

## Alnwick Ramblers AGM

5pm on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020

This meeting was held via Zoom.

**1. Present:** Ian Lord; Ann Lord; Barbara Hargreaves; Paul Hargreaves; Roger Adams; Heather Corby; Janice Clarke; Paul Wright; Nigel Towers; Janet Towers; Barbara Sexon

**2. Apologies:** Daphne Kelly; Derek Gander; Marilyn Martin

**3. Minutes of 2019 AGM** were formally approved, with Heather Corby proposing and Janice Clarke as seconder. There were no matters arising.

### **4. Annual reports and accounts**

#### **a. Treasurer's report** presented by Paul Hargreaves

The current balance of the accounts is £175.67, a deficit of £363.82 from the previous year. We did not receive a grant from Area during this financial period due to the lack of expenditure in the previous financial year set against the high level of available cash in the account.

I have been informed however that the Area Grant of £162.67 will be credited to the Alnwick Branch account in early November 2020. This will raise our bank account balance to a figure of £338.34.

Expenditure, totalling £363.82, has been made to Lesbury Village Hall for the 2019 AGM, the purchase of First Aid Kits and Hi-Visibility vests for walk leaders and for an annual ZOOM subscription to enable and facilitate the Alnwick group to function effectively.

On behalf of the Alnwick Branch I would like to record my sincere thanks to Mr Chris Waterston in his role as Independent Examiner for his professional assistance during my tenure.

Since the meeting Paul Hargreaves has confirmed that the Ramblers' grant was credited to the group's account on 29<sup>th</sup> October, so the current balance is £338.34.

#### **b. Walks Programme report** presented by Heather Corby

Whilst we had good programmes of varied walks, it's been a year of much disruption caused mainly by Covid 19 restrictions.

Prior to Covid, we had only had to cancel one walk due to inclement weather. However, though the Spring, and now the Autumn lockdowns, all group walks have been suspended.

Over the summer however, once we were able, the walks programme got underway again, and we hope the same will be true from December onwards. Whilst Ramblers HQ said up to 30 on a walk was permitted, we typically limited the group size to 10, subject to what the walk leader was also comfortable with. The advance booking system we have had to follow seems to have worked well, though it was noticeable that on the longer, more hill based walks it was the same people who booked the spaces and we were not

oversubscribed. There was one lower level walk that was attended by a slightly different group though the other lowland walk that was in our schedule ended up being cancelled due to poor weather. The feedback from the walk leaders is that the new COVID secure arrangements have not been overly onerous and indeed the advance booking system has had the added benefits of being able to contact booked walkers in the event of a required route change or cancellation due to poor weather etc, and knowing that everyone who is coming on the walk has turned up at the start.

If the walk on 6 December does go ahead, this will be a joint walk with the Berwick group.

Prior to COVID 19 we have had around a dozen people who offered to lead walks, but more would be welcome as it can be a struggle to fill the programme each 6 months. However, early signs are that the number of active leaders may be on the decline as a result of Covid 19 though it is too early to tell if this a permanent shift, or, understandably, just people's lack of fitness though walking less and /or hesitancy to want to walk in a group.

Heather also reported that there are only 2 gaps in the upcoming programme of walks, for 7<sup>th</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> June.

#### **c. Access Officer's report** presented by Paul Wright

During the past year the Council has received an application to fill in three road bridges over disused railways in the area. These bridges are showing signs of weakness and the simplest solution would be to completely fill the undersides. However the disused lines are being used by local walkers and cyclist and there is a proposal that the lines become part of a Greenway network in the area. Various local organisations such as the Alnwick Civic Society and Friends of the Earth are promoting the idea and asked Alnwick Ramblers to object to the proposed infill of the bridges. A letter of objection was sent to the planning committee. No other information was available at the time of this AGM

Paul drew also drew attention to the Alnwick Town Council's Subcommittee on Sustainable Transport. As the group's Access Officer he has represented Alnwick Ramblers on this committee for several years. He thinks this is an active committee and it is worthwhile having a representative from the Ramblers as a member of it. He will be standing down from this subcommittee on Sustainable Transport as well as from the Access Officer's post and suggested that whoever takes over as Access Officer would find it useful to join. The committee is very Alnwick based and so whoever joins should live in or near the town.

#### **d. Social Activities report** presented by Janice Clarke

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic it has not been possible to hold any soacial events this year. It is hope that in the coming 12 months it will be possible to organise a BBQ on the beach at Alnmouth and a walk across to Holy Island via the Pilgrim's Way. Both these events have been held before and were popular. It is also the intention to have a pooled supper with a relevant speaker sometime towards the end of next year. Until current restrictions are easier it is not possible to make more definite plans.

## 5. Committee nominations and election

Three officers are standing down from the committee - Paul Hargreaves (Treasurer), Paul Wright (Access Officer) and Marilyn Martin (Membership Secretary). On behalf of the group the Chairman, **Ian Lord** thanked them for the work they have done for Alnwick Ramblers.

**Janet Towers** offered to take the post of **Treasurer**. She was proposed by heather Corby, seconded by Ann Lord

**Ann Lord** offered to take the post of **Membership Secretary**. She was proposed by Heather Corby, seconded by Paul Wright.

**Paul Hargreaves** offered to take the post of **Access Officer**. She was proposed by heather Corby , seconded by Janice Clarke.

All three were unanimously elected. **Ian Lord** will inform the Ramblers Association of the changes to the committee and **Barbara Sexon** will inform the membership.

## 6. Any Other Business

### a: Recording next of kin information

**Janice Clarke** asked whether it would be beneficial to take details of walkers' next of kin as well as their contact details required by "Track and Trace" when they book for walks. She is concerned that if there was an incident involving new walkers, the walk leader would not know who to contact. There was some discussion about this as some members thought it a good idea whilst others thought it an unnecessary extra load on walk leaders. It was decided that all walkers should be reminded and encouraged to carry contact details for their next of kin somewhere accessible (eg on a tag or easily seen on/in a rucksack) when they take part in a walk. A reminder of this advice will be included on the walks programme and be put on the website.

### b Pre-booking Walks

**Nigel Towers** proposed that even when the current restrictions are relaxed, the policy of pre-booking walks should continue. This would make the organisation of walks easier for the leaders. It was agreed that, from now onwards all walks will be pre-booked by members.

When coronavirus restrictions are lifted members would be allowed to join walks without booking. However they would run the risk of missing the group if all members who have pre-booked arrived early allowing the walk to set out before the advertised time. Also, if the walk had to be cancelled, the leader would only contact members who had pre-booked.

## **7 Date of next AGM**

This has been set as **21<sup>st</sup> November 2021**. The location and style of the AGM will be decided by the committee at a later date, depending partly on whether the restrictions on live meetings are still in place. There was some discussion about whether the AGM should be linked to a social activity to encourage more members to attend. It was agreed that a decision on this will would be taken by the committee nearer the time.

**Barbara Sexon**

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