

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
HERTFORDSHIRE AND NORTH MIDDLESEX AREA
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AREA COUNCIL MEETING
1 September 2008

Members Present:

David Allard, Chris Beney (minutes), Annette Cotter, Philip Greswell, Norman Jones, Robin King, Sarah Lea, Ray Peters, Bert Richardson, Harold Stokes, Edward Walker (Chair), Mark Westley, David Whiskin and David Dickson.

Agenda Item

- 1 **Apologies.** Chris Clyne, Phil Escritt
- 2 **Minutes of Last Meeting.** Agreed after noting Annette Cotter's apologies.
- 3 **Matters Arising** None
- 4 **Correspondence received**
08/46 Area Consultation – ACTION David Allard and Norman Jones will do reply on line.
08/45 Area view on RA 75th Anniversary – We plan to concentrate on our 25th rather than on the RA's 75th.
The secretary reported that mileage rate changed from 25p to 28p from 1st July.
- 5 **Woodland Trust donation** – Bert Richardson had recently met with Woodland Trust (WT) and the Mayor of St Albans. Bert was unhappy with the WT's attitude to public paths. Chris Beney confirmed that with his experience over many years with Woodland Trust at Bushey Merryhill. Annette Cotter suggested £400, the proposed amount, was much too small. Mark Westley was concerned at the strange use of this good farm land. Others spoke in similar vein to all this. It was AGREED that we would offer at least £500, but make it explicitly a donation tied to the provision of rights of way. We would also support a local liason group with RA, St Alb & Dist, F of the HW... Phil Escritt to be local contact.
- 6 **Lilley Bottom housing proposal** – £1000 for letters to members to make objections. Discussion included the small weight given to standard letters. And the timeliness or prematurity of acting now. And the pros and cons of plain opposition compared with mitigation proposals as at Stevenage. AGREED that the issue would be explained in Stile with suggestions/pointers for what people should write. We won't spend the money now but the treasurer will put £1000 in next year's budget in case.
- 7 **Letter to RA chief executive to enable members' email addresses to be provided** –it was recognized that Central Office was not yet in a position to allow this to happen, the lists being in some disarray, But it was AGREED that David Allard should write anyway, in order to help speed up the eventual provision of this facility. Philip Greswell would prepare and send to David a draft of the suggested letter.
- 8 **Fred Milton's Letter** - Various views were aired with a view to resolving the issues, but this was not 100% successful. It led to a more general stance and it was AGREED that improved group-group and area-group communications were very desirable. Also AGREED that it would be appropriate to note this for probable action by next year's committee.
- 9 **Treasurer** - had been asked if payment can be made earlier to groups. She confirmed it could, soon after the AGM. It was AGREED that groups should get budgets in by end of November and they would then be paid soon after the AGM. The treasurer urges groups to put extra-ordinary items into their budgets e.g. for campaigns, path structure improvement. The treasurer asked for draft minutes to go to groups and soon after the minuted meeting. Phil Escritt had said that he can do this.

- 10 Footpath Secretary** – Mark Westley reported that we had various vacancies especially around Hertford eg Little Berkhamsted.
- 11 Local Access Forum** – Norman Jones reported that Andy Hardstaff was no longer organizing the Forum, rights of way (Bob Fenton) were now doing it with Anna Mangini as Secretary. Some of the issues of late updating of the website and of document issue should improve.
- 12 Officer general** – Ray Peters suggested that officers should be strongly encouraged to provide written reports, especially when some action on them was required by the committee. Preferably just over two weeks before the meeting. This was AGREED.
- 13 RA Greater London Forum (RGLF) -**
Chris Beney reported that Alexandra Rook of Walk London had led a discussion. The Forum had agreed a work programme:
Establish all groups we should interact with.
Review London Boroughs' Rights of Way Improvement Plans.
Develop a policy on shared routes (cycles, Greenways etc.)
And various other things including visiting the Olympic Site.
The RA budgeting system now allows one Area to carry the whole Forum costs so we don't need to plan for it. The position on travel costs is not clear.
We still need a permanent representative.
- 14 Reports from Group Representatives.**
Sarah Lea: East Herts key issue is getting more members, especially younger ones. Two members who ran a RA stall at a local show reported that people were unwilling to do 10 miles for a first walk. A general discussion ensued about lengths of walks and age and meeting people's needs.

Norman Jones: Dacorum had identified that only the more enthusiastic like longer walks, more people are attracted to short ones.

Philip Greswell: The coach trip to Hastings was popular and places taken up very quickly.

Robin King: having taken on the task of coordinating the 25th anniversary, had got Justin to publish an invitation with full contact details: no response at all. So the four schemes proposed earlier will be explored with the aim of a proposal to be put to our November meeting. Robin King also touched on lack of interest at Group level of Area news and how to overcome it by regular reporting.
- 15 Agenda item 10: Positions for which volunteers need to be found.**
Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Minute Secretary. David Allard reported that Phil Escritt had kindly agreed to take the Minutes Secretary position. Chris Beney raised the question of splitting treasurer's functions, perhaps paying someone for the clerical part of it. Annette Cotter said that we can pay an honorarium, not a salary. She also said that the treasurer's work was some three hours per month plus one and a half days at 'examination of accounts' time plus a day or so for budgets.
A general discussion about these posts ensued but no specific conclusions reached. The secretary agreed to arrange for the STOOP Launch, Volunteers Required and Minutes of the Meeting to go on the Area website.
- 16 Any Other Business** – Proposed by Bert Richardson and AGREED (Annette Cotter & David Allard not present) that a £25 voucher be presented to David and to Annette as a token of their work.
- 17 Next meeting 10 Nov 2008**

18 Meeting ended 9.30pm completed and on time.