

Ramblers' Association, Northumbria Area
Minutes of Area Council Meeting : Monday 15 April at 7 pm
Held at Trinity Church, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne

Present

Mike Webber, Area Chair, & Chair Chester-le-Street)	Jenny Ellis (Treasurer, Morpeth)
Wendy Maxted (Area Secretary)	Vicky Ludbrooke (Sec. Morpeth)
Pauline Hawdon (Area Mins. Sec., & Affiliated Group Sec.)	Bill Gallon (Independent)
Neil Allender (Rights-of-Way Officer)	Alison Emslie (Independent)
Nuala Wright (Access Officer)	Robert Rayner (Ponteland)
Doris McAlister (Gateshead)	Julie Brown (Sec. Short Circuits)
Jan de Jong (Gateshead)	Gillian Darbyshire (Sunderland)
Julia Forster (Hexham Secretary)	Barrie Russell (Chair, Tyneside)
Carol Sanderson (Hexham)	David Crowe (Area – Independent/Tyneside)
	Gill Dallow (Tyneside)

Apologies: Mike Webber welcomed everyone and then gave apologies for Steve Edwards, and Richard Fletcher.

1 **Minutes of last meeting:** Having been circulated, were taken as read; and agreed. Previous Minutes were now available on the website.

2 **Matters Arising:**

3.1 **Area Secretary** - Wendy Maxted had agreed to be Area Secretary.

3.2 **Longer Walks Group** – was now established.

1. **Reports from Area Officers**

4.1 **Chair (Mike Webber)** (*extracts from his report not covered in other sections*)

- He thanked Wendy Maxted for taking over as Area Secretary and Judith Taylor for the help given over the year. Ideally, he would like Forward Planning and someone trained to take over the role in future.
- **The Area AGM** had gone smoothly following an enjoyable walk past Lumley Castle in the morning. Berwick would be hosting the next AGM on 8 February 2020.

Long-term plans: At the last meeting he had spoken about Ramblers 3, 5, and 10-year plans which were on the website to view or print out. He suggested groups may wish to consider their own short, medium and long-term plans. He had submitted Business/Action Plan ideas to all Group Secretaries and Chairs and awaited their comments. Some Groups had not received this information and Mike would investigate. **Mike Webber.**

He intended leafletting observers on Park Runs in the Chester-le-Street area; it was pointed out that some Park Runs consisted entirely of runners and were unsuitable for leafletting.

- **National Parks:** This was the 70th anniversary of the Act of Parliament establishing National Parks, and in Castleton, the Ramblers pledged to continue to protect them.
- **Ramblers "Walking for Health"** was England's largest programme of health walks. This 21-month project began in January and would be delivered in parts of London, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol.
- **Report form:** Mike had not received any feedback from Groups or the Area to the new Report form.
- **Great North Walk** – the Commercial Section of the Great North Run company stated they were planning to re-introduce the Great North Walk some time in the future. Mike would like the Ramblers to have their own "Big Walk". This could start in a small way with banners to promote the organisation. Central Office had agreed that this could be part of the Walks Festival.
- **General Council:** Mike had submitted an Expression of Interest for General Council to be held in Newcastle in 2020. As this year's is in the north (Manchester), the next would be in the South, but we were favourites for 2021.

He had attended General Council recently. £3 million was to be spent on promoting the "new Ramblers". They had received £2.9 million from the Postcode Lottery but this would be lost if membership fell below 100,000. There had been improvements to IT systems, the website and they were now employing full-time staff. Mike was to be NE representative

- **The new Annual Area Report** to Central Office was progressing.
- **Business Action Plans and Planning:** He had submitted Business/Action Plan ideas to all Group Secretaries and

Chairs and awaited comments.

4.2 Finance (Steve Edwards report)

The current balance was £3911.10. All invoices received had been paid and the year-end annual returns process had been completed on time. The invoices for adverts placed in the latest Walks booklet had been paid in full including the balance owed from last year by Ramblers Holidays. The next payment of £1250 from Ramblers Central Office was due at the end of April.

4.3 Heritage Way (Bill Gallon, Dave Crowe):

The February edition of the Walk magazine had included a long article. Stewardship was now in Group hands. Dave Crowe said that a detour to the Angel of the North would be decided by the Heritage Way Steering Group to offer the safest and most interesting route - not necessarily the shortest, before publishing it on the website. Promoting the route required contacting seven Highways' departments. They would like it to be included on OS maps.

Bill Gallon stated that he and Judith Taylor had attended a conference in Wallsend Memorial Hall on "Heritage Ways" with groups representing the Bowes railway which was opening 3 trails, and the Hetton railway which would be celebrating its 200th year in 2021. Bill had taken the publicity boards to Wallsend and also used them for a short talk in Sunnyside, where another group had shown interest in the leaflets. There was evidence that the leaflets had greatly increased numbers of people walking the route. Ramblers membership application forms could be included in the display.

Judith had written an article for the "Northumbria" magazine office which included comments from John Grundy. Free publicity could also be made by leaving "Walks" magazines in public areas.

The Long Distance Walkers had done two sections and presented certificates to their members.

4.4 Coastal Path (Nuala Wright) –

The England Coast Path had opened a 16 mile route from Skegness to Mablethorpe, Lincs., on 27 February. When completed in 2020 it would be the longest coastal path in the world (2,795 miles). Natural England had some conflicts to resolve in the Lindisfarne area from nature interests and wild-fowlers.

Richard Fletcher would like sculptures where it crossed borders into Scotland (East and West) and Wales (north and south). Finance may be available from Scotland, and Ramblers Holidays Trust.

4.5 Lost Ways & Re-launch: (Neil Allender).

Footpaths must be registered by 2026 and training was very important. The main speaker at the AGM, Jack Cornish had spoken on "Lost Ways – Don't Lose your Way". An introductory training course, followed by a full day course later could be arranged. A venue with Wifi would be necessary with 2-3 people from each group attending. Old maps were available on line or old maps and pictures could be used. Alison Elmslie said a short paragraph explaining what skills would be required was needed. Jack Cornish would like to be informed of what was decided, and a venue booked for June. A minimum of 20-30 people would be required. Mike would contact Sue Rogers (who? Why?) **Mike Webber**

Jack Cornish had said he would consider making a presentation for U-tube. Neil would contact him. **Neil Allender**

A considerable number of applications were being made by the Horse Society and Cyclists.

4.6 Training:

New Walk Leaders Training would include navigational skills both in the classroom and the field, First Aid, Accident/Incident reporting. Two managers were being recruited to roll out this training. Central Office intended to train trainers so that there was consistency. This would start in June/July and be carried out by St John's Ambulance. A course on Walk Leadership was to be held on Sunday 3 May in Blanchland.

General Council were producing a Member Registration App.

5 Group Reports

It was intended to publish a 3-fold A4, 2-sided "Impact" report which could be used as publicity. In September Mike would send out pro-formas for Group completion. Compiling the report would be taken over by David Crowe and finalized by February.

5.1. Longer Walks group (Neil Allender) –

17 had attended in January; 9 in February and March. It was gradually increasing.

5.2 Hexham –

Had 139 members, including some new members and some losses. Numbers on walks had increased to 15-20 and 5-mile walks were popular. A programme of family walks was starting once a month on a Sunday afternoon of a maximum of 3 miles. They had 2 new Committee members. They wanted to improve their web page; they were way-marking twice a month. They had planted a tree in memory of Mavis Harris and having a plaque made and were having an event at the end of May; they would email other groups. They had bought an eye-catching roller panel with details of their group which would be used at their market-stall in May which had cost £120. The material could be removed and reprinted when required. They had opened Twitter and Facebook accounts.

5.3 Chester-le-Street –

had advertised in their free local paper "What's On", This year they had 97 members compared with 93 last year. There were 21-22 people on walks.

5.4 Morpeth –

They had adopted Section 2 of the Heritage Way, which would be walked once a year to identify and report any problem areas. The first walk took place on 24 March. A few signage problems were reported. Membership was down to 60 with

about 20 seen regularly. Few were on email and it was difficult to get in touch with members. About 6-10 attended walks. They were trying to promote walking as a healthy exercise.

- 5.5 Ponteland** – The pattern of walks continued as before with the shorter Wednesday walks being better supported. Membership had fallen slightly from 97 to 96.
- 5.6 Short Circuits** – 85 members. They walked alternate Saturdays with 20-30 attending. Bill Wright had taken over from D Moore as Walks Co-ordinator. They were organising a day to Berwick.
- 5.7 Tyneside** – Numbers on coaches varied with no pattern. A 4-page spread walk leaflet had been printed. The group had been asked to be involved in a film about a family with a suicide which would be followed by a walk and discussion.. This would also include a tour of the theatre.
- 5.8 Gateshead** – They had 5-6 new members. Attendance on walks was 13-17 people.

6 Any other Business

Emergency Key-rings: Chester-le-Street stated that an order of 300 Emergency Key Rings would cost £335 + VAT; £1.35 per keyring.

Date of Next Area Council meeting – Monday 21 October 2019.