

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 16TH APRIL 2024

Minutes

Present Sue Rick (Area Chair and Mansfield & Sherwood), Adrian Amer (Vice-Chair), Judith Anson (Area Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), Brian Tuffnell (Area Webmaster and Mansfield & Sherwood), Jim Norris (Area Countryside Officer and Gedling), Martyn Gill (Mansfield & Sherwood), Mike Stock (Rushcliffe), James McGill (Newark), Joyce Pedersen (Newark), Yinka Soetan (One Step Walkers), Keith Jacobs (Broxtowe), Wendy House (Broxtowe), Dave Johnson (Robin Hood Way Flexi Group), Tom Munro (Worksop), Jim Sinclair (Southwell) and Sandy Shepherd (Southwell)

- 1 Apologies: Alex Ellis (Groups Officer), Diana Munro (Membership Secretary and Worksop), Linda Honey (Nottingham) and Dave Johnson (Southwell)
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on 16th January were approved as a correct record.
Proposed: Chris Thompson Seconded: Keith Jacobs
- 3 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
None
4. Rights of Way Committee
James McGill raised the issue of the Rights of Way Committee's recent 'disarray' and expressed surprise the issue was not on the agenda. The recent resignations were concerning and Nottinghamshire County Council officers had contacted James. The people on the Rights of Way Committee did a good job and were worthy of respect.

Neil Stafford replied, explaining the events since the April 2023 Area Council when Steve had made a statement and left the meeting. That has distressed several members and Yinka had been concerned for Steve's welfare and followed him out of the meeting to check on him. As Ramblers had a duty of care to its members, the matter had been referred to Central Office, and, as all issues were confidential, the Executive Officers were not able to comment. There was no further communication with Steve, except through an intermediary. Steve then resigned in November stating that his only involvement would be as Don't Lose Your Way Coordinator for Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The Rights of Way Committee had continued with Sue and Judith managing the meetings and the correspondence. Paul Fenton had been welcomed as the new Rights of Way Secretary and his resignation was disappointing.

Dave Johnson said Paul had been elected at the AGM and wanted to be Area Rights of Way Secretary on his own terms which would include involving Steve Parkhouse in meetings. Joyce added that people had to work together and problems worked through. Sue stated that she had been involved in meetings with Central Office and Steve for 6 months on a confidential basis and Steve had said he wanted to only do what really interested him i.e. the DMMOs. Sue had welcome Paul's election and had wanted to work with him.

Judith added that she had proposed a review of the Rights of Way Committee to ensure it was appropriate for 2024 but this had not been accepted. A working party would be the

way forward to review membership, job roles, etc. The position of volunteers was uncertain in the structure and they could not currently claim expenses. Adrian felt there should be a mutually agreeable framework. James thought a working party was not appropriate and there should be a wider meeting. Jim stated that a large meeting would be unwieldy and would not make progress. Adrian felt any meeting should be inclusive and open. Tom commented the last meeting of the Rights of Way Committee had been appalling and members had left the meeting because members had been insulting. A defined structure was required.

Judith explained there already was a structure for the Rights of Way Committee approved by Area Council in 2014 and any review must start from there. Joyce commented there needed to be an agreed level of delegation. James said Steve was being bullied by the Executive Officers. Adrian replied that Steve had not been bullied by anyone but as the issue was confidential the Officers could not effectively respond, even to defend themselves.

Dave proposed Paul be asked to produce a paper about the future of rights of way and James added that would include the return of Steve Parkhouse to the Rights of Way Committee as his expertise was necessary. Adrian commented that other papers and views would also be welcomed. Joyce suggested Sue should speak to Paul. Yinka suggested the remaining members of the Rights of Way Committee should be included in a meeting with Area Council. The date for the next ROW Committee was 14th May and it was agreed to use that date after contacting the members. Yinka felt any change should be taken one step at a time. There was a suggestion that other Areas be contacted and Judith explained that every Area operated differently. Sue added that there should be training for the Group Footpath Secretaries and for any volunteers.

Judith summed up what had been agreed:

- joint meeting to be held on Tuesday, 14th May at Bilsthorpe
- Sue and Dave to ask Paul if he would be willing to put a paper together for discussion at the meeting
- if Paul does not want to produce a paper, James would do it
- the starting point would be the 2014 Rights of Way Committee and structure papers
- ground rules would be established at the start of the meeting

5 Area Officers Reports

5.1 **Area Chair** Appendix I

Sue asked Groups to provide information for the display boards at the Nottinghamshire County Show on 11th May. Sue also hoped to provide practical training for walk leaders and Sue asked people to offer to help.

5.2 **Area Secretary** Appendix II, IIa, IIb

Venue and timing for future meetings: The White Post were no longer able to offer their upstairs room. Members were asked to offer suggestions for venues at about the same cost and public transport would be helpful. Bilsthorpe was now open from 4.30 and members agreed to start Area Council at 6.30PM in future.

Walk Leaders Guidance: Judith had circulated an advance copy of the new Guidance. Although there was concern about the leader to walker ratio, it was felt to be manageable. Sue had organised training for the Mansfield & Sherwood Group which could be extended to others.

2025 AGM Speaker it was agreed to again have a guest speaker rather than a member of the Board of Trustees. Suggestions were the Woodland Trust, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, the Bennerley Viaduct or a member of the Ramblers Paths Team. Judith was asked to follow up these suggestions.

5.3 **Area Treasurer** Appendix III, IIIa

Notts Guided Walks Programme: Area Council had paid £200 for an advert in the printed copy of the Notts Guided Walks Programme for many years and that had been agreed in the 2023/24 budget. However, the NGWP had requested an additional contribution as it had a shortfall in funding. Neil reminded Council that Area had identified £635 to fund two Area visitors to General Council in 2024 after the 2023 GC had voted to allow visitors and return to a two day format. The Board of Trustees rejected that vote and no visitors are allowed at the single day event. Neil proposed that £300 of these funds be used to support walking in Nottinghamshire by increasing the sum for the NGWP to £500 for 2024 only. Dave Johnson asked Chris why the funds were needed. Chris explained that only £1,000 of the £2,000 requested had been received. Dave suggested that additional space for Ramblers could be provided in the magazine to reflect the increased sum but Chris confirmed the booklet had already been set up. Neil confirmed the sum for the NGWP had to be voted on each year.

Proposal: Area Council is asked to approve the expenditure of £500 on the advert for Notts Area Ramblers in the 2024 Notts Guided Walks Programme

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Joyce Pedersen

Vote: all in favour

Renewal of Zoom Account: Although the Zoom account was not due for renewal until September Neil asked Council to agree it in advance to assist budget planning. The current cost was £143.88, although it could increase, but this was offset by reduced travelling expenses and room hire.

Proposal: Area Council is asked to approve the renewal of the Area Zoom licence in September, based on the current price of £143.88.

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Tom Munro

Vote: all in favour

Cloud Storage: Neil spoke to Appendix IIIa which would be discussed at the next Area Cluster meeting. This was particularly important as information had recently been lost. Neil would also work with the Area Webmaster, Brian Tuffnell as it might be possible to use the Area website to store information with sign in only access and limited rights to amend documents.

Recce Expenses: a Group had contacted Neil about the increase in the mileage rate and the impact on the budget. All Groups had been asked to send in comments in Appendix VIII. Keith thanked Groups for their ideas and responses. Wendy commented on the very small capitation paid to Groups. Jim and Sandy both agreed the amount paid to Groups was too small and if it was not spent the Group was asked to return it. Southwell was trying to balance its budget which was not adequate. Neil informed Groups that they could apply for a budget if the capitation sum was not sufficient. Under the Charity Commission rules, the reserves held had to be limited and due to the restrictions of Covid, Groups had not been able to spend their funds. Neil also suggested that all Groups insisted expense claims were made quarterly so the Treasurer could plan the following year's budget more effectively. Yinka explained One Step Walkers made sure they did not have a surplus and had funded first aid kits, compasses and walk leader training.

At 9.15PM the meeting agreed it would continue with urgent items.

5.4 Area Membership Secretary Appendix VI

Judith thanked Diana for her work in contacting all members of the NE96 Not in Group section encouraging them to move to join a Group to obtain the full benefits of their membership. Although only a few members had moved it is hoped more will follow.

6. General Council

Judith explained that, for the first time in many years, Area Council was able to discuss the motions being presented to General Council and advise the delegates. Members thought the motions were disappointing but Dave asked what the data on the walks attendance register on the Ramblers app was used for. Sue replied this was used by Ramblers to demonstrate to potential funders how much activity there was. Mansfield & Sherwood also used it as part of the AGM. There was a discussion about how this information could be accessed on Assemble. Judith asked members to contact her for guidance.

7. Group Reports

Yinka asked Groups how they knew how many walks potential members had attended as they should only do three taster walks before joining. Members responded that it was not possible to know although people attending should be asked if they were Ramblers members. Yinka also asked about young people under 18 attending walks. Groups responded that everyone under 18 should be accompanied by a parent or guardian and that the walk leader could refuse to take a child on a walk if there was concern about safety or ability to undertake the walk

8. Trent Valley Way

Judith had been contacted by Alison Thornhill at the Trent Rivers Trust about the Trent Valley Way. Groups had been involved in surveying the route through Nottinghamshire over 10 years ago. It was now proposed to follow the route from Shardlow through Nottinghamshire looking at its condition from both a safety and a visibility/way marker perspective. Groups were very supportive of being involved in this initiative and asked Judith to follow it up.

9. Ploughing and Cropping Survey

Dave Johnson informed members that Nottinghamshire County Council was looking for more volunteers for the ploughing and cropping survey. Interested members were asked to contact

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=vsTFy7jGAkm_8SepHyiQ4oNM9pGE8_9DtVPhDb8U8wFUODExSDFNQIhFMEIURjhKV0FBM1YxTIlzRi4u

Volunteers were being sought in the north of the County particularly.

10. Date and Venue of Next Meetings

Tuesday, 14th May, 6.30PM Joint meeting between Area Council and Rights of Way Committee at Bilsthorpe.

Tuesday, 16th July, 6.30PM Area Council at Bilsthorpe.