness-raising of community council powers through the Paths for People leaflet.

Working together as one team under the leadership of the Chair is important to our success. She encouraged members to be part of the Big Welsh Walk and reflected on the impact this new event was already having on the local network through our close work with the council. Finally, she thanked members for sharing their skills and knowledge.

6. **TREASURER'S REPORT AND OTHER FINANCIAL BUSINESS**

- 6.1 The Honorary Treasurer John Cook spoke to the published accounts which had been circulated.
- 6.2 He provided clarification that the late receipt of the bill for Welsh Council in Lampeter was accounted for in this year's accounts.
- 6.3 Groups and areas were encouraged to continue to look at reducing and it was acknowledged that progress has been made. Reserves should be no more than 100% of annual income, and Ramblers central office will look to cut budgets accordingly.
- 6.4 Assurances were sought from the floor that a broad-brush approach to reducing budgets would not be taken, and that areas would not be penalised for having achieved previous reductions in reserves. It was suggested that clarity was needed on the roles of WCEC/ Ramblers GB and Ramblers Cymru in setting budgets. The Treasurer confirmed that further devolution and liaison on budgets was being explored.
- 6.5 Thanks were given to the Honorary Treasurer for his support in resolving issues in Gwent area.
- 6.6 It was queried from the floor how walk recce expenses were paid and what was eligible to be covered. The Treasurer explained that this is covered in guidance and reasonable expenses were covered, but there was variance in how groups approached this.
- 6.7 The accounts were accepted.

7. REVIEW OF MOTIONS FROM WELSH COUNCIL 2015

7.1 Ensuring that plans submitted with planning applications will show rights of way

There was some disappointment expressed at the lack of progress on this motion. Delegates were reminded that the Ramblers business plan cycle begins in October, and until such work is factored into plans, it is not always possible to make progress. Ramblers Cymru is seeking to establish the national picture.

8. PRESENTATION BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE RAMBLERS GB

The Chief Executive thanked members for her welcome since taking up her role and explained her background in the National Trust and Groundwork. She outlined her vision of Ramblers as one team, and she highlighted external context including; Brexit, where Wales is leading way and standing up for access; challenges from initiatives such as Parkrun; Network Rail crossing closures; and the age profile of the population. There is a real need to improve communication – with each other and non-members. We have choices ahead, including how to grow membership, partnerships and

fundraising opportunities; how to support volunteers and members, and running regular campaigns.

9. DISCUSSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER MOTIONS

9.1 **Emergency motion on Designated Landscape report**

The motion, proposing a response to the Welsh Government report and its omission of the Sandford Principle, was carried unanimously.

9.2 **Bilingual business style card**

Submitted by North Wales area. The motion was carried with two absentions.

9.3 **Cycling on public paths**

Submitted by North Wales area. Requesting that Ramblers Cymru commence discussions with members and Cycling groups regarding future shared use. The motion was carried unanimously.

9.4 **Improving the use of Pathwatch and Big Pathwatch information**

Submitted by Carmarthen and District Group. Seeking improvements to the Pathwatch app and how its data is delivered to local authorities; and how this data is followed up by Ramblers.

The motion was not carried: For 17 ; Against 22; Abstained 10.

9.5 **First Aid Courses**

Submitted by Swansea Group. Seeking a consistent approach to the delivery of First Aid courses. An amendment was proposed to insert the words "information on" before the words "First aid courses".

The motion was passed as amended: For 27; Against 10; Abstained 8

9.6 **Sections 53 and 55 of the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000***

Proposed by Swansea Group. Opposing the enacting of the cut-off date for definitive maps, and seeking to achieve immediate rescinding if enacted in Wales.

The motion was not carried: For 18; Against 19.

10. **CONVERSATION BETWEEN JANE DAVIDSON (VICE-PRESIDENT, RAMBLERS CYMRU) AND RHODRI MORGAN (FORMER FIRST MINISTER, WELSH GOVERNMENT)**

- 10.1 Rhodri Morgan spoke of his love of walking and how a 5 day walk on the Pembrokeshire Coast between long political campaigns had saved his sanity. He spoke of how difficult it can be to find the most effective lobbying approach, depending on whether you want to be on the outside looking in, or on the inside where you may lose effectiveness by association. They discussed the strong narrative now offered by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and how this can be used to influence local authorities by showing the wider benefits of the footpaths. The rights of way are for the

people and the local authorities exist to serve the people, though it was recognised that they are struggling to meet such statutory obligations. The Wales Coast path was discussed as having been subject to many compromises on the route, particularly in urban areas; and to be aware of the risk that with a focus on a 'nation-building' coastal path, inland paths may become neglected.

Rhodri Morgan acknowledged the huge potential of re-establishing local paths and bridleways to introduce more local children and people to their countryside. More options for linear walks with return transport to extend the way people use footpaths and gain life-enhancing experiences.

He also raised the issue of way marking and the need for more information of a standard that can be recognised internationally and provide walkers with reassurance about the quality of the route. He also flagged the 2026 cut-off date as being important, and the issue of the big country estates which successfully kept their paths off the maps via their influence on parish councils.

The rewilding of the Welsh uplands was discussed, with thoughts on the possible re-introduction of species and more 'wilderness' areas as sheep numbers decline. The protection and enhancement of the environment and biodiversity has to be a long-term objective.

Jane Davidson highlighted statutory funding for rights of way and preserving links to local transport that facilitates walking, as key priorities for Ramblers in Wales.

11 ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT, DENIS McATEER

The President paid tribute to the late Mary Robinson as a committed campaigner for Ramblers and a passionate campaigner against inappropriate windfarms.

12 ADDRESS BY ALISON MITCHELL, SCOTTISH COUNCIL CONVENER

Alison Mitchell passed on the best wishes of the Scottish Council and congratulated Chris Hodgson on his election as Chair. She highlighted the work going on in Scotland to equip Scottish Council with the skills they need. A gender balance has been achieved in Scotland and there is representation for a younger groups. She drew attention to the forthcoming Young Walkers weekend in Edinburgh in May, and the Highland gathering of weekend walking.

13 ADDRESS BY KATE ASHBROOK, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kate Ashbrook thanked the staff and praised the leadership Ramblers Cymru shows through innovation and partnerships. She highlighted the role areas can play in communicating the value of walking to authorities and to help put walking at the heart of communities. She encouraged delegates to look towards the local elections on 4th May and to ask candidates about their intentions towards rights of way and wellbeing plans, and to hold them to it. She also encouraged areas and groups to take the lead on different pieces of work and then share their experiences, including their success with others and staff.

14 ELECTION OF WELSH COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND OFFICERS

The following people were confirmed as officers for the coming year:-

President	Dennis McAteer
Vice Presidents	Jane Davidson Ron Williams Richard Lloyd Jones Huw Irranca Davies Vernon Davies
Chair	Chris Hodgson
Vice Chair	George Allingham Gwyn Lewis
Honorary Treasurer	John Cook
Honorary Secretary	Diane Davies

8. ELECTION OF WCEC MEMBERS

8.1 The following people were elected :-

Max Grant
George Allingham
Simon Longman
Stan Winstanley
Steven Hughes

8.2 Representation on other bodies

It was agreed that the following individuals would represent Ramblers:

- National Access Forum: Director, Ramblers Cymru
- Mountain Training Board: Director, Ramblers Cymru
- BMC Cymru: Stan Winstanley

9. ELECTION OF AUDITOR

9.1 John Cook confirmed that the current Auditor, David Arwyn Howells, had agreed to continue. Carried.

10. ADDRESS OF CHAIR AND CLOSE OF WELSH COUNCIL

- 10.1** Des Garrahan, Chair Ramblers GB addressed the meeting. 2017/18 is his last year as chair, and he thanked the Wales Chair, WCEC, the staff and all the volunteers who deliver our mission noting that it would not be possible without their dedication. He urged members to focus on what and who they can influence, including local politicians, and to appreciate that not everything asked of staff is within their gift to give. He challenged members to try to do what they can at their groups to improve the gender balance on committees.
- 10.2** Chris Hodgson thanked everyone for attending and urged care in the manner of our communications; to work together for our charitable objectives; and for everyone to seek to enthuse others.

Signed (Chair)

Dated

APPENDIX A:

Area & Group Representatives

Allingham, Jeanette	Pembrokeshire Area
Austin, Alan	Powys Area
Beale, Richard	Swansea Group
Clifton, Nigel	Cardiff Group
Coombe, Tony	Dinefwr Group
Curle, Ruth	Glamorgan Area
Donovan, Keith	Greater Gwent Area
Fernley, Margaret	North Wales Area
Fernley, Neville	North Wales Area
Fitzpatrick, Gwenda	Vale of Glamorgan Group
Hill, Leighton	Glamorgan Area
Jones, Chris	4 Wells Group Chair
Jacob, Alan	Ceredigion Area
King, Abi	Pembroke Group
Lee, Nigel	Pembrokeshire Area
Leggett, Richard	Carmarthen Group
Morgan, Allan	Bridgend Group
Osbourne, Sarah	Cardigan Group
Payne, Clive	Powys Area
Reeves, John	Pembrokeshire Area
Slattery, Joanna	North Wales
Slattery, Kevin	North Wales
Smith, Gwyn	Greater Gwent
Thomas, Andrew	Neath Port Talbot Group
Thomas, Gareth	Gelligaer Group

Thomas, Maggie
White, Doreen
Williams, Geoffrey
Williams, James

Islwyn Group
Conwy Valley Group
Carmarthenshire Area
Lampeter Group

Visitors:

Kovacs, Marika
Lee, Arthur
Cook, Eva
Lloyd Jones, Sir Richard
Lloyd Jones, Lady Helen
Payne, Joan

Herefordshire Area
Herefordshire Area