

## **Ramblers Association South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area**

### **Minutes of the AGM held on 23rd January, 2016 at the Methodist Hall, Tickhill, Doncaster, hosted by the Doncaster Group**

*These minutes to be approved at the AGM in January, 2017.*

#### **Welcome**

David Gadd, Chair of the Doncaster Group, welcomed everyone to the AGM. He said that the Doncaster Group was very busy, putting on a series of walks every week. A new series of easier walks was due to be provided in the Summer Programme monthly on Thursdays, to follow a strenuous walk the preceding Tuesday.

The Group assists DMBC's Rights of Way department by monitoring the RoW on the borough, last year achieving a 100% completion. The Group also has a set of volunteers who assist DMBC in the maintenance of the RoW network.

The Group has recently established a 'Lost ways' committee and will contact other walking groups, horse-riders, parish councils, etc to try to work together to claim 'lost ways' before the 2026 deadline.

#### **Present**

Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Mike Rhodes (Access and RoW Officer, Peak District National Park), Alex Mannings (Ramblers Hon Treasurer) and 49 members.

#### **Apologies**

Nikki Speakman, Lizzie Joyce, Susan Haywood, Gordon Haywood, Pauline Gibbons, Wayne Grounsell and Roly Smith.

#### **Notification of any other business**

One item, from Neill Schofield.

#### **Appointment of Tellers**

Mike Pye and Cath MacKay.

#### **Approval of minutes of the 2015 AGM**

Approved by Mike Pye, seconded by Terry Howard. Agreed.

#### **Matters Arising from those minutes**

Terry Howard said that the motion last year to ask local authorities to 'dedicate' publicly owned woodland and open spaces had been worthwhile, with positive responses from the Doncaster, Rotherham, Chesterfield and Sheffield local authorities.

#### **Approval of the Annual Report**

Mike Pye proposed and Philip Ryder seconded that the annual report be accepted. Agreed.

#### **Approval of the Annual Accounts**

Gavin Johns said that the Area had received £6,000 from Central Office and distributed £6,154 to Groups in the Area. Area spent approximately £800 during the year on administration, including production of the Annual Report/Newsletter. Area paid out £564 to Dearne Valley for publicity and approximately £250 to Doncaster for roundels.

GJ has been informed that Area is due to receive a legacy, a proportion of the sale of a house, after the death of Ivy Cowans (the daughter of GBH Ward).

It was agreed to re-appoint Andrew Milne as Independent Examiner.

#### **Election of Officers**

The following officers were elected en bloc:

Allen Pestell (Chair and Countryside Officer), David Gadd (Secretary and Membership Secretary), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Christine Whittaker (Information/Publicity Officer), Les Seaman (Access Officer), Cath MacKay and Terry Howard (Members Without Portfolio).

Christine Hewett was elected as a representative of an Affiliated Group (The Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group).

Cynthia Ashton (Sheffield Co-operative Ramblers) was co-opted onto Area Council.

### **Vice Presidents**

Cath MacKay, Terry Howard, Mike Pye, David Hey and Roy Cannon (subject to confirmation) were elected as Vice Presidents.

### **Delegates to General Council**

Allen Pestell was elected. Area Council will choose a second delegate.

Area Council usually funds the attendance of one non-delegate to General Council. Due to the fact that it is close this year, in York, it was agreed to fund two people.

Christine Hewitt and Christine Whittaker agreed to attend.

### **Affiliation to Kindred Organisations**

Les Seaman proposed and Neill Schofield seconded that we affiliate to the following like-minded organisations: the Peak District Green Lanes Alliance, the Open Spaces Society, the Peak and Northern Footpath Society and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Agreed.

### **Role of Area**

The following document had been circulated prior to the meeting:

#### **Area Functions**

It is a fundamental principle that Groups should do as much as possible themselves. The role of Area is to support the Groups within the Area in the following ways:

1. Promote the charitable aims of Ramblers, including by supporting the various Ramblers initiatives and campaigns.
2. Promote closer links between the Groups.
3. Distribute money from Central Office to the Groups according to their needs and to maintain an oversight of each Group's financial matters.
4. Have an oversight of the well-being of the Groups and, when appropriate, assist in the establishment of new Groups.
5. Support, if necessary, Groups over issues such as rights of way disputes, access issues, etc., in their area.
6. Arrange an annual AGM, where the Area Council is elected and delegates are chosen to attend the Ramblers General Council. General Council is where overall policy is set, and the Ramblers trustees are elected.
7. Promote and organise, as necessary, training for Group members in such things as navigation, walk leading, rights of way issues, first aid and publicity.
8. Maintain contact with Ramblers members who choose not to belong to a Group.
9. Maintain contact with walking groups in their Area who are affiliated to Ramblers.
10. Endeavour to settle any disputes within Groups, if such disputes cannot be settled internally.
11. To co-operate with other Areas, as necessary, in the furtherance of Ramblers' aims.

Jack Burland suggested including a final catch-all statement, as below.

12. Help the Groups in any suitable way to achieve the above functions.

There was unanimous agreement that the description of the Role of Area be accepted.

### **Motion**

Allen Pestell proposed and Cath MacKay seconded a motion, to which Neill Schofield suggested an amendment. It was pointed out that the governance issue has dragged on for some time and that members are weary of it. It is acknowledged that the people driving the issue have Ramblers interests at heart, but governance issues are not important to the vast majority of members. A survey of members a few months

ago was considered to be poorly drafted, and therefore led to inaccurate conclusions. Moreover the language used in documents from central office is in the 'management-speak' vein, with members initially expected to 'sign-up' to fulfil their roles. Such language, and such expectations, in an association which is essentially based on volunteers, is totally unacceptable. The flawed consultation process has cost a lot of goodwill.

After considerable discussion the following motion was agreed:

'This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to end the current governance review.

We recognise that the functioning of the Ramblers can be improved, so we call upon the Board to seek solutions based upon partnership and communication'.

**Speaker's Address: Mike Rhodes, Access and Rights of Way Manager, Peak District National Park**

Mike explained that his role was to assess sustainability; identify priorities; increase partnership work with local authorities, land-owners, police and user groups such as walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, etc; monitor vehicular use; encourage voluntary management; consider restraint of vehicles as appropriate; prevent illegal motor activity.

He explained that funding for items such as the repair of bridges, access gates, etc has been cut to zero, and therefore in September 2014 an Access Fund had been launched. An initial £3,000 had been given by the National Park Authority. SYNED had recently given £1,000 to this ring-fenced fund.

Questioned afterwards, Mike said that he felt that the time taken to apply a Traffic Regulation Order was reasonable in view of the fact that people's rights were being taken away from them, and therefore due process should be followed.

**Speaker's Address: Alex Mannings, Ramblers Hon Treasurer**

Alex said that he had been a Ramblers member for many years, a walk leader, social secretary of his 20s-30s Group, Group Chair and then Area Chair of Inner London.

He praised Ramblers campaigns, for the establishment of the National Parks, for the CROW Act, for the Coastal Path, etc. With about 107,000 members, the organisation punched well above its weight.

He said that the role of Groups was to provide a walking programme, to expose members to the bigger issues of the RoW network such as monitoring and maintenance, and to try to increase membership.

Alex drew the attention of members to the Ramblers website, used by over a million people, on which Groups can present themselves.

The Walking for Health scheme is working well, with over 600 schemes offering 175,000 walks. The short walks of 60-90 minutes were linked with 'The FriendshipProject' to aid progression from WFH to Ramblers. The tie-in with the Macmillan Trust was working well.

The Big Pathwatch has been an innovative scheme, with an app available to map the current state of foot-paths.

Regarding rights of way, he said that the Andrews case had been won by Ramblers, at some expense, but that it was crucial to ensure that historical evidence was usable in making a claim. Ramblers was pushing for gates, stiles and waymarking standards to be standardised.

Alex pointed out that there were vacancies for trustees in a few months time and new people would be welcome.

Cath Mackay proposed a vote of thanks to both speakers. She said that Mike had always been around, that his constancy and reliability were to be treasured. She said that the work done by Alex for the members shows dedicated and enthusiastic support for the future of Ramblers.

**AOB**

Neill Schofield informed members of a trip to Germany to celebrate the anniversary of a Ramblers sister-organisation.

Next AGM:                   28th January, 2017  
Sheffield 40s Group to host  
Bradfield Village Hall,  
The Sands,  
Low Bradfield,  
Sheffield, S6 6LB

General Council:       2nd/3rd April, 2016

University of York,  
Heslington,  
York, YO10 5DD

2016 Meetings: ACROW meetings start at 6.30pm and Area Council meetings start at 7.30pm  
All meetings are held in the Quaker Meeting House, St James Street, Sheffield S1 2EW.

8th February, 2016

6th June, 2016

5th September, 2016

21st November, 2016