

**Ramblers' Association, Northumbria Area Council Meeting :  
Monday 7 April 2014 at 7 pm, held at Jesmond Methodist Church, Newcastle upon Tyne**

Minutes

Present

Judith Taylor (Chair, Area & Tyneside)	John Davison (C-le-St Sec.)	Josie Lowden (Hexham)
Arthur Quick (Treasurer)	Steve Edwards (Ponteland)	Cliff Ludman (Durham Group)
Neil Allender (Area Secretary)	Richard Fletcher (Durham)	Michelle Taylor (Northumbria WG)
Malcolm McVey (Area & Tyneside M'bsp)	Bill Gallon (Pennine Way Assoc. Gateshead)	Dave Turnbull (Member)
Pauline Hawdon (Minutes Secretary)	Barbara Harrington (Tyneside)	Tom Turnbull (Northumbria Short Circuits)
Nuala Wright (Access Officer)	Mavis Harris (Hexham)	Kathleen Tweddle (Chester-le-St Chair)
Gill Dallow (Tyneside)	Mark Harrison (Northumbria WG Chair)	John Routledge (Sunderland)
Gillian Darbyshire (Sunderland Sec.)	Ken Hughes (Hexham)	

The Chairman, Judith Taylor, paid tribute to Ann Key who had died suddenly, and for her work in Training, Publicity, and past knowledge of RA matters. She then welcomed new members Steve Edwards (Ponteland) and Michelle Taylor (Northumbria Walking Group).

1. **Apologies:** Alan Mitcham, Rob Hutchinson, Tony Royston, Peter Blacklock, Linda Law, Ian Tait, Gilbert Roberts, Roger Carpenter, Mark Nugent

2. **Minutes of last meeting,** having been circulated were taken as read and approved.

3. **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.

4. **Reports from Area Officers**

4.1 Area Treasurer (Arthur Quick): Details were circulated. Income from advertising had dropped as some firms had gone out of business.

4.2 Area Rights-of-Way Co-ordinator (Alan Mitcham) (written report)

Excellent new mapping version (<http://prowmaps.northumberland.gov.uk>) with fully up-to-date ROW mapping was provided by Northumberland County Council.

A monthly volunteering scheme had been set up by Tyneside ramblers to survey, report, tidy vegetation, replace waymarkers. Hexham Ramblers continue with their scheme, and some local Parish groups were also operating.

Newcastle City Council had finally agreed to consider the logistics of diverting a path around Morley Hill Farm despite agreement some months ago that the path would remain open.

Concern expressed regarding RoW management in North Tyneside, outsourced to Capita Symonds. The Officer was unable to do his job properly due to constraints put upon him. Some key councillors were concerned and it was hoped the situation would improve. North Tyneside no longer had their own RoW Officer.

Wind turbines: Northumbria Ramblers had objected to Belford Burn wind-farm and a decision was expected shortly. Formal objections had also been made to revamped proposals at Rayburn Lake (between Wingates and Netherton) – originally turned down in 2012. Bill Gallon mentioned that Yetholm Loch proposals had been rejected.

4.3 Membership Secretary (Malcolm McVey) – Overall membership continued to fall.

5 **Group Reports**

5.1 Alnwick

They had had a good winter season with sunny days on Sundays and attendances of 20-25 members with an influx of new members. Mid-week shorter strolls with coffee shop attracted approx. 15 members. They had a pooled supper in March at Longhorsley with quiz and slide show.

5.2 Chester-le-Street

Membership remained steady, with walks organised week-by-week. Attendances averaged 16 with a maximum of about 31. A pre-paid charge of £10 was made and walks were shorter. Reminders of events were circulated by email and the website had had 22,000 hits since its launch in October and an average of 170 per day since January.

5.3 Durham (Cliff Ludman)

Had introduced Saturday walks following the "Get Walking Keep Walking" campaign and obtained email addresses from Durham County Council. This had increased membership. They led Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday and, in summer, Monday evening walks. Social events included a Christmas lunch in Beamish area and a summer picnic on Holy Island. Uncertain of response to leaflets left in libraries, but good use of website and walks finder.

5.4 Gateshead (Peter Blacklock, Secretary)

They continued to walk on Saturdays with 10-20 ramblers and had sufficient walk leaders for the first part of the programme. They had difficulties filling Committee positions. Details of training course had been emailed to all members. The Walks Secretary had organised a 5-day holiday to Fort William on 17 May and a coach trip to Ambleside on 31 May. Some new members were now walking regularly with the group.

5.5 Hexham (Ken Hughes)

Attendances had reached a maximum of 25, with weekly walks varying in length. They continued with footpath maintenance and waymarking Isaac's Tea Trail would start soon. They had worked with NCC to provide a handrail to rebuilt steps and continued to liaise on diversion and other problem areas. Social calendar included regular coffee shops after walks and a holiday arranged for Easter at Malham. The destination of a summer coach trip was yet to be decided.

5.6 Northumbria Walking Group (Mark Harrison)

Membership was 180. Michelle Taylor was now Secretary and there was a new Membership secretary. They had a varied walks programme with regular monthly socials.

5.7 Northumberland Short Circuits (Tom Turnbull)

Fortnightly Saturday walks had regulars of 35-40 people and a membership of 86. A social lunch had been held at the Shepherd & Shepherdess, Beamish in March; a walking weekend was to be held in Melrose in June, and following the successful "away day" to Kilburn White Horse last year, a walk near Keswick was being planned for September. Some officials were retiring and they needed replacements. There were discrepancies in membership numbers from Central Office - Malcolm McVey advised that alterations should be sent to Ian Johnstone (Central Office).

5.8 Ponteland

Wednesdays walks of 5-7 miles followed by lunch, were most popular with 25-30 attending. They had advertised in the local and monthly free papers. Total membership was about 100.

5.9 Sunderland

There had been attendances of 25-30 on Wednesdays and 12-20 on Sundays, including some new members. Social in pub was appreciated; 40 members had attended a social event in Berwick. Intended to hold a 10-pin bowling event. Emergency key-rings had sold well – 20 remain out of 300.

5.10 Tyneside

They had a new Chairman and Treasurer. Wednesday walks were most popular and there had been an improvement in Sunday attendances.

**6 General Council Report (Richard Fletcher)**

Approx. 400 delegates attended the meeting in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. There were stands promoting local groups, coastal access etc. 5 workshops of one hour were held in the morning and members could attend 2 each. He felt that some of the formal meeting in the afternoon was taken up with local issues such as London borders and way-marking in Yorkshire. However, 4 amendments were quickly carried and a 5<sup>th</sup> was withdrawn by the Chairman.

Richard talked to Benedict regarding state of footpaths and suggested a national organisation to look after paths. Benedict said they were in discussion with Google maps to include paths. £330,000 had been set aside to walk every single footpath and report on its condition. Nuala was reluctant to ask people to walk paths again when we had already done the "walk-a-square" campaign.

**7 Coastal Access celebration and future developments (Nuala Wright)**

Natural England was officially opening the Durham Section on Saturday 12 April; the Cumbrian Section opened on 11 April. Central Office were co-ordinating and funding our section from North Gare, Hartlepool to South Bents, Sunderland, on Tuesday 15 April. People would be encouraged to walk in fancy dress and there would be T-shirts for leaders, plus badges, balloons and kites. Refreshments would be provided at Seaham Hall. Press releases had been sent to local media.

**8 Training**

As Ann Key had organised everything, Judith had agreed to be contact person rather than the programme be cancelled. Richard Holmes preferred groups of 4-5 people (a maximum of 10). The first course "4 Skills" was on 26 April in the Ingram Valley; so far there were insufficient people. He was charging £35; members paying £10. Durham Group would prefer a closer venue.

**9 Vacant Posts**

9.1 Area Chair

9.2 Area Secretary – John Davison had agreed to take over from Neil Allender.

9.3 Vice Chair

9.4 Publicity Officer – Rachel Orange had volunteered.

**10 Future of Map Library**

Gill Dallow was holding 3 big bags of maps and walking books; some had been purchased by the Tyneside Group; some were Ann Key's. They covered local and other areas and were rarely borrowed. Malcolm McVey will catalogue them.

**Malcolm McVey**

**11 Updates**

The website was now 3 years old and needed refreshing. Central Office had a template which Durham group use. A meeting was planned for 29 April with Gill Dallow, Tony Royston, Dave Turnbull, David Crowe and Judith Taylor.

It had been agreed to delay sending out a questionnaire until the website was updated.

Group Secretary meetings: Durham had been held and Northumberland were meeting this month.

**12 Any Other Business**

12.1 Bill Gallon - 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Pennine Way. They had obtained Heritage Lottery Fund money to restore the monument on Cross Fell. In April 2015 they hoped to walk the Pennine Way in a day to celebrate and would like other groups' involvement. Information would be needed by October 2014 to include in RA programme.

12.2 Information had been received from Ken Coulson who would like to link Cuddy's Course, which started from Chester-le-Street church, with a walk from Hexham Abbey via Causey Arch. In turn this could link with St Oswald's Way and St Cuthbert's Way to form a long-distance walk. Nuala suggested looking at the Long Distance Walks Association website and including this in their directory.

12.3 Malcolm McVey – thought it logical to divide the walks programme into summer and winter programmes. It was agreed to hold this in abeyance until other changes had been implemented.

12.4 YHA would like circular walks of 3-8 miles to be put into their Routes Wizard, particularly for Berwick, Once Brewed, and Langdon Beck .

**13 Next Area Council Meeting – Monday 3 November.**

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9 pm.