

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON**  
**TUESDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2025**

## Minutes

**Present** Alex Ellis (Groups Officer) in the Chair, Judith Anson (Area Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), James McGill (Newark), Keith Jacobs (Broxtowe), Yinka Soetan (One Step Walkers), Dave Johnson (Robin Hood Way Flexi Group), Elaine Hobson (Vale of Belvoir), Dave Hobson (Vale of Belvoir), Jim Sinclair (Southwell), Denise Garley (Mansfield & Sherwood), Andrew Cowell (Notts & Derbys Walking Group), Mike Stock (Rushcliffe) and Thelma Ward, Worksop

1. Apologies: Adrian Amer (Area Vice-Chair), Diana Munro (Area Membership Secretary and Worksop), Brian Tuffnell (Area Webmaster and Mansfield & Sherwood), Sharron Hartshorn (Mansfield & Sherwood), John Young (Vale of Belvoir), Linda Honey (Nottingham)

## 2. Statement by Chair

Alex Ellis, Chair for the meeting, stated that all members were to treat each other with respect, raise their hand if they wished to speak and not raise their voices. Any one not complying would be asked to leave.

### 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were approved as a correct record.  
Proposed: Denise Garley                      Seconded: Keith Jacobs

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting  
None.

## 5 Area Officers Reports

## 5.1 Area Secretary Appendix I

Nottinghamshire County Show 10<sup>th</sup> May – Judith asked for volunteers to attend the County Show and the set-up day. Chris would represent the Robin Hood Way Association. Alex would contact the Mansfield & Sherwood Group. Denise commented there had been too many people at certain times last year and a rota was required. Judith thought there might not be enough people to manage a stand but a decision would be taken later. **Post Meeting Note:** Collingham Group have agreed to attend.

Central Office and November Cluster Meeting – Jim questioned the sentence “Ramblers needs to be relevant to the public and the current Ramblers model is 50 years out of date.” Both Judith and Neil confirmed these were the exact words used by the Chief Executive. Area Council expressed concern at this comment.

## 5.2 Area Treasurer Appendix II

Neil presented his report. A recent email had been received from Ramblers proposing a pilot with Groups to receive payments from members using credit/debit cards via a system called Evalon. Neil had circulated this to Group Treasurers. Neil stated that he would be happy to advise Groups on managing payments for holidays and trips as these were often substantial sums. The Quarter 2 funding had not been received but would be sent on as soon as possible. In response to a question about the accounts, Neil

confirmed Area had a professional Zoom account which was used for Area meetings such as the Rights of Way Committee.

**5.3 Rights of Way Committee Appendix III and IIIa**

Judith presented the report of action over the last quarter. A revised paper on Green Energy Developments – Guidance to Developers was received for discussion. Judith explained the changes from the last document, in particular the need for Ramblers to state the minimum that would be expected from developers, and to respond to every application rather than assume it would be approved on appeal. Each application would still be considered on its merits. The focus was to protect rights of way and the countryside. The section in the previous document suggesting Ramblers wanted to see community enhancements such as benches and picnic areas had been removed as that was a local community matter. Dave Johnson commented the document was too lengthy, negative in its wording and would not encourage developers to engage with Ramblers. Judith responded that the priority was to ensure the development had as little impact as possible on users of the countryside which should be the focus of any negotiation, rather than accepting mitigation. James stated his support for the paper.

Area Council discussed specific points and with the agreed changes the document was agreed as Area policy.

The Great North Solar application was raised. This would have been managed by the Area Countryside Officer and therefore by Area Council. It was agreed the Rights of Way Committee would manage the application with Dave Johnson and Peter Somerville leading. There was a large number of documents and members of the ROW Committee would assist. A full report would be made to the April Area Council.

**5.4 Area Membership Secretary Appendix IV**

There were no questions.

**5.5 Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer Appendix V**

Chris Thompson explained the Walk Notts 2025 brochure would replace the previous Notts Guided Walks. Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers had advertised in the brochure for many years and Chris asked Area Council if this could be agreed for 2025. In answer to a question from Dave Johnson, Neil replied that £200 had been allocated in the 2024/25 budget subject to Area council approval. The wording of the advert for 2025 would need to be approved.

The following motion was proposed:

That £200 be approved for an advert for Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers in the printed brochure for Walk Notts in 2025.

Proposed: Jim Sinclair

Seconded: Neil Stafford

Vote: all in favour, none against and no abstentions.

Chris reminded members they had already received a request to add walks to the brochure and the walks should be sent to Chris at

[tourismheritage@nottsarearamblers.org.uk](mailto:tourismheritage@nottsarearamblers.org.uk)

**6. Group Reports Appendix VI**

**One Step Walkers** Yinka Soetan reported the Group was experiencing difficulty finding new walk leaders and existing leaders were doing multiple walks. Dave Hobson said the

Vale of Belvoir had similar problems and in future, walks would be organised by the Committee with members invited to lead it. The Group had 700 routes available for leaders to choose, rather than devising their own walk. Andrew Cowell added Notts & Derbys Group had a core of member leading walks. A problem was that fewer people were able to read a map and therefore were not confident to lead a walk. Judith suggested that organising a map reading course would be helpful. Dave Hobson suggested that how to manage an app would also be helpful. Yinka informed members that One Step Walkers ran a map reading event annually which included both classroom and practical work. Andrew and Yinka would be in contact about working jointly. Thelma Ward reported that Worksop encouraged members to lead one walk with a buddy who could take over if there was a problem. The potential leader was also assisted if they were unsure on map reading.

**Rushcliffe** Mike Stock reported the pilot Trent Valley Way (TVW) survey had been carried out except for the section closed temporarily by Severn Trent Water. Mike asked what the next step was. Judith replied that the first survey had been a pilot and she would need to contact the Trent Rivers Trust. The intention was to contact Groups where the TVW went through their patch.

## 7. Rights of Way Protection - Proposed Organisational Structure

Neil Stafford presented Appendix VII which was the result of work over the last year. The paper set out the current structure agreed in 2013. That had been established to meet those challenges at that time and the paper detailed the changes since then. Neil quoted the first two charitable aims of Ramblers:

“The objects of the Association are to promote, encourage or assist in:  
(a) the provision and protection of foot paths and other ways over which the public have a right of way or access on foot, including the prevention of obstruction of public rights of way.  
(b) the protection and enhancement for the benefit of the public of the beauty of the countryside and other areas by such lawful means as the trustees think fit, including by encouraging the provision, preservation and extension of public access to land on foot; ----”

While the District Coordinator role had worked well in some patches, in others it was unnecessary. While the seven Local Planning Authorities had similar population size, geographically they were very different. The plan to reorganise Local Authorities would be influential and Area would have to consider how to respond.

The proposals were to split the existing Area Rights of Way Secretary role. The workload had increased and was not manageable. The Rights of Way Protection Officer, an elected role, would focus on Area response to ROW diversion and extinguishment orders, Local Authority and County Authority Planning Applications, Local and Neighbourhood Plans, Planning Inspectorate Appeals, Landowner Deposits and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. This was predominantly a desk-based task. The Rights of Way Maintenance & Improvement Officer, also an elected role, would undertake surveys, monitor and resolve blockages and carry out footpath maintenance and improvement. This would be a practical role. The ROW Information Officer, non-elected, continues to ensure accurate record keeping, act as a single point of contact and manage the Rights of Way Committee meetings.

The role of Group Footpath Officers should be expanded as they have the detailed local knowledge. Although each Group would agree the role of its own elected Officer, a list of responsibilities would be provided. Other members might wish to be involved with rights of way but without taking a formal role at Area or Group and that was to be welcomed. There needed to be agreement on their involvement to ensure compliance with insurance and the payment of travelling expenses.

The Area Rights of Way Sub-Committee is a formal Sub-Committee of Area Council. It has delegated authority to respond on time limited issues but must report to Area Council at the next meeting. In matters of policy, Area Council must be consulted, agree the direction and any action taken. It must therefore be chaired by an elected officer. The operational management of the Sub-Committee will be agreed by its members.

The meeting was then opened up for discussion. In response to a question from Jim Sinclair, Neil confirmed that the restructure had been discussed by Area Council over the past year with the paper bringing all the ideas together. Chris Thompson supported the paper and asked how the posts would be filled. Neil replied that if the paper was agreed, then the membership would be targeted directly. It was important to fully involve the Groups. Dave Hobson asked about the Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) records. Neil confirmed NCC were introducing a new system in 2025, more in line with the public records made available by Derbyshire County Council. Dave Johnson would be helping to pilot the system.

James McGill thanked the Area Officers for the work put in to the paper and to Neil and Judith for managing the rights of way work over the past year. James explained the District Coordinator role had been created because of the shortage of Group Footpath Officers and he was concerned that would still be the case. The split between a desk based role and a more practical role was interesting but James was unsure whether it would work. James also thought the paper excluded the work on DMMOs and felt that the person who had led on the historical DMMO claims should be part of the Area team. Neil replied that NCC should be maintaining the list of ROW issues, rather than Ramblers and the new NCC system would allow that. The historical DMMOs in Nottinghamshire had all been identified, and most of the claims submitted. NCC had taken on more staff to deal with the backlog and it had been noticeable over the past few months that more DMMOs were now being actioned. DMMOs were not submitted by organisations but by individuals and claims on user evidence (rather than historical evidence) were often submitted by the public. Anyone could look at the progress on DMMOs by using the Ramblers DLYW maps and the British Horse Society website. Yinka thanked Neil for the explanation of DMMOs (in Appendix IIIa) and asked if technology, for example drones, could be used to survey rights of way, rather than them being walked. Neil thanked Yinka for her helpful comment and Google earth and Streetview were already used when assessing planning applications for their impact.

Members were asked to vote on whether to accept the paper and move to implementation;

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Judith Anson

Vote: For 9; Against 2; Abstain 4

The paper was therefore approved, without amendment.

It was agreed that members who had voted against or had abstained be invited to send comments, to the Area Secretary, to see if it would be possible to take their views into account.

8. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025, 6.30PM at Bilsthorpe.