

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 23RD JULY 2024

Minutes

Present Adrian Amer (Area Vice-Chair), Judith Anson (Area Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), Jim Norris (Area Countryside Officer and Gedling), Alex Ellis (Groups Officer), Diana Munro (Membership Secretary and Worksop), Martyn Gill (Mansfield & Sherwood), Mike Stock (Rushcliffe), James McGill (Newark), Joyce Pedersen (Newark), Keith Jacobs (Broxtowe) and John Young (Vale of Belvoir)

1. Sue Rick
Members gave their personal memories of Sue Rick. Adrian spoke of how moving the well attended funeral had been and there was a minute's silence.
2. Apologies: Brian Tuffnell (Area Webmaster and Mansfield & Sherwood), Yinka Soetan (One Step Walkers), Linda Honey (Nottingham), Dave Johnson (Robin Hood Way Flexi Group), Tom Munro (Worksop), Ralph Middlemore (Broxtowe), Howard Lloyd (Rushcliffe) and Dave Johnson (Southwell)
- 3 Minutes of the Previous Meetings
Minutes of the meeting held on 16th April and 14th May were approved as a correct record.
Proposed: Chris Thompson Seconded: Neil Stafford
- 4 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meetings
None
- 5 Area Officers Reports
- 5.1 **Area Secretary Appendix I & Ia**
Area Chair Adrian agreed to Chair Area Council meetings but an Area Chair was required. Diana Munro proposed that Area Council members should be asked to put themselves forward at the October Council to be appointed ex-officio until the Area AGM.
General Council 20th April 2024 Neil Stafford spoke to Appendix Ia and he and Adrian had found the opportunity to meet other Areas very helpful in building relationships. Unfortunately, the Board would not agree to revert to the 2 day format which allowed greater opportunity for discussion and meet others. Motion 4 concerned the use of the walk attendance register on the Ramblers app. Members had agreed it should not be compulsory as it excluded those without a smart 'phone, ignored problems with 'phone signals and the imposition of technology. Adrian stated he had raised concerns with staff about the Access to Nature Bill although the new government could have a different agenda.
Safeguarding Officer All Areas were required to have a Safeguarding Officer. Diana Munro and Alex Ellis both volunteered and would attend the training to establish exactly what was required. A report would be made to the next meeting.
- 5.2 **Area Treasurer Appendix II**
Area Budget and Funding Request 2024-25 Neil explained the key points of the budget and informed members that Don't Lose Your Way was no longer classed as Restricted

Funds and had been moved into ROW expenditure. An additional £1,900 was being requested to support the expenditure budget of £10,075.

Area Council was asked to endorse the budget and funding request:

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Alex Ellis

All in favour

Peak & Northern Footpath Society Area Council was asked to renew the annual affiliate subscription at a cost of £22.50:

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Jim Norris

All in favour

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England Area Council was asked to renew the annual subscription to the CPRE at a cost of £36:

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Alex Ellis

All in favour

Alleged Copyright breach by Broxtowe Group Broxtowe Group had used a photograph from the Hay-on-Wye Tourist Board website to advertise their Group holiday on Walksfinder. The Group had received a 'fine' of £365.96 for an alleged breach of copyright. Broxtowe had contacted Central Office as well as Area for advice. Neil had researched the company making the demand. The Visual Rights Group appeared to have been set up for the sole purpose of trawling the internet looking for breach of copyright by anyone and then charging them. It would have cost £35 to pay to use the photo although there was sympathy with the Group for using a photo of a resort to encourage people to visit. Central Office had originally told the Group they would have to pay, although the cost had been reduced as Ramblers is a charity. In that case, Area had offered to meet the cost as the Group did not have the funds. Neil was concerned at Ramblers action and questioned whether it had sought legal advice. Adrian stated that he was not certain a legal infringement had taken place. Keith Jacobs confirmed that Central Office had now apologised for telling the Group it had to pay and had agreed to meet the cost from Ramblers funds. Keith added that, regrettably the Group Publicity Officer had resigned. Members expressed their sympathy for the Group as the action to use a Tourist Office photo to advertise a holiday in that resort would seem reasonable. All Groups were reminded of the need to double check copyright and either only use their own photos or use one from a free site. Judith would raise this at the next Cluster meeting as Ramblers needed to give clear advice to Groups and Areas.

5.3 **Rights of Way Committee**

Judith presented the report of action over the last quarter. Neil reported on the A52 developments and consultants had asked Ramblers if they could provide any information on the use of the existing crossings. Rushcliffe Group had circulated this request and Neil had submitted a summary of over 20 responses. For the Tollerton development, Ramblers should push for a bridge, rather than just a crossing as the residents were effectively cut off. The issue of improvements to the underpass near the Wheatcroft Island also needed to be pursued.

Pathwatch 2 Members were asked for their view on funding for Pathwatch 2, a proposal from Staffordshire Area. Council agreed this should not be supported but commented that Nottinghamshire County Council had not implemented the promised system for reporting and recording ROW problems. James was thanked for his article "Good crop, bad crop!" which was leading the Area website.

5.4 **Area Countryside Officer**

Jim informed members the remit of the new Mayor would include activities of interest to Ramblers. Jim would be in contact with Paddy Tipping and the other Ramblers Areas to discuss how to ensure Ramblers was involved. The Areas were very different and on some issues, e.g. solar developments, Nottinghamshire might need to take a separate approach. In answer to a question, Jim explained the 'grey belt' was disused car parks, closed power stations, etc although the CPRE had identified some of these as good environmental areas for wild life. Council agreed with Jim's approach. The Great North Road Solar consultation was ongoing and Jim would be taking the lead. On High Marnham, Jim, Adrian, James and Chris were all involved.

5.5 Area Membership Secretary Appendix VI

Diana reported on the lack of response from those members Not in a Group to her letter or email encouraging them to join a Group. These members only received Central Office mailings and the Area AGM notice. It seemed these members were not interested joining their local group and participating in activities although supporting Ramblers financially. Council thanked Diana for her work on this.

5.6 Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer

Chris Thompson explained the new pedestrian bridge over the Trent in Nottingham currently did not have definitive ROW to it along the embankment; these are permissive paths only. Chris had been in touch with Ramblers on behalf of the Nottingham City LAF. Discussions were continuing on the Notts Guided Walks Partnership and Active Travel on the 2025 brochure. The Trent Vale Trail work also continued with the issue of Clifton Hill and ROW improvement being discussed.

6. Group Reports

The Group Reports were taken as read and Judith gave an update from One Step Walkers.

7. Structure of the Rights of Way Committee

Neil spoke to Appendix VIII which had been prepared for the Special Area Council on 14th May but not discussed. Appendix IX included all the 2014 documents which created the existing ROW structure. Neil stressed the changes since 2014 and the need to have an organisational structure to meet the challenges in 2024 and in future. In particular, the Group Footpath Secretaries need to be more involved, with less reliance on a small number of specific individuals at Area. One of the proposals was for the existing Area ROW Secretary role to be split between an Area ROW Protection Officer (planning applications, proposals to modify ROW) and an Area Footpath Maintenance Officer (monitoring of ROW network, working with NCC, physical work on ROW).

Neil proposed a small number of volunteers should produce ideas and principles for a new ROW structure to present to Area Council. Several Groups pointed out they had not had the opportunity to discuss this with their Committees and could not agree to the proposals but were supportive of establishing a Working Party. It was proposed a facilitator should be appointed to lead the Working Party and several names were suggested. Membership of the Working Party was raised and the problems (set out in Appendix III) of existing members of the ROW Committee not responding to emails was raised. Chris then informed members this was because the ROW Committee members had been informed (it was unclear who by) that Central Office would be intervening in the

rights of way management of Notts Area and they should not respond to any requests from the Area Secretary to attend meetings. If that was the case, no further progress would be possible although the basis on which Central Office could intervene in the operation of an Area was unclear. No further facts could be established on this matter in the meeting.

As it was not possible to resolve that, Neil was asked to write a remit for the Working Party and circulate it before next Area Council. Several members felt the key to future working was improved communication.

Post Meeting Note: Adrian, Judith and Neil contacted Central Office to follow up the suggestion there would be an intervention. As any work would have been wasted if that was the case, no further action was taken pending receipt of a reply. Despite a number of emails, including with deadlines, no response has been received. In early September it was established there is an ongoing reorganisation at Central Office involving redundancies.

10. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 15th October, 6.30PM at Bilsthorpe. The discussion topic will be the structure of the Rights of Way Team.