

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2022**

Minutes

Present Sue Rick (Area Chair and Mansfield & Sherwood), Judith Anson (Area Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Tony Norcross (Minutes Secretary), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), Steve Parkhouse (ROW Secretary), Alex Ellis (Groups Officer), Brian Tuffnell (Mansfield & Sherwood), Mike Stock (Rushcliffe), Jim Norris (Gedling), Keith Jacobs (Broxtowe), David & Barbara Dobson (Nottingham), Keith & Janet Ross (Worksop), Dave & Elaine Dobson (Vale of Belvoir), Anne Bister (Ravenshead & Hucknall), Dick Brader (Ravenshead & Hucknall) and Brian & Wendy Culpin (Ravenshead & Hucknall)

1 Apologies Adrian Amer (Vice-Chair and Newark), Diana Munro (Membership Secretary and Worksop), Sue Jones (Countryside Officer), Bob & Heather Ingram (One Step Walkers), Dave Johnson (Southwell), John Young (Vale of Belvoir), and Allan Rogers (Robin Hood Way Flexi-Group)

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting 19th July 2022

Approved:

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Keith Ross

3 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

None

4 Area Officers Reports

4.1 **Chair** Appendix I.

No questions

4.2 **Secretary** Appendix II and IIa

Judith stated the most important item was the discussion on the Ravenshead & Hucknall Group (R&H) set out in Appendix IIa. It was agreed that if Groups had any questions on any other Officer reports they should be sent by emails with responses included in the minutes.

Ravenshead & Hucknall Group: the 4 members of the Group present stated they wanted to walk as a 'friendship' group of about 23 members preferably remaining within Ramblers but in a Flexigroup as it was not possible to form a Committee. The other members of R&H would need to join other Groups as the R&H Group would be dissolved. An alternative choice of those 23 R&H members was to set up an independent walking group or join the U3A and arrange separate insurance. Judith read the comments from Southwell: that members from R&H would be welcomed, concern about additional work for Area Officers, the problems of a merger and members should be able to choose their own Group. Other comments made in the meeting from those Officers and Groups present:

- On average 70% of Group members do not engage with their Group but support Ramblers through their membership and support for campaigning
- All Groups needed to work hard to find Committee members and the duplication of all roles in Groups and Area might not be sustainable in the long term with a new model being explored nationally

- If a Flexigroup was approved by Area it should be time limited until a Committee could be formed
- Flexigroups did not have funds and all requests would need to be made through Area Council with the Area Treasurer managing this
- Previous Group closures had been managed through mergers to keep the Group name
- The creation of a Flexigroup with the disbanding of the R&H Group would not encourage the remaining 85 members to stay in Ramblers
- No arrangements for Groups should transfer to Area to manage – this needed to be managed locally
- Nottinghamshire was unusual in having so many Groups and future mergers might be necessary if Committees could not be formed as had happened in Derbyshire; the answer was not to pass the responsibility to already overworked Area Officers which would deter people coming forward for Area posts
- The 23 friends could be part of another Group and still walk together
- A positive way forward should be sought and all members should be encouraged to participate
- There were 2 issues – whether a Flexigroup should be approved by Area Council, and separately, where those members not in the Flexigroup should transfer.

Group representatives agreed the decision on whether to support a Flexigroup needed to be made by their Committees and the vote would therefore be deferred until January 2023. Judith would contact all Groups to ask them to submit a vote even if they would not be attending. The R&H members present confirmed they would continue to receive correspondence, organise walks and Wendy Culpin would become Treasurer as Anne Bister wished to retire.

4.3 **Treasurer** Appendix III

Neil presented the report and several items were discussed:

Revision of Volunteer Mileage Rate: Ramblers had increased the Volunteer Mileage Rate from 28p to 45p per mile although this was after 2022/23 budgets had been submitted. Area Council was therefore asked to approve raising the mileage rate for Area volunteer travel to 45p per mile.

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Alex Ellis

Vote: For 12, Against 0, Abstain 4

Motion was carried

Robin Hood Way Flexigroup claim for expenses: Neil's report set out the background to the claim for expenses which had been incurred without prior agreement to attend the Nottingham Festival on 27th August. Notts Area Ramblers had decided not to be represented at the Festival and it had been understood at the July Area Council the Robin Hood Way Association was attending, not the Flexigroup, so there was no funding requested. As the RHW Association does not have public liability insurance, the RHWA completed the booking forms in the name of the Flexigroup to obtain Ramblers insurance cover. The costs claimed by the RHW Flexigroup were £84.12 and neither the Area Secretary nor Area Treasurer were consulted in advance and just received the claim form after the event. Area Officers have considered this claim and recommend to Area Council the claim should be rejected.

Proposal: that the expense claim of £84.12 from the Robin Hood Way Flexigroup for attendance at the Nottingham Festival be rejected

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Steve Parkhouse

Vote: For 12, Against 0, Abstain 4

Elaine Dobson raised the question of payment of recce expenses and said this had been discouraged by Ramblers. Keith Ross quoted from the Financial Regulations but Neil explained that these had been revised in 2012 by FIN014 and read out current guidance. Dave Hobson confirmed Vale of Belvoir encouraged walk leaders to claim for recces. Keith Ross expressed concern about the cost nationally and Neil replied he assumed Ramblers had considered that when the rise to 45p was agreed.

4.4 **Rights of Way Secretary** Appendix IV
No questions

4.5 **Countryside Officer** Appendix V
No questions

4.6 **Membership Secretary** Appendix VI
No questions

4.7 **Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer**
No questions

4.8 **Communications Subcommittee** Appendix VIII
No questions

5 Group Reports Appendix IX
No questions

6. Discussion Session – Walk Leader Recruitment

One of the biggest problems facing Ramblers groups in general is recruiting volunteers to lead walks as our membership age group continues to rise and experienced walk leaders are no longer able to lead walks putting more pressure on current walk leaders to produce a walks programme. There is a lot of help for making up new walk leader packs on Assemble but the practical training relies on individual groups.

The purpose of this session was to share good practise in recruiting new walk leaders. The participants were split into 4 groups & discussed the following questions, 2 groups who weren't able to attend sent in their responses-

1/ How does your group recruit walk leaders, what works well for you? Identify from your membership which members have the skills to lead walks.

Be pro-active- regular encouragement/mentoring.

Map reading training.

Sharing local expertise.

Email requests with dates.

Personal contacts.

Beg for volunteers.

Write to every member with dates of possible walks.

Recce with new walkers & offer support.

Offering experienced walk leaders as mentors.

Discuss walk leadership during walks.

2/ Has filling in & keeping risk assessments deterred members from walk leading?

Yes

To some extent but a good recce is essential
Yes some refuse to fill in forms and lead walks.
No as the assessment supports the recce & information needing to be shared at the beginning of the walk.
It is not welcomed by all.

3/ Does your group provide training i.e. Map reading, route planning, group management? Would you like to see training at Area / National Level?

Attended map reading at C/O Roadshows which were excellent.
Not formal but support as a group.
We have tried to do training sessions but haven't been successful in recruiting more leaders.
We run annual Navigation events & found it works better with smaller groups & 1-1 support.
Yes we run courses from time to time.
Training is available (Area + National)
Preferably not electronic.

4/ Do you provide a buddying system/ support new leaders for the first few walks?

Yes
Informally.
Yes, but not often taken up as most of the current leaders have been leading for 10 years.
Yes, happy to help new leaders.
Yes, if needed to provide encouragement.
Each new walk leader is supported by a member of the Committee or the walk co-ordinator for at least their first walk & whatever is needed after that.

5/ Has your group tried advertising for walk leaders on Assemble & what are your thoughts on this?

No, like the personal approach.
Only available via Ramblers website link- who would know where to look?
No. won't work, not local enough.

6/ What do you think about using non Ramblers members as walk leaders?

Wouldn't have insurance & be dedicated.
There may be safeguarding issues, experience & capability not known & may not set a pace for our walkers.
Would they know what is involved i.e. form filling, if you don't know the walk leader how do you know if they might leave you behind. No insurance.
Could Introduce new members. No insurance, Will not know the walkers (health issues, capability).

7/ Should we be more flexible with walk programmes to encourage new leaders i.e. our members have other commitments & may not know what they are doing in 6-9 months time.

Some groups design the walk programme around their walk leaders whereas we do a programme & then seek the leaders.
We like to plan 6 months in advance.
Plan 2 months in advance.
Every group is different.
Flexibility is important to attract a wide range of walk leaders.

8/ Do you have problems recruiting walk leaders for shorter walks/less than 6 miles?

Can be too many walks in the week so a balance required.

We buddy the slightly less confident leaders to lead shorter walks.

No difference.

Some of the walk leaders would prefer to do longer walks but see leading shorter walks as an opportunity to interact with other members of the group.

Conclusion

The group discussed the responses, ideas for walk leader training locally & advertising for walk leaders on Assemble.

Each group uses their own methods to recruit new walk leaders but a common theme was being proactive and recognising which members have the skills to lead walks or need their confidence boosting with mentoring from experienced walk leaders. The best place to recruit seems to be on walks where you have a captive audience, the time to explain what is involved and constantly ongoing.

Some walk leaders have been put off by having to fill in and keep risk assessments but many recognise that they are there to help inform participants of the risks involved on the walks and reduce accidents.

Map reading training has been successful for many groups, especially working with smaller groups and providing a compass, first aid kit etc. can be a good way of thanking walk leaders for their participation. Most groups use a buddying system to support new walk leaders.

Some of the members would like to see the C/O Roadshows return with the walk training element.

None of the groups have tried recruiting new walk leaders with the pro forma on Assemble and some don't know how to access Assemble. They were wary of having walk leaders who don't know the group and wouldn't be covered by Ramblers insurance.

The consensus was that flexibility is important to attract a wide range of walk leaders whether it's organising the walks programme and asking for walk leaders afterwards or asking for walks and dates to be submitted from individuals.

Some groups have lots of walk leaders for longer walks over 8 miles but struggle to get leaders for short walks, other groups encourage the slightly less confident walk leaders to lead shorter walks with support. Many walk leaders also lead for other non Ramblers groups/ private groups.

There are some good resources on Assemble that can be utilised, helping groups to access new technology may be a way forward. If we want to encourage younger members we need to embrace all mediums to share the vast knowledge and experience of our current membership.

7. Date and Venue of Next Meeting 17th January 2023

The next meeting will be held in person at Bilsthorpe.at 7.30 on Tuesday, 17th January 2023.