

Ramblers' Association, Northumbria Area
Area Council Meeting : Monday 13 April 2015 at 7 pm
Held at Jesmond Methodist Church, Newcastle upon Tyne

Minutes

Present

Penny Ford (Area Chair, & Alnwick)	Joyce Lowden (Chair, Hexham)
Gill Atkinson (Area Treasurer)	Ken Hughes (Sec., Hexham)
Malcolm McVey (Area & Tyneside Membership)	Vicky Ludbrook (Sec. Morpeth)
Dave Turnbull (Area Media)	Dorothy Watson Fenwick (Publicity, Morpeth)
Pauline Hawdon (Area Mins. Sec., & Affiliate Group Sec.)	Lucy Hall (Northumbria Walking Group)
Peter Stableford (Temp. Sec, Ch-le-St)	Michelle Taylor (Northumbria Walking Group)
Irene Bell (Committee, Chester-le-Street)	?? – <i>not on sheet!</i> (Northumbria Short Circuits)
Richard Fletcher (Area Vice Chair, Walks Sec., Durham)	Stephen Edwards (Sec., Ponteland)
Doug Moffatt (Chair, Gateshead)	Gillian Darbyshire (Sec., Sunderland)
	Gill Dallow (Secretary, Tyneside)

Action

1. **Apologies:** Nuala Wright, Peter Blacklock, Rob Hutchinson, Tony Royston, Mark Harrison, Ann Dickinson, Kathleen Tweddle, Bill Gallon, Mavis Harris, John Routledge, Dennis Borley, Ann & Derek (Short Circuits) and Mark Nugent.
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Having been circulated, were taken as read, and approved.
3. **Matters Arising:** No matters arising.

4. Reports from Area Officers

1. Area Treasurer (Gill Atkinson)

Balance at the bank was £7,800 which was approximately 2 years' "spend". There were no major expenditure expected other than an estimated £1500 for newsletters. According to the national website, Flexi-groups were being promoted (no committee) who could apply directly to Central Office for expenses. This may be useful for groups unable to find committee members.

- 4.2 Chairman (Penny Ford) & General Council- In response to Gill's question whether or not Central Office had implemented "Governance", Penny Ford and Richard Fletcher had attended General Council and confirmed that Governance agreements had been deferred for a year - the questionnaire had been confusing and the response limited. The Saturday meeting at General Council had been chaotic as the Chair was absent and the temporary Chair's knowledge was limited. Some discussion had taken place re one-man-one-vote rather than delegates voting on behalf of groups but no decision made.

Richard had joined a well-attended workshop on pathways, in a very small room, led by an inexperienced person. "Path Watch" (*when all footpaths were to be surveyed*) was being funded by Ramblers' Holidays, starting in June and finishing in September, although the Smartphone APP to be used had not yet been developed. Apart from a brief leaflet, there was no advice or structure given. It was commented that the last survey had been time-consuming and had yielded no improvements. Concern was expressed that rights-of-way may be lost because of cut-backs in staff.

Penny had attended a workshop on "Recruiting volunteers".

Dave Turnbull had suggested that Central Office considered running a workshop using our trainer as he had 3-4 years successful experience in this area. They had responded that they intended running their own workshop later in the year.

- 4.3 Membership Secretary (Malcolm McVey) – Membership to date was 2101, with 72 new members. Since January we had lost 110 but gained 80, although it was difficult to compare monthly figures.

4. Publicity (vacant)

Rachel Orange had resigned as Publicity Officer but had been keen to use Facebook. The Northumbria Walking Group used Facebook but had had to monitor whether or not those posting messages were members or not.

Some groups would like a small publicity leaflet with Ramblers' information on the front and local group contacts on the reverse. Information had been displayed by some groups in Costa Coffee shops, supermarkets, and Tesco which had a community room. Penny asked groups to email her with what they would like included and she would discuss with Richard and Dave what could be printed. This would be funded by the Area **Group Secretaries**

5. Group Reports (summary)

5.1. Alnwick (Penny Ford)

They were doing well with 8 new members who were walked regularly and were involved. Average attendances were 20. The group was surveying paths and sending information to the Rights-of-Way Officer.

5.02 Chester-le-Street (Irene Bell & Peter Stableford)

Peter had taken over as Secretary from Jon Davison following his resignation after the AGM. Peter was also Membership Secretary and current membership was 97 with averages between 20-30 walkers. A new constitution had been agreed at the AGM. The Christmas lunch at the Hill Top Pub & restaurant, following a Beamish Valley walk was so successful that an evening meal was organised there in March. Monthly socials had been organised ranging from bowling to ceilidhs, and visits to the Swing Bridge and Water Treatment Plants.

Monthly Thursday morning short walks had 5-10 persons attending, and from April until September they were producing fortnightly Wednesday evening short walks. A Pennine Way 50th celebration walk was arranged for 26 April 2015. This year they were pleased that a young member had undertaken to be Walks Co-ordinator, and a 19 year old member had become website manager and media organiser.

5.03 Durham (Richard Fletcher)

They sometimes shared with Chester-le-Street increasing averages from 16 to 30+. Leaflets showing all the walks for a month had been displayed in GP and dentist surgeries with good results. Their programme included Walks-for-Life, Wednesdays, and Monday evening walks. Cliff Ludman was making a good recovery and had returned to walking.

5.04 Gateshead (Doug Moffat)

A walk was planned to celebrate the Pennine Way from Cow Green to Dufton. Other walks included Jedburgh, the Cheviots and a Summer meal had been arranged. Holidays were booked for Scotland, the Lakes, and Portugal.

5.05 Hexham (Ken Hughes)

The Footpath Maintenance Group had started for the 2015 season for the fourth year and would be active throughout the Summer. The Footpath Secretary was busy with a number of diversions, including the Old Swimming Pool and at Melkridge. They were concerned about the proposed footpath survey as they received no feedback from Central Office from the previous one.

For the 50th Anniversary of the Pennine Way they were including some walks between Housesteads and Bellingham finishing with tea in Bellingham.

A weekend break had been organised at Keswick and socials included a trip on the Tyne. Current membership was 138 but unfortunately they had lost their Membership Secretary.

They were unclear about what was required from recent instructions regarding the website, and were advised to contact Tony Royston.

5.06 Morpeth (Vicky Ludbrook)

Membership stood at 74 members with one new member from the Health Walks initiative. They now had more leaders and attendance on walks had risen slightly. Their programme included Christmas dinner at the Sun Inn in Morpeth, and a short walk around Stannington with lunch at the Ridley Arms. They continued to find tea-rooms after walks and in March enjoyed a fish and chip meal after the Seaton Sluice walk.

Ripon rambles had asked if they could join in a walk on 27th September around the Hadrian's Wall area.

5.07 Northumbria Short Circuits

They were doing well - 44 people had attended the previous Saturday.

5.08 Northumbria Walking Group (Michelle Taylor & Lucy Hall)

Membership was around 200, with average attendances of 20+. They would like more walks leaders and hoped to plan their programme further ahead. They intended to focus on some shorter walks but would like to have a choice. It was suggested they looked at the website for training dates, and details of walks which could be planned in the area.

5.09 Ponteland (Steve Edwards)

They met alternate Sundays (average of 6 attending) and two Wednesdays per month (10-25 walkers). Programme details were circulated by email. Total membership was 99 with 4 new members, 3 of whom were regular walkers and expected to enlist a further 2 members shortly. They felt that removal of the NN code from membership numbers made local administration more difficult.

They had been advertising regularly in local press and free sheets, with 75% enquiries from printed press and 25% from websites. A publicity leaflet from Ramblers that could be customised to local requirements would be helpful.

5.10 Sunderland (Gillian Darbyshire)

There had some new members with averages of 25-30 walkers on Wednesdays and 12-20 at weekends. They intended to hold a meeting to plan the next six months' programme which would include socials, a Christmas meeting, and holidays to Llandudno and Pitlochry.

11. Tyneside Ramblers (Gill Dallow)

Their Constitution had been amended changing the date of the AGM to be held before Annual Council. Overall membership had declined, but active walking, particularly on Sundays had increased, mainly due to the determination and enthusiasm of Coach Secretaries. Discussions were taking place with the Forestry Commission regarding placement of a seat in memory of Ann Key. The Footpath Maintenance group continued to be active and were about to move to a new area. Unfortunately, Barbara Dickson, Chairman, had been unable to attend meetings due to postponement of courses of chemotherapy. She had the full support of the Committee.

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Website (Tony Royston)

It was hoped to upload group and area pages onto the National site, which was free and had additional features. Anyone having difficulties should email Tony Royston (tonyroyston@btinternet.com) or Ian Tait (ian@iantait7.wanadoo.co.uk), or contact Gateshead's webmaster Alison Emslie (Alison.emslie@hotmail.co.uk). Details of group webmasters should be emailed to Area Chair.

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Publication and distribution of Walk Northumbria (Pat Jackson)

Because of the difficulty of getting content and the cost implications, Walk Northumbria may be wound up. Information to members would then be included on the website.

8

Training (Judith Taylor)

Details of all training courses were included on the website. The course on 6 June in the Ingram valley had been postponed to 13 June. There were vacancies for Blanchland on 25 April. Courses cost £40, were subsidised by the Area by £30 and participants paid £10. If any group had 4-6 interested members, a date could be arranged specifically for them.

9 **Any Other Business**

9.1 Wall Watch – Sections of Hadrian's wall could be walked and condition of footpath reported on.

9.2 Key-rings – It was agreed that Chester-le-Street could order 250 additional "emergency" key-rings. It was suggested that, for the future, enquiries be made to purchase through Central Office in large quantities.

9.3 Pennine Way celebrations - It was confirmed that Hexham, Gateshead, Chester-le-Street and Sunderland were participating with walks. The Pennine Way Association was to dissolve this year.

9.4 Maps - Malcolm McVey had catalogued 316 maps, originally purchased with Joe Rossenberg's legacy, plus some from Ann Key. These had been donated from the Tyneside group's library. They had been infrequently used.

It was agreed the Area would fund postage of £1.80 to send these out, but borrowers would be responsible for their return.

9.5 Woolsington Hall - There were proposals to redevelop Woolsington Hall and Parkland. Malcolm would pass details to Nuala Wright and Alan Mitcham.

Malcolm McVey

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

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Date of next Area Council Meeting – Monday 12 October 2015.