

Minutes of the AGM held on 26th January, 2019, held at the West Bretton Village Hall, Bretton Lane, Wakefield, WF4 4LB. (To be approved at the 2020 AGM).

Welcome

Carol Wood, secretary of the Barnsley and Penistone Group, welcomed everybody to the AGM. She expressed the hope that the walkers had enjoyed the walk this morning. She introduced Area President, Lord David Blunkett, Area Chair, Allen Pestell, and Area Secretary, David Gadd.

Obituaries

The deaths during the past year of long-time Ramblers Alan Street, of the Barnsley and Penistone Group, and John Wadsworth, of the Rotherham Metro Group, were noted. Both men had served the cause of the Ramblers for many years.

Present

Lord David Blunkett (President), Mike Pye (Vice President), Rebecca Dawson (Ramblers Trustee), and from Area Council, Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Les Seaman (Access Officer), Christine Whittaker (Information Officer), Cath MacKay and Terry Howard (Members Without Portfolio), Nicki Speakman (Barnsley and Penistone), Jez Kenyon (Sheffield 40s), Wayne Grounsell (Sheffield 40s), Ken Coupar (Sheffield 20s), Philip Ryder (Rotherham Metro), Christine Hewitt (Sheffield Visually Impaired Group) and Cynthia Ashton (Sheffield Co-operative Ramblers). There were an additional 42 members present.

Apologies

Roly Smith (Vice President), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Philip Lee (Dearne Valley), Margaret Seaman (Sheffield).

Notification of AOB

Nothing notified.

Appointment of Tellers

Mike Pye and Cath MacKay.

President's Address: Lord David Blunkett

David said that we all owe a debt of gratitude to Roly Smith for the work he has done towards the success of the Clarion Call book and his writings over the years highlighting the pioneers of access to the countryside.

David said that he and Mike Pye have a long shared history, on Sheffield Council and the Left Foot Forward walking group. He said that he is delighted to be involved in the celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the National Parks Act on 27th April in Winnats Pass. This year is the 200th anniversary of Ruskin's death and he, along with people like Ebenezer Elliott, from Rotherham, were seminal figures in the fight for access to the countryside.

David said that people often ask him, a blind person, why he enjoys walking in the countryside. He said that the feeling of the wind in his hair, the sun on his face, the sounds of the birds, the wind in the trees, along with a commentary on the scene, gives him a clear picture in his mind and, perhaps, that we should treasure what we have.

David believed that there was an awakening interest in South Yorkshire, the countryside and its heritage and that he had talked to Dan Jarvis, the regional mayor, about using resources to the benefit of the

countryside for the benefit of the economy, the environment and for the wellbeing of the population; we need to celebrate the past as we look to the future.

Approval of the minutes of the 2018 AGM

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. The mis-typing of Pye and Burland were noted and then the minutes were approved. Proposed by Cath MacKay and seconded by Mike Pye.

Matters arising from those minutes

None.

Annual Report

Hard and digital copies of the report had been circulated previously. AP said that the plans for removing the electricity pylons in the Dunford Bridge area had been approved in committee and had been passed to Barnsley MBC. Also, that he was on a committee to consider the proposed upgrading of the M1, with most of the section being a straightforward widening but significant alterations will need to be made to the last section. He said that the Parkwood Springs project, in the area of the former ski village, would provide a much-needed green area in that part of Sheffield.

Cath MacKay and Les Seaman proposed and seconded that the report be accepted. Agreed unanimously.

Approval of the Annual Accounts

During the year the Area received £8,700 from Central Office and distributed £5,925 to Groups in the Area. The Area spent approximately £1,250 during the year on administering the Area, including production of the Annual Report. We paid out £10,492 from the Ivy Cowan Trust (£10,000 for 'Mend our Mountains', £200 for Dronfield Heritage Trust and £292 for Roy Cannon Memorial signpost). The residue of the Ivy Cowan Legacy Fund (£27,217), following discussions with central office, was transferred from a restricted fund to our un-restricted General Fund. The Area was heavily involved with the production and selling of the Clarion Call book. A re-print of 1000 books was made, costing £1,780 from the Clarion Call account. To date, the Clarion Call has cost £7 in postage, etc costs and earned £2,081 in book sales. We paid out £480 from the Roy Cannon legacy this year for a memorial bench and signpost. The Groups have asked the Area for approx. £5,756 funding for the coming year. We will be contributing £1,264 from our own funds in line with The Rambler's Reserve policy towards our budget of £7,664 and will therefore be asking Head Office for £6,400, a decrease from last year. Our thanks are due to our independent examiner, Mr Andrew Milne. Cath MacKay said that she has been in touch with the family of Roy Cannon and that they would like to express their gratitude for the memorial signpost, which had been installed in the correct place on a right of way which needs clearing.

It was proposed by Mike Pye and seconded by Nikki Speakman that the accounts be accepted. All agreed.

Election of Officers

Vice Presidents: Mike Pye, Roly Smith, Cath MacKay and Terry Howard were elected en bloc. Proposed by Allen Pestell and seconded by Les Seaman. Agreed unanimously.

Allen Pestell then proposed, and Mike Pye seconded, that Helen Jackson and Jack Burling be elected as Vice Presidents in recognition of their contributions, over many years, to Ramblers in particular and the countryside in general. Agreed unanimously.

The following, proposed by Allen Pestell, seconded by Mike Pye, were elected as Area Council officers en bloc: Allen Pestell (Chair/Countryside), David Gadd (Secretary/Membership Secretary), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Les Seaman (Access), Christine Whittaker (Information Officer).

Affiliated representative: Christine Hewitt (Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group).

Co-opted member: Cynthia Ashton (Co-operative Ramblers).

Members Without Portfolio: Cath MacKay, Terry Howard.

All nominations were agreed by the membership.

Affiliation to Kindred Organisations

Allen Pestell explained that SYNED is affiliated to the following like-minded organisations: Peak District Green Lanes Alliance, the Open Spaces Society, the Peak and Northern Footpath Society and the Council for the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Proposed by Terry Howard and seconded by Mike Pye. Agreed unanimously.

We also agreed to refer the issue of the large number of walking groups previously affiliated to the Ramblers who had, mainly because of the previous increase in the affiliation fee of over 100%, decided not to affiliate to Area Council.

Motions

The motion was proposed by Nikki Speakman, seconded by Mike Pye:

‘This AGM asks Area Council to contact the Transport appointee to recommend that public transport across South Yorkshire and, where appropriate, North East Derbyshire to:

- i) be better coordinated and regulated;
- ii) improve services in the evening and on Sundays;
- iii) introduce affordable prices and ticketing to encourage more people to use the services; and
- iv) look at the interconnectibility of Supertram, using existing rail tracks, so it can join the major towns of our area.

Nikki Speakman explained that the public transport system in this country was in a state of significant decline, to the detriment of the public in general. Ramblers who want to attend walks using public transport are limited in their walks now. Judy Gathercole, of the Sheffield Group, said that her group used to use public transport all the time to access walks but that this was no longer possible, further, that some people in the past had joined Sheffield Ramblers specifically because they only used public transport. Christine Hewitt pointed out that the visually impaired had no choice but to use public transport to travel independently. David Blunkett said that he totally supports the motion and that he will speak to Dan Jarvis about it. He said that Paul Bloomfield, MP for Sheffield Central, is due to have a meeting with the First bus company soon and that he will take our motion to that meeting.

The motion was passed unanimously.

TH said that this represented the views of the 2,300 members in SYNED.

Delegates to General Council

Allen Pestell and Nikki Speakman were nominated to be the delegates for SYNED at General Council in Manchester, 13th/14th April. Jez Kenyon agreed to go as a non-voting representative.

Speaker's Address: Rebecca Dawson

“2017/18 has been a good year for the Ramblers.

We have made good progress with our “one team” approach, working together to start to deliver our new business plan to reverse our longstanding membership decline, build a culture of trust, adhere to our collective values and code of conduct, and encourage constructive collaboration.

Key delivery developments this year include...briefly...

- Winning a major new income stream, as a new beneficiary of the Peoples Postcode Lottery
- Achieving recognition of public access in the Agriculture Bill.
- Initiating our digital and data transformation programme.

- Championing many right of ways successes & 80 years of access.
- Developing a plan for DLYW
- Starting insight research into our membership and potential members
- Developing a Great Britain walk leader training project from a Scottish pilot.
- Establishing new partnerships with like-minded organisations.
- Starting an area support pilot project and improving our communications across the organisation for example with the new monthly volunteer newsletter.

PLANS FOR 2018 – 2019

In 2018/19 we will continue to build “one team” and **continue to deliver transformative change, through implementing our new business plan**. This plan recognises that we are in a time of major dislocation. The information age is driving rapid economic and technical transformation. On 29 March 2019 the UK is expected to leave the European Union. And the UK population is ageing. In this context, it is vital that we look outwards and adapt at pace to our evolving circumstances, if we are to remain relevant to future generations. In summary, our plan includes the following priorities, to stimulate a return to growth:

Expanding support for volunteers. We will develop our training, resources, policies and guidance for volunteers across the whole organisation. We will provide support for our walking activities, focusing on those delivering walks, path maintenance and area/group leadership volunteers. We will clarify and integrate short health walks.

Developing a regular cycle of major campaigns. We will deliver regular campaign activities throughout the year and innovative, awareness-raising approaches, to reach out and proactively involve supporters with our cause, and deliver on our policy aims across all 3 nations.

Growing membership and associated income. We will put our members at the heart of our work. We will diversify our income through partnerships with individual supporters and organisations such as the People’s Postcode Lottery, Ramblers Walking Holidays, corporates and trusts, to strengthen our financial position.

Transforming data, digital and insight capabilities. We will create a suite of strategic capabilities including a data centre, insight hub, mobile apps and walk library, with new creation and curation tools and a new website and communication system, to provide better insight and improved understanding of our supporters.

Improving internal infrastructure. We will improve our in-house support systems (IT, Finance, HR, telephony, video conferencing and remote access) through our Tapestry programme. The upgrading of our foundational infrastructure will enhance our effectiveness and efficiency. We will also develop a long term location strategy.

Ongoing themes. In addition to the five key development priorities outlined above, we will continue to steadfastly support our volunteers and work together to build a strong charity which delivers exceptional services for our members and the walking public. We will provide this support through continuing to invest resources into governance, devolution and teamwork.

PATHWATCH

In 2018 we have engaged with highway authorities and volunteers across the country to understand their experiences of the Pathwatch reporting system in terms of what is working well and what is working less well. Feedback has been collated and is currently being used to inform the future development of the existing Pathwatch app and associated reporting system. The advocacy & engagement team is working closely with the data and digital transformation team to explore both quick wins and longer-term im-

provements in the app and reporting system. In the interim, monthly updates of reports received are still available on the Ramblers website.

PATH MAINTENANCE

The landscape for Ramblers volunteer path maintenance teams is changing rapidly in an environment of local authority budget constraints. Recognising this changing landscape, we will be carrying out a discreet piece of work over the next 12 months to better understand our path maintenance teams across Great Britain: how they operate, their relationship with the local authority, the resources they have and the challenges they face. That analysis will enable us to assess how we can better support our path maintenance volunteers and better publicise their invaluable work in the future.

DON'T LOSE YOUR WAY

A Don't Lose Your Way Project Manager (generously funded by the Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust), Jack Cornish, was recruited in November 2017. Jack, with the support of a volunteer advisory group, has been scoping the future direction of our work to save historical rights of way. Jack is developing a workable model for the project from 2019 until the 2026 cut-off date. Issues being addressed in this stage include facilitating the easy identification of possible lost historical rights of way, making historical evidence better available to those researching historical rights of way, recruiting more volunteers to the project and making it easier for volunteers to contribute to this important work through providing support, training and guidance to volunteers. Funding has been secured from PPL in order to extend the Project Manager post as we start to implement the project in 2019.

MEMBERSHIP

The Ramblers has a loyal, dedicated community of more than 100,000 members across Great Britain, however our membership has been in slow and steady decline for more than a decade. As one team of volunteers and staff members across Great Britain, we are committed to reversing the trend in the years ahead. As you all know, the reasons for this decline are many and varied – there is no quick fix – and it will take a great deal of hard work and commitment on many fronts to return our membership to growth. We are at the early stages of building the capacity, expertise and infrastructure needed to enable our membership to grow locally, throughout our Areas, and across our three nations.

The factors influencing membership growth are many and varied. However at its heart lies the need for the Ramblers to demonstrate our relevance to those walkers who do not yet walk with us and give them a compelling reason to join us. We need to be welcoming and relevant - not only to those who would wish to join a led Ramblers walk - but also to those who chose to walk independently with friends and family. Walkers of all types should be in no doubt that the Ramblers is a vital charity to join and support: to protect our path network, campaign for access to green spaces, and positively affect wellbeing. This is what makes us distinctive from other walking groups and we are committed to helping more walkers to understand why joining the Ramblers will enable them to support this cause. For the first time the Ramblers now has a Director of Membership (Sarah Marfleet) who is part of the senior leadership team and reports directly into the Chief Executive Officer and onwards to the board. Sarah is now building a capable membership team and appointed Nicola Fickling as our Head of Membership in October 2018. Sarah and Nicola will develop a membership growth strategy in 2019.

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

Of all the things we 'could' do, there are some that we 'must' do, if we are to halt our long term membership decline and see membership return to growth. We need to underpin our plans with robust, evidence-based insight, which will help us to prioritise our resources, focus our efforts and maximise our impact. We are currently undertaking research to help us understand what walkers need from us and explore their interests, preferences, behaviours, motivations and patterns/types of walking. We will also gain evidence about what walkers think of our brand and what we need to do encourage them to embrace our cause and walk with us. Insights will be gathered from a number of sources including online surveys and focus groups. We are conducting this research both with our own 100,000 members and supporters, and also with some of the 9 million walkers across Great Britain who don't yet walk with (or

support) us. We look forward to sharing these findings with you in 2019.

DATA TRANSFORMATION

This is a three-year programme running from 2018 to 2020, to transform the Ramblers' capabilities through data accessibility and digital products. To achieve this transformation, we will be delivering a number of key projects via seven work streams: data centre, insight hub, new walk & route planning capabilities/library, data capture strategy/tools /processes, new mobile strategy and apps, new public-facing website, supporter communications system. During 2018 we set up the data centre into which all our different data sources are being ingested. This work will continue during 2019, to enable us to build up a consolidated picture of our supporters and their behaviours with us.

The insight hub was designed to empower staff and volunteers with intelligence about the Ramblers. This hub contains live reports (or dashboards) which show the data within our new data centre. Early dashboards include Pathwatch submissions, Group walk participation, volunteer roles and a limited access dashboard (given data protection requirements) for membership secretaries. A pilot group of 150 volunteers has been testing the membership dashboard and we are now ready to roll-out this dashboard to all membership secretaries this winter, so that by early 2019 over 500 volunteers will have access to the hub. During 2019 we will continue to develop dashboards and roll out the insight hub to our core leadership volunteers: chairs, general secretaries and treasurers.

A mobile phone walk register app, to data capture details of walkers on Group walks was tested in spring 2018. The main finding from the test was that registration took too long so a new membership card has been produced with a QR code which is being rolled out to all members. Now a new version of the app (with a built in QR code reader) is being piloted across the country in 16 Areas. In 2019 we will be making the app available to all Groups who wish to view this valuable data about who attends their led walks. Please note it is not mandatory for Groups to register walkers, however, the intelligence provided through registration is incredibly useful as it will help Groups to recruit new members and also deliver high quality walks programmes. During 2019 we will be working on the development of route and walk planning capabilities to replace our current systems, building a GB route library for our members and delivering a new public-facing website and supporter communications system which will significantly improve our organisational dialogue and help us to reach out to potential new supporter".

After Rebecca's address TH said that it was vitally important to remember the heritage of the countryside and the open access movement and that as we looked back at the important people in the past we might like to consider that **we** might be considered important figures some time in the future. He suggested that the archives in central office should be open to members.

CM said that while she can use a computer to access emails, read reports, etc her ability is limited and Ramblers should remember that many members can not or do not wish to be dependent on electronic communication. RD said that Ramblers would always be mindful of the non-digital members and, further, that Walk magazine will increasingly, following a change of editor, reflect the work that groups do. IT training, online or face-to-face, was being offered to membership secretaries who need to use the new digital dashboard.

Any Other Business

None.

Vote of thanks

CM thanked everybody for their attendance, the Barnsley and Penistone Group for hosting the AGM and Area Council officers for organising it. RD was thanked for her lucid and inspirational address.

Future meeting dates:

2019 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.

25 February 2019

3 June 2019

2 September 2019

25 November 2019

2019 General Council: 13/14th April. Manchester

2019 27th April. Celebration to mark the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The occasion will be marked in the Winnats Pass between 2.00 and 4.00pm.

2020 AGM: 25th January. Sheffield Walking Group (Sheffield 20-30s) to host.

Area website: www.synedramblers.org.uk

National website: www.ramblers.org.uk

Addendum.

Information received by Mike Pye pertinent to the motion:

Dear Mike,

Thanks for your email about local transport, sharing the motion from the Ramblers Area AGM and good to see you last Saturday. Sorry for the delay in getting back to you. As you'll know, I receive hundreds of emails a day so, although I read yours at the time, I am just now getting a chance to respond.

I take the points of the motion. I agree that public transport should be better coordinated and regulated. The Sheffield City Region devolution deal was a positive step towards that, but it is a shame that this has now stalled, and I'm working closely with Dan Jarvis on what we can do to move it forwards.

I'm also glad to see Dan Jarvis' transport [vision](#), and welcome the [recently announced bus review](#) led by Clive Betts MP on improving local transport, and hope that these will help us find ways forward to address the problem. However, these would still mostly rely on a devolution deal so we are somewhat stuck until then. I also take the point that there should be greater evening and Sunday services, more affordable prices and a better integrated ticketing scheme.

Last November [I raised the problem](#) of high fares and fewer journeys with the government, pointing out that their policies of deregulation are a cause. I support Labour's proposals to give cities more power over local transport. More about my work on transport more generally can be found [here](#).

Thanks again for writing to me.

Best wishes to you and Jo.

Paul

Paul Blomfield MP

Member of Parliament for Sheffield Central