

Access, Countryside and Rights of Way

23rd November, 2015

Present: Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Terry Howard, Cath Mackay, Basil Merry, Martin Allsop, Jez Kenyon, Christine Whittaker, Lizzie Joyce.

Apologies: Les Seaman, Philip Ryder.

Minutes of the meeting 7th September 2015.

These were agreed as being correct.

However, apologies were given to BM for the non-production of a report he had submitted from NE Derbyshire.

Matters arising

TH said that there had been no further progress on the Wharnecliffe rail crossing issue, with no interest from the local MP.

Access matters

Sheffield CC is bidding to be an Outdoor City. Working parties have been established and proposals made. The consultation period ends very soon.

TH said that there is a concern to people interested in walking because a key element of the plans are to create zones, into which footpaths, being linear, do not neatly fit. They may therefore be left out of the process. The initiative includes parts of Derbyshire, Rotherham and Barnsley. The Peak District National Park is involved in the consultation process.

The Sheffield Group, at its AGM, passed a motion supporting the initiative but pointing out that the need for access depends on a first class rights of way network. A positive response to the motion has been received. CM said that she is concerned that the initiative is/will be driven by finance, with the possibility of commercial companies telling the council what to do, with the countryside developing into a theme park.

The irony of bus services being reduced as attempts are being made to encourage more people to use the countryside was pointed out.

JK suggested that may be helpful if the activity of walking was considered from the point of view of different categories of walkers i.e. the casual strollers who walk irregularly, dog-walkers, health walkers, etc as well as the more serious walkers such as those who join Ramblers.

It was also pointed out that the figures in the Outdoor City document show that walking is easily the most popular outdoor activity, yet only two pages are given to it, while climbing, running, etc have more pages dedicated to them.

Countryside matters

Regarding HS2, the estimates of building it appear to be rising massively. Additionally, the estimates for the Birmingham-Leeds section are very high because of the cuttings, flyovers, tunnels, etc needed.

Possible changes to local government were noted, with this region having a mayor, who would be responsible for highways and hence rights of way. Whether the new arrangement will help remains to be seen.

Rights of Way matters

TH said that local authorities sometimes dispose of land. Land near Bradfield was sold by Sheffield CC and, since Ramblers were consulted in the process, two new rights of way were created. TH strongly urged Groups to get involved in the consultation process if councils sell off land so that walkers can benefit.

BM said that the Derbyshire RoW service review is still awaited.

Regarding The Big Pathwatch, JK urged people to complete as many sample squares as possible before the deadline of 31st December. Ramblers need a certain number of squares to be completed to make the exercise statistically valid. Members are referred to www.jez.cc/pathwatch.

CW pointed out that there is the possibility of putting newly created rights of way on the SYNED website, but none are referred to her.

AOB None