

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2021

Minutes

Present Jim Norris (Area Chair), Judith Anson (Area Secretary, Membership Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Tony Norcross (Minutes Secretary), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), David Dobson (Nottingham), Sue Rick (Mansfield & Sherwood), Brian Tuffnell (Mansfield & Sherwood), Dave Johnson (Southwell), Keith Jacobs (Broxtowe), Dave Hobson (Vale of Belvoir)

A minute's silence was held to remember Alex Staniforth.

- 1 Apologies Adrian Amer (Area Vice-Chair, Newark), Steve Parkhouse (Area ROW Secretary), Sue Jones (Area Countryside Officer), Barbara Dobson (Nottingham), Keith & Janet Ross (Worksop), Heather Ingram (One Step Walkers), John Young (Vale of Belvoir)
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting 20th July 2021
Approved
Proposed: Sue Rick Seconded: Chris Thompson
- 3 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- There were no matters arising.
- 4 Area Officers Reports
- 4.1 **Chair Appendix I.**
 There were no questions on Jim's report.
- 4.2 **Secretary Appendix II**
 Judith stated the comments on RamblersNET suggested some walk leaders were withdrawing because of concerns about the compulsory risk assessments. The reasons were having to complete them, then keep the paperwork for 3 years and concern the insurers might not provide support to the leader if they felt the form had been incorrectly completed. Judith asked the Groups present for their views:
 Dave Hobson – incident forms had to be filed immediately so why did the risk assessments have to be kept for 3 years? There was no feedback from CO on how many incidents were reported or how many led to an insurance claim. None of the walk leaders had withdrawn.
 Newark – Judith reported the Group Secretary was storing all the risk assessments, rather than each walk leader.
 Collingham – Neil added that the Group was also holding them centrally.
 Sue – the assessments were being kept and there had been no problems with walk leaders
 Dave Johnson – Southwell had difficulty finding walk leaders and the risk assessments had not helped
 Keith – the Group supported risk assessments which allowed leaders to record other useful issues; the reports were being kept centrally; leading should be a pleasure and not a duty

David Dobson – one walk leader had refused; others saw the form as common sense.

Fortunately, Nottinghamshire did not appear to have major problems with completing the risk assessments and although there was a problem finding enough walk leaders, that was probably due to them dropping out for other reasons.

4.3 **Treasurer Appendix III**

Neil thanked Group Treasurers for submitting their annual returns promptly.

4.4 **Rights of Way Secretary Appendix IV**

There were no questions.

4.5 **Countryside Officer Appendix V**

Dave Hobson referred to the Notts Walker which mentioned the proposed large solar farm in Bassetlaw. Leicestershire had also received an application for a solar farm larger than 50 megawatts. Chris Thompson asked that thanks be passed to Sue for the report and particularly the work on the objection to the gravel pit at Barton-in-Fabis.

4.6 **Membership Secretary Appendix VI**

There were no questions on Judith's report.

4.7 **Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer**

Chris was discussing with Jim how his role would continue to develop. In response to a comment from Chris, Judith reminded Council that the AGM was a review of the period 1st October 2020 – 30th September 2021 and was not a forward look. Future proposals would not be raised at the AGM and would need to be approved by Area Council.

4.8 **Communications Subcommittee Appendix VIII**

The Notts Walker had been received that day and members commented on the excellent content. Jim added the Facebook page likes were increasing and thanked Sue. Judith asked members for their views on the brand refresh video. Dave Hobson said the fast moving images had made him feel sick and the initial sequence was out of focus. Dave was also concerned the flashes could trigger an epileptic attack in a susceptible viewer. Judith confirmed there would be work for Areas and Groups to do when the brand refresh was introduced. This would be taken through the Communication Group to provide as much assistance to Groups as possible. New information was arriving from Central Office regularly on the changes. At an Area Cluster meeting it had reported the professional actors used in some of the publicity material had also appeared in an advert for Co-Op Funeral Care and Central Office had been asked to use Ramblers members. Neil and Chris were thanked for their work on the self-guided walks and the contribution of Alex was noted.

Jim added the Press & Publicity job would be advertised but asked Groups if they had any suitable candidates.

5 **Group Reports Appendix IX**

Group representatives made the following comments in addition to their written reports:
Nottingham – David confirmed the Group was holding the Area AGM. David also asked other Groups about allowing dogs on walks. Mansfield & Sherwood put on the walk description whether the walk is 'dog friendly'. Southwell only allow guide, or assistance, dogs. Vale of Belvoir allow dogs. Broxtowe allow dogs on suitable walks only. Judith added a problem had been experienced by a Group some years ago when a dog

accompanied a blind walker and problems arose where the dog was unable to get over the stiles. There was also an issue about offering lifts if the guide dog was to go in another walker's car. This had been discussed with Central Office and the view was any blind or partially sighted walker should be accompanied by their own experienced guide, rather than rely on those present to do the guiding and manage the guide dog.

Vale of Belvoir – walks were being placed on GWEM but some leaders were concerned about large numbers turning up and had asked that people booked in advance and numbers limited. Existing walk leaders were doing more walks than usual.

Broxtowe – the Group had new walk leaders and had increased the membership.

Southwell – the Group had 10 new members.

6. Date and Venue of Next Meeting 18th January 2022

The majority of present and views received from other Groups was for the next meeting to be held in person at Bilsthorpe. Judith was asked to book the small room instead of the Hall as the sound was better. The meeting will be held at 7.30 on Tuesday, 18th January 2022.

7. Discussion Item – Risk Management & Stiles

Dave Hobson, Vale of Belvoir had produced a paper “risk management and stiles” and led a discussion. Dave made the following points

- there was no feedback from Ramblers to Groups about how many incidents there were with stiles although an incident form had to be completed by all Groups when there was an accident. The scale of the problem was therefore unknown
- there was a disconnect between Notts County Council and the number of ‘dangerous’ stiles so the local problem was unknown. If all such stiles were reported, would it be manageable? What some walkers could manage easily would be a block for others e.g. height of the steps.
- the British Standard for stiles was set out in the paper and the intention of NCC was that all stiles should be replaced with gates but there was no time scale.
- given the Ramblers new requirement for a written risk assessment, should a walk leader change the planned walk if a stile was not in an acceptable condition? If this was done by all walk leaders, there could be a problem with the number of paths available with ‘safe’ stiles.

Chris Thompson explained the responsibility for stiles was with the landowner and not NCC although reports were made to NCC. The ROW Management Plan 2016-2026 set out the details. NCC were encouraging landowners to replace stiles with gates to allow better access for disabled walkers and NCC could make a financial contribution. Chris encouraged all Groups to report dangerous stiles to the relevant District Coordinator.

Keith felt stiles put some people off walking and Leicestershire was much further forward with gates being introduced. Chris commented that Leics CC allowed Ramblers to work on ROW which Notts CC did not. Tony added that stiles were only in Britain and he had never encountered a stile abroad. Keith stated that stiles or gates allowed walkers to cross fields with livestock and that maintenance had been neglected by landowners during Covid, possible to deter walkers. Chris reported a section of the Robin Hood Way had been illegally closed by a landowner to allow stock on the land. Dave Johnson suggested there might not be as much stock outdoors as there used to be. Dave also questioned what would make a stile dangerous – there was no definition. Keith agreed that all stiles identified by Ramblers Groups as dangerous or difficult should be reported.

Jim thanked Dave and Vale of Belvoir for bringing the paper and to all members for their contribution to the discussion. It was agreed that Chris and Steve Parkhouse would work with Dave Hobson on a paper about stiles, the minimum standard, their eventual replacement by gates and obtaining feedback from Ramblers about the number of incidents involving stiles. The paper would encourage all Groups to report stiles to the District Coordinator so the problem was recorded. This would also be discussed with NCC at one of the meetings. The paper would be presented to a future meeting of Area Council and circulated to Groups.