

Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of Northumbria Ramblers held at Jesmond Methodist Church, St. George's Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne at 7 p.m. on Monday 1st September 2014.

Present: Judith Taylor (Chair), Rob Hutchinson, Jon Davison, Bill Gallon, Tony Royston, Dave Turnbull, Alan Mitcham, Ian Tait, Nuala Wright, Neil Allender, Gill Atkinson and Malcolm McVey.

1. Apologies for absence: Paul Roberts, Pauline Hawdon, Rachel Orange, Mark Nugent and Richard Fletcher.
2. Minutes of the previous Meeting were approved.
3. Matters arising:

Mark Nugent had questioned the amendment "whenever practicable" added to 5.5 of the Minutes of the September 2013 EC Meeting. Judith explained that the concern had not been about giving notice of any wind farm visit, but of restricting objections. Occasionally, an objection had to be made as a matter of urgency without there being time for a visit. She proposed going back to the wording agreed at the EC Meeting on 30 September 2013 and the Committee agreed.

Nuala described the celebration of the opening of the Hartlepool to Sunderland stretch of the coastal path on 15th April. The whole section had been walked on the day. Attendance had been good, especially from Sunderland CHA/HF and Chester le Street Group, and the event had resulted in a lot of publicity for Ramblers. She thanked all who had contributed and/or taken part.

Judith explained that after a meeting it had been decided not to proceed with the questionnaire.
4. Financial matters

Judith welcomed our new Area Treasurer, Gill Atkinson.

Gill reported that the Area's allocation of £3400 had just been received. Budgets for 2014/15 had to be submitted to Central Office by 12th September. Group budgets were in hand, but a budget for Area had to be decided. She could use Arthur's budget for the previous year, but with annual expenditure of about £6,000 we would have a large surplus unless we greatly increased expenditure or reduced the amount we applied for.

Dave Turnbull said that we should be spending money on training. It was agreed that website improvement was urgently

required, and would need funding. Malcolm McVey suggested that training courses should be free to encourage participation. There were plans to check, improve and publicise the Heritage Way during the coming year. Malcolm suggested that petrol expenses of footpath maintenance volunteers should be reimbursed. Alan Mitcham stressed the need to improve communication with members. Judith proposed that £2,000 should be allocated for publicity because she knew that Rachel Orange wanted to do a lot of things to publicise Ramblers, and this would require funding. It was agreed that we should apply for £2,000, but explain that we were using our reserves to fund these projects. The concern was that if we asked for a reduced amount of money, we would be limited to that amount in future years.

Gill Atkinson, Jon Davison and Dave Turnbull were appointed additional signatories for the Area's bank account. With Malcolm McVey and Neil Allender, there were now 5 signatories.

The Meeting passed the following Resolution:

On behalf of the Organisation, we confirm that at a properly convened meeting of the Committee, it was resolved that:

1. The Mandate for the operation of the bank account payment instructions and banking services is provided to the Bank and that amendments to the Mandate may be provided by any Committee Members, Director or Trustee or any other officer of the organisation who is notified to the Bank as being authorised by the Committee to do so;
2. The Bank is entitled to rely upon this Mandate until it receives a later Mandate amending it;
3. The Bank will be notified in writing of any change in Committee members/Directors/Trustees of the Organisation
4. The Terms and Conditions remain unchanged and in all other respects.

5. Website

Judith said that Central Office were emphasising that as much use as possible should be made of websites. Our website should be attractive and up to date, and at the moment it was neither. Rachel Orange was keen to use the website to increase communication and publicity.

Dave Turnbull suggested we should decide what we wanted i.e. prepare a brief, and hire someone to redesign the website. We had money to spend on this. Ian Tait said that we should look at other websites for ideas, and that there were plenty of designers who could do the job. As soon as we had decided what the site should look like, he would get some quotes for doing the work. Malcolm and Alan mentioned the possibility of doing something to make our site more prominent when anyone searched for "Ramblers"

It was agreed that a sub-committee comprising Rachel Orange, Dave Turnbull, Tony Royston, Ian Tait and Judith Taylor, would take this forward.

6. Training

Judith explained that she had taken on the organisation of training after Ann Key's death. There had not been time to find anyone else to do it.

27 people had gone on training courses so far in 2014. She suspected that this might have been because those who were interested had been on previous courses. There were 2 remaining courses in 2014-advanced navigation in September, and night navigation in October. She asked Ian Tait to find out whether any NWG members would like to attend these courses.

Judith would evaluate the training courses with the trainer, Richard Holmes, after the last course had taken place. She would discuss with Richard the possibility of providing courses in the Durham area.

The Committee would have to decide whether it wanted to continue to provide training in 2015, and, if so, who would organise it.

Dave Turnbull said that all those who had been on the courses had said that they were good. He felt that it was important that Area should continue to offer training. It might be necessary to look at the type of courses being offered.

7. Walk Northumbria

Judith said that as an experiment Walk Northumbria was being produced 4 times a year, but she knew that Pat Jackson was

struggling to find contributions from members to fill the available space.

Both Nuala and Alan said that they would like to see it continue to be produced 4 times a year.

There was then the problem of distribution-Judith had taken this on when Ann Key had moved to Ponteland. Even though we sent out only about 300 copies of Walk Northumbria and the Walks Programme, it was still a time consuming task to sort out labels and stuff envelopes.

Gill Atkinson agreed to look at Malcolm's membership list and see whether we could combine this with the list of those who had asked for paper copies, with a view to printing our own labels. She would see whether we could employ a printer to distribute Walk Northumbria/Walks Programme-Judith would check whether our current printers, Deakins, could offer this service.

Nuala asked that members be emailed to let them know that the latest version of Walk Northumbria was now on the website.

Groups should do more to get members' email addresses. Some groups were already well organised, but others had a long way to go.

8. Role of Vice Chair

Judith asked everyone to think whether we needed a Vice Chair. In the absence of the Area Chair, any member of the committee could chair a meeting if required.

Dave said that if we could find some one prepared to do the job, we should have a Vice Chair.

Judith asked for any suggestions of candidates for the role. She would mention it to Richard Fletcher and Rachel Orange.

9. Any Other Business

Nuala said that Mark Nugent had drawn her attention to a cruise liner sailing between the coast and the Farne Islands. He was concerned about oil spillage and other potential damage to the coastline. Mark had reported this to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty authorities, and Nuala had raised it with Emily Shaw at Ramblers Central Office.

Judith handed out the business cards designed by Richard Fletcher. Rachel Orange had 2,000, and Richard would distribute

them in the Durham area. Alan agreed to distribute them in Ponteland, and everyone else was asked to take some and distribute them as they saw fit-on walks, outdoor shops, doctors' surgeries etc.

The meeting then discussed the Heritage Way. Bill Gallon had walked it recently and had found it in surprisingly good condition. Many of the signs had survived. Alan said that the Tyneside Footpath Group had shown interest in working on the Way. He had spoken to the Local Access Forum who knew nothing about the Way.

We would need to find out whether there would be any funding for restoring/re-publicising the route. The route would have to be checked and publications brought up to date.

Gill asked that all expenses claims should be sent to her before the end of the month.

Gill said that she would like to use the Internet banking facility offered by Unity Bank. There would still need to be 2 authorisations before any payments could be made. The Meeting approved this.

Bill Gallon reminded members of the Pennine Way celebrations in April 2015. Groups would be encouraged to participate.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9 p.m.