

Chairman's Annual Report – Shrewsbury Ramblers 31st October 2021

Walks Programme

Between 2nd December 2020 and 4th January 2021 Shrewsbury Ramblers ran an adhoc walking programme with numbers controlled by the walk leader.

Most walk leaders were not prepared to lead so the task fell on the shoulders of the few. The burden of additional administration in terms of advertising on Whatsapp, Facebook updating GWEM and publishing emails was shared across the group. It was strongly felt that the offer needed to continue.

From 5th January and the 14th April all walking was suspended . An adhoc programme was successfully run between the 15th April through to September.

A programme of walks was put on from September through to December . Considering the number of walk leaders who were no longer available .the number of gaps in the programme was minimal. A good number of the gaps were filled in by ad hoc walks that members pledged as we moved through the programme.

It has demonstrated how adaptable and resilient we are in terms of reacting to change,

As of 18th October we had increased our membership to 416 so are bucking the trend of falling membership in other groups.

The use of a meeting point for Tuesday and Thursday walks was re-instituted from September. Most people are travelling direct to the published start point . Some of them are car sharing while some people prefer to travel alone. The meeting point is generally used by Ramblers who are happy to drive and pick up other Ramblers who prefer not to drive.

From the start of September walking programme, Sunday ramblers opted to travel direct to the start point. Sunday Ramblers leaders are currently being consulted on whether they wish to continue to travel direct to the start point or meet up at Abbey Foregate from the start of the next programme in January. This is due to the mix of Sunday walkers being quite changeable with a lot of

one off walkers and members from other groups attending adding to the risk of car share.

Coach Trips

The cancelling of previous events led to a significant administrative effort involved in refunding Ramblers.

Thanks to the determination of Al Davies , Peter Greeve and Mick Gadd a coach trip was successfully carried out at Hibre Island in August. It was a welcome relief from all the doom and gloom,

Final planning is underway for a Slate Trail Coach Trip in Snowdonia early next year.

Away Weeks

29 Ramblers enjoyed a glorious week of walking at HF Lulworth Cove in October thanks to the sterling organisational work of Mick Gadd.

Additionally, planning is well underway for an away week in Abergavenny in May next year.

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Activity continues apace with new recruits coming on board

New Technology

Walkie Talkies have been introduced on Tuesday walks where the number of walkers are high. The technology is particularly useful in informing the backmarker that the gate needs closing and for informing the leader that someone is having a ‘comfort stop’ at the rear and to slow the pace up to allow them to rejoin the group.

A zoom session to assess what next after the demise of Viewranger is being held across Shropshire to pass on the combined knowledge to interested parties on the 3rd November. It is anticipated that over 30 members will take part.

Vacancies

Audrey Menhinick is standing down as Vice Chair/Special Projects .

There is also vacancy for Walking Environment Officer as well as a social events co-ordinator.

The temporary Sunday walks co-ordinator Amanda Hartley Newton is seeking to handover to a new entrant whilst a Wednesday evening walks co-ordinator will be required in place by April 2021.

A.G.M.

The first face to face committee meeting of the year took place in October so conducting a face to face AGM is quite an event.

To make the event more attractive it has been decided to start the evening with a talk from the Welsh Beaver Trust for half an hour, deal with Ramblers business in a 20 minute window and devote the rest of the evening to the social side. Positive feedback has already been received on this format and it is hoped that there will be a good attendance.

A bullet point summary of Committee member's reports will be available for Ramblers to view on display boards and they will be published on Shrewsbury Ramblers website seven days before the AGM.

Goals

The heavy overhead of postal charges is being combatted by challenging back members who request the walks programme and newsletter to be posted direct to them. Significant reductions have been achieved by Di Higgs.

It is also noted that the significant number of changes in the walks programme makes the Group Walks Event Manager the go to location for the latest information.

Shrewsbury have an excess of funds primarily due to the success of the 20 walks book. Going forward, a concerted effort will be made to spend money on worthwhile local projects such as information boards which can also act as an advert for Shrewsbury Ramblers.

The Group have in excess of 300 20 walks books available so a reprint is not considered at the moment. The 20 walks book is slowly being corrupted by

changes to walks that are hopefully captured on the website and can be linked to via a QR code. Long term it has to be decided whether the book is rewritten or whether another 20 walks book is published though this would require significant resource to become available.

Points of Contention

One walk leader took it upon himself to ban known unvaccinated Ramblers from his walk. A ruling was received from Central Ramblers and this was shared with the Group making it clear that we cannot refuse to lead unvaccinated ramblers as it is after all a very safe activity.

The January programme will see a refresh of risk assessments taking place. There had been some negative feedback from certain walk leaders on this requirement but following the central commitment to carry on with this requirement a cut down risk assessment will be used. It will continue to be emphasised that the assessment of risk is carried out via a recce,

The three Shrewsbury Group volunteers who came forward to assist in the 'Don't lose your Way' project identified are still awaiting clarification on what the next steps are. We are awaiting clarification from Shropshire Area who is leading this critical project and what the next steps are. The momentum has been lost. The project should have been scoped more effectively before involving volunteers.

It is the belief of Shrewsbury Groups committee that the role of Walking Environment Officer is not being carried out effectively at Area level, The approach taken by the incumbent is to ensure that footpaths are still walkable after development but not to take into account the environmental impact, Central Ramblers have supported our interpretation of the role. As a result of this Shrewsbury Group lodged an objection to the NWRR on environmental grounds. It is hoped to fulfil the role definition in the short term by adopting a committee approach in evaluating the environmental impact of local developments, Longer term it is hoped to have someone on the committee focusing on this role.