

**Minutes of Executive Committee of Northumbria Area Ramblers
held at Jesmond Methodist Church, St George's Terrace, Jesmond on 30th September
2013 at 7 pm**

Present:

Judith Taylor (Chair)	Pat Jackson	M J Nugent
Neil Allender	Ann Key	Arthur Quick
Richard Fletcher	Malcolm McVey	Tony Royston
Bill Gallon	Tim McVey	Dave Turnbull
Pauline Hawdon (Mins)	Alan Mitcham	

- 1 **Apologies for absence:** Nuala Wright, Gilbert Roberts, and Rob Hutchinson.
- 2 **Minutes of the previous Executive Meeting** were approved.
- 3 **Matters arising:**
 - 3.1 Group Secretary meetings held for Northumberland and Durham were much appreciated.
 - 3.2 Donation made toward footpath from Rowlands Gill to High Spennithwaite.
- 4 **Hosting and Management of Website**
 - 4.1 245 members out of 2,264 had opted for paper option. Some members might now prefer to return to having a paper copy; Group Secretaries were to be contacted to inform their members that anyone wishing to return to paper copies should contact M. McVey. A sub-group would discuss the idea of a questionnaire which could examine members' opinions on a range of subjects. A prize could be offered for completing the questionnaire.
 - 4.2 Website now fully working using Ramblers main website hosting without charge and upgrading to latest version. Confirmed that registration only necessary if using the Forum or posting photographs.
- 5 **Wind Turbines (Alan Mitcham)**
 - 5.1 Walks to inspect the proposed Belford Burn and Middleton Burn sites had been undertaken by members of the Executive Committee. Notice of the Middleton Burn visit had been circulated to all Group Secretaries. Members of Berwick Group and Tyneside Group took part in the visit.
 - 5.2 All action taken by Northumbria Ramblers is in accordance with national Ramblers' policy and only when a proposed site would interfere with rights of way and/or have an adverse impact upon the beauty of the area.
 - 5.3 The Meeting agreed that the following statement would be minuted: 'All objections to proposed wind farm sites are made in accordance with the charitable aims of the Ramblers. These aims drive all our campaigning actions.'
 - 5.4 A copy of any formal letter written on behalf of Northumbria Ramblers would be sent to and retained by the Area Secretary.
 - 5.5 Notice of future visits to proposed wind farm sites would be posted on the website and emailed to EC members and Group Secretaries. All members who wished to attend would be free to do so.

5.6 To avoid disputes between members, personal views about wind turbines would be restricted to the Forum and Walk Northumbria.

6 Highthorn response

A surface mine was proposed near Cresswell. It was intended to walk the rights-of-way affected. A meeting with the company is to be arranged to clarify questions on diversions, reinstatement of area, existing tree and hedge plans, and access to Druridge Bay throughout the work. The idea of asking for financial help in compensation for the loss of access during the work was suggested and agreed. Completion was expected by 2026/27 and reinstatement in 2032.

7 Training (Ann Key)

Six training courses planned; problems with people cancelling and one course had to be withdrawn. Would like a pro-forma requesting email address, telephone number, home address and a non-returnable fee to be paid in advance. Dates would be firmly fixed before asking for participants. A Central Office representative from the Scottish Office had attended a 4-skills course to see how these were run, but no response had been received.

It was agreed to contact participants and ask for comments on the courses for inclusion in the Walk magazine and Area News.

Action: Ann Key & Pat Jackson

8 Unrecorded Ways (Neil Allender)

If these are not recorded by 2026 they will be lost; it needed someone to act as co-ordinator. Suggested Neil contacted Roger Carpenter. Some paths used regularly were not shown on maps and these needed to be recorded.

Action: Neil Allender

9 Finance (Arthur Quick) – see separate report.

Arthur commented that there was £1,000 surplus, due mainly to 4 groups who had not accepted their annual grants. Not posting programmes had saved £1,500, otherwise we would have made a large loss. A uniform allowance of 35p per mile for travel expenses would be used in future.

10 Any Other Business

10.1 Dave Turnbull said a major deregulation bill was proposed as an alternative to rights-of-way legislation. This included a possible extension of the 2026 cut-off date for some unrecorded ways. The outline plan looked favourable but would await more detail.

10.2 Strong dissatisfaction had been expressed over plans to include forests within DEFRA control and disband the Forestry Commission. We would prefer to keep a freestanding department as forests should not be subject to 5-year changes of policy. Suggested that this be emailed to the 38 Degrees group.

10.3 Pat & Judith would discuss the future of Walk Northumbria.

10.4 Priorities for next year: (a) Training; (b) Publicity – using website, advertising on beer-mats, posters in walking shops (c) Membership

10.5 Judith requested ideas for Area Council – meeting in a month.

10.6 Coastal path – Some paths required diverting because of landslip in the Denes. Contact MPs to urge early completion. Given sufficient notice, Durham Tourist Information centre would provide publicity,

10.7 Bill Gallon – new route from South Shields to Ferryhill – the Permian Way.

The meeting closed at 9 pm.