

South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire

Area Council

8th June, 2015

Quaker Meeting House, St James Street, Sheffield, S1 2EW

Present: Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Terry Howard (MWPF), Chris Greig (Dearne Valley), Mark Hodgkinson (Sheffield 20s), Christine Hewitt (Sheffield VI Group), Les Seaman (Access), Basil Merry (CNED), Judy Gathercole (Sheffield), Philip Ryder (Rotherham Metro), Jeremy Kenyon (Sheffield 40s), Nikki Speakman (B&P), Christine Whittaker (Information Officer), Marion Thompson (Doncaster)

Apologies: Cath MacKay (MWPF), Cynthia Ashton (Co-op Ramblers), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Raj Joshi (Sheffield 40s),

Minutes of the meeting of 9th February, 2015

They were agreed as being correct.

Matters Arising from those minute

There were no matters arising from those minutes.

Group Reports

TH said that the Clarion Ramblers, established in 1900, was finishing and remaining members of the group have expressed the wish that the name lives on. The Sheffield Group has agreed to discuss the matter and vote on it at their next AGM.

Officer's Reports

Chair

AP reported on the previous ACROW meeting, explaining that the tree-felling in the Burbage Valley had been completed and further work would be carried out after the nesting season, that consultations on replacing the Stanage Pole were ongoing, the HS2 was likely to come to the fore following the recent election of a Conservative government, that discussions were taking place regarding removing some pylons and burying power lines, and that the trail riders had approached Derbyshire CC regarding opening some byways which the Peak District National Park has closed.

Secretary

The correspondence list had previously been distributed.

The up-dated membership figures for SYNED Groups and the national figure had previously been distributed.

Access Countryside and ROW and Area Council meeting dates for 2016 have been established.

Treasurer

The financial statement had previously been distributed.

Requests for funding by the Chesterfield, Doncaster and Dearne Valley Groups were agreed: proposed JK, seconded CW and agreed unanimously.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the publication of a booklet of six walks in the Fox House area, complete with background information. The booklet, circulated, was still in draft form, with modifications needed. Funding was being sought for printing, with distribution (to Foothills, Longshaw, the Fox House Inn) agreed. Issues such as information being available on the internet, likely booklet sales, publicity for Ramblers, etc were discussed. Overall opinion was supportive, with details needed on the amount of money being requested. Some of the funding provided would be recouped through sales.

The Ramblers Central Office Volunteer expenses guidelines had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was agreed that Area Council adopt this policy and that Groups be recommended to do likewise. Proposed AP, seconded PR and agreed unanimously.

Recruitment of members.

MT said that a member in Doncaster had waited about eight weeks after sending a cheque to Central Office to become a member.

Various members pointed out that despite their Groups functioning well, with many members participating in the walks, with successful liaison with councils regarding footpath monitoring and maintenance, membership was flat. Greater competition from other, cheaper, walking groups was clearly an issue. It was pointed out that there were 30 U3A walking groups in Sheffield alone and that U3A had withdrawn from a walking forum, saying that such work should be left to Ramblers. It was suggested that we ask Central Office to write to U3A nationally, pointing out that if Ramblers didn't do the work that we do, U3A wouldn't be able to enjoy walking as it does. JK said that most people didn't appreciate the work done by Ramblers until they became members.

It was also pointed out that membership fees for the RSPB and the National Trust, for example, enable members to visit bird sanctuaries, magnificent buildings, etc., but that Ramblers membership 'only' enables members to go on walks, which are free anyway.

Ramblers Derbyshire Rights of Way committee

Area Council approved the structure and policy and congratulated BM for his work in getting this cross-Area/Group committee established so that Ramblers can speak with one voice to Derbyshire CC and the Peak District National Park regarding RoW matters.

Area Council: review of role

AP said that Area Council had three main strategic roles – the co-ordination of the Groups, leadership, and monitoring of the Groups. We need to ask ourselves if we do each of these things well.

It was agreed to distribute a questionnaire to all Groups to ask for their thoughts on what Area could do to support them, as well as questions about the way they function, whether they would support joint walks, training workshops, an internet forum, etc. A draft questionnaire was circulated, with suggestions for changes to be made to the secretary as soon as possible.

AOB

Various aspects of The Big Pathwatch were discussed. There is an informative article on page 40 of the latest *walk* magazine. Central Office are planning a national launch event in July and the hope is that local Groups can build on that in their area.

Congratulations to Carol Denman, of the Doncaster Group, and Kevin Dolby, of the Rotherham Group, for their Highly Commended photos on page 88 of the Summer *walk* magazine.

ACROW and Area Council meetings:

6.30 and 7.30pm starts respectively 7 September 2015
23 November 2015

8 February 2016
6 June 2016
5 September 2016
21 November

AGM: 2.00pm 23rd January, 2016. Methodist Hall, Tickhill.
Doncaster Group hosting.

Area website: www.synedramblers.org.uk
National website: www.ramblers.org.uk