

**THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION  
HERTFORDSHIRE AND NORTH MIDDLESEX AREA**

**Minutes of Meeting of Area Council, 1 February 2010**

**1. Attendance**

David Smith	Chairman
Harold Stokes	Vice Chairman. North Herts
Nigel Agar	President
David Allard	Area Treasurer, Royston
Chris Beney	Independent
Chris Clyne	Membership Secretary, Finchley and Hornsey
Graham Daniels	Independent
David Dickson	Publicity Secretary
Roger Housechild	Watford and Three Rivers
Sue Jacobs	North London and South Herts
Norman Jones	Secretary, West Herts
Sarah Lea	East Herts
Pat Marshall	North London and South Herts
Bert Richardson	Independent
Edward Walker	Independent
Mark Westley	Area FP Secretary
David Whiskin	Mid Herts Footpath Society

**Apologies for Absence:** Phil Escritt, Philip Greswell, Ray Peters.

The Chairman reported he felt honoured to be elected to chair the Area Council. He hoped to carry out the necessary duties to the satisfaction of all the members. With such a substantial agenda, he proposed an agenda timetable, which he hoped would be acceptable to all members. He welcomed Roger Housechild, a new member, and representing Watford and Three Rivers. Also welcome for her first meeting was Pat Marshall (NLSH), accompanying Sue Jacobs.

**2. Minutes of Meeting held on 9 November 2009. Corrections**

Item 3, Item 6. Harold Stokes advised that the amount transferred from North Herts Group to the new NHYW Group would be £50 (not £100, the figure given in the minutes).

**3. Matters Arising**

Item 7. Chairman. Para 3. Harold Stokes reminded the committee that, as far as Area organised events were concerned, the Area had decided to give priority to 2009 (Area 25 Jubilee) over 2010 (Ramblers 75 Anniversary). **All Groups** were reminded that 2010 Celebrations would be left to them to organise, notably Get Walking Day (Sunday 23 May) and a Baton Walk (in the autumn). Any steps they are taking to celebrate the 75 Years should be reported to the next meeting (and perhaps also to Stile).

Group Reports. Bert Richardson suggested that the Council reprimand Watford and Three Rivers for its absences from these meetings. The suggestion was rejected and Council was pleased that the Group was again represented.

Item 9. Stationery. **Chris Beney** agreed to provide Sarah Lea with a pdf version of the new Ramblers logo, which would enable her to use it with Microsoft Works.

#### **4. AGM Matters**

Minor corrections to the draft minutes had already been reported to the Secretary. With these amendments Council accepted the minutes as an accurate record. The venue (Woolmer Green Village Hall) was agreed to be perfectly satisfactory, and would be used again. The Secretary was thanked for his work on the AGM Booklet, on which the Area felt justifiably proud. After considering a suggestion made at the 2010 AGM, a slightly later date for the 2011 AGM was agreed (29 January). The choice of a speaker for the meeting would be left until later.

**North London and South Herts Group** agreed to accept responsibility for refreshment arrangements for the 2011 AGM.

#### **5. Ramblers Civil Liability Insurance Guide.**

Roger Housechild introduced his paper. He was concerned at the Guide's various inconsistencies, and felt that its approach and content would result in most Groups taking no notice of it. David Smith supported Roger's concerns, pointing out that the Guide contains a confusing mix of requirements, some of which are 'must do' and others that are 'ideals'. Chris Beney suggested an immediate report to Central Office on our concerns. Norman Jones felt sure that the whole issue would come up at General Council, and any report by us be better left until after the GC meeting. It was agreed that the **Secretary** would report our concerns in a general way to Central Office, his report perhaps based upon the Roger Housechild paper.

#### **6. Potential Motions for General Council**

a) Affiliation Fee. Bert Richardson argued for a fee for affiliated groups to be calculated in accordance with the size of their membership, perhaps £1 per head. Many members argued against the proposal. It was reported that the Board of Trustees is already carrying out its own investigation on this issue. It was agreed to take no further action prior to the GC meeting.

b) Duration of General Council. It was agreed, by a majority, to submit a motion to General Council.

***General Council meetings to last two full working days, and to be held in a centrally accessible location.***

**Action: Secretary**

There were three votes against this motion: Mark Westley, David Allard and Norman Jones.

#### **7. Area Position on Motions to be Presented at General Council**

Harold Stokes presented the Guidelines paper he had jointly drawn up with David Smith. He acknowledged that this was a brief summary of detailed arguments already presented to the Council in the personal paper submitted by Phil Escritt. Justification for the proposed Guidelines could be found in the Escritt Report.

The Guidelines paper was agreed to represent the general views of the Council. Mark Westley argued that Area delegates, in voting for Trustees, should vote for the slate of candidates proposed by the Concerned Ramblers. It was however felt by the majority of members that the delegates should not be bound in this way, but rather left to their own judgement during the course of the meeting.

Norman Jones felt that the Area should, by and large, support the general suggestions made by Central Office regarding the membership of the Board of Trustees, but perhaps to take little notice of the need to ensure a young and ethnic membership amongst the Trustees.

**David Smith** and **Harold Stokes** will be the Area's appointed delegates. **Norman Jones** and **David Dickson** will also be attending as observers. The **Secretary** will be confirming all bookings with Central Office.

#### **8. Area Secretary's National Information**

It was noted details of any "favourite Area" walk, to be included in the proposed Collins publication later in the year, needed to be submitted to Central Office by 31 January. Harold Stokes was prepared to offer a STOOOP walk, but members eventually agreed to nominate a section of the Hertfordshire Way, a section accessible by public transport. **Bert Richardson** will submit details directly of Hertfordshire Way, Leg 10, Cuffley to Hertford.

Norman Jones had attended one of the special regional meetings with the Chief Executive and Chair of the Trustees. David Smith and Harold Stokes had been unable to book for the London meeting as it was already full.

#### **9. Change of Name of Dacorum Group**

The revised constitution, as submitted, was accepted. The formal change of name, to "West Hertfordshire Group", including the abbreviated form "West Herts Group", was also formally approved.

#### **10. STILE. Report of the Sub-Committee**

Harold Stokes presented the report of the Sub-Committee. The next issue of Stile was due to be published on 1 May, with a copy date of mid March. Three decisions were requested by the Sub Committee. The Council agreed

(a) A report on Central Office financial matters to be included in the next issue of Stile. **Norman Jones** will develop the draft paper already prepared by Phil Escritt.

(b) To accept as an overall goal the move towards electronic communication with members. This is accepted but subject to three conditions

- Members without electronic communication must not be disenfranchised. Generally this means members must positively opt-in to e-communication.
- e-mail addresses must be based on Central Office (CRM) data. There are inherent dangers in attempting to maintain unco-ordinated databases at Area and/or Group level. At some stage this message must be communicated to Central Office.
- The Sub Committee to continue to define the objectives of the Area website, and to develop appropriate procedures to ensure the objectives are met.

(c) Distribution List. The principles presented by the Sub-Committee were agreed, and the listing provided with the Sub-Committee's report also agreed. **Members** with suggestions for adding to the list should report them directly to Phil Escritt, who is currently maintaining the list on behalf of the Sub-Committee. Bert Richardson suggested including local newspapers: some doubt was expressed as to the value of this without some form of Introduction or a Press Release, but such decision could be left to the judgement of individual members. Nigel Agar suggested the Lea Valley

Authority, and the Chiltern Conservation Society. On this point, Nigel wondered whether we, representing local ramblers, should be a stakeholder on the LVA. He (**Nigel Agar**) agreed to prepare a paper for the next meeting.

### **11. Treasurer's Report**

Following the discussion at the last meeting, justification for the proposed items of expenditure (£1,000 for STOOP; £500 for HOOP, £500 for FHW) had now been received. The Council agreed that these funds could now be released. David Allard reported that funds had already been received by him to make these payments. Two incoming payments (of £2,000 each) were expected, in April and July respectively, from Central Office, sufficient to meet our immediate forthcoming commitments.

In contrast to the recent poor financial oversight at national level, the Chairman requested a Treasurer's report be circulated ahead of future Council meetings to ensure members are aware of the Area's financial situation. As well as balances, the report should indicate significant exceptional items compared with the year's budget.

### **12. Other Officers Reports**

Mark Westley reported that Graham Howard from Mid Herts Footpath Society had agreed to act as Footpath Secretary, but was not an RA member. **Harold Stokes** had agreed to find a membership application form for him. There are still vacancies in North Herts and East Herts. Chris Clyne reported some improvements in membership reports from Central Office. No other reports had been submitted. The Chairman requested that for the next meeting all Officers submit a short written report, to be included with the agenda papers.

### **13. Ramblers Greater London Forum**

Information can be found on [www.rglf.org.uk](http://www.rglf.org.uk). Len Banister, its Chairman had written an article for Stile, and the **Secretary** agreed to circulate a copy to members. He would also request that RGLF minutes be formally circulated to all our London Groups.

### **14. Group Reports**

Sarah Lea mentioned the forthcoming East Herts Group Barn Dance (6 March, Little Hadham Village Hall – see Stile, page 7). Harold Stokes mentioned new developments with the North Herts website ([www.nhrg.org.uk](http://www.nhrg.org.uk)) now actively maintained by an enthusiastic member. Sue Jacobs wondered whether the London Groups (at least) might not want to co-ordinate their baton walks in some way: to do so would make more sense of the project. But there were no volunteers to act as co-ordinator. The Stile Sub-Committee might consider this for Stile.

### **15. Any Other Business**

Chris Beney reported on developments with the Standard for Gates and Stiles at BSI. Any comments on the draft should be reported directly to him.

Harold Stokes requested that the proposal submitted by North Herts Young Ramblers, although received out of time for this meeting, be considered and approved, since there were no contentious matters, either budgetary or constitutional. He saw no valid reason for delaying the application until the time of the next Council meeting. On receiving the assurance that the constitution agreed and approved by the first AGM of NHYW was derived directly from the model constitution, the Council agreed to formally recognise them as a new Group.

The **Secretary** will now circulate the proposal developed by NHYW to all members.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Next Meetings: 19 April, 6 September, 8 November.

Harold Stokes