

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

MINUTES OF THE AREA COUNCIL MEETING
10 November 2008

Members Present

Nigel Agar, David Allard, Chris Beney, Chris Clyne, Annette Cotter, David Dickson, Phil Escritt, Philip Greswell, Norman Jones, Robin King, Sarah Lea, Ray Peters, Harold Stokes, Edward Walker (chairman), Mark Westley, David Whiskin.

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Bert Richardson.

2 Minutes of Meeting held on 1 September 2008

Add the following text

The Council considered the four points raised in the letter of 7 August from Mr David Smith, Chairman of North Herts Group.

- 1. Minutes of the Council meeting should be distributed widely. This is now done, and the minutes appear on the Area website.*
- 2. Area website to be updated with Council decisions. Again, this is now done.*
- 3. Area to take lead in supporting Groups by promoting best practice. No action needed, since there is no evidence of need from any Group other than North Herts (and perhaps Dacorum) for such action.*
- 4. Extend Central Office's review of strategic priorities to Area level, perhaps by researching action taken by other Areas. No action needed for same reason as above.*

Item 5 Woodland Trust Donation: delete the words "at least" before "£500"

3 Matters Arising

Item 5 - Woodland Trust Donation

Questions were raised about the Woodland Trust's reaction to the council's condition that the donation should be tied to the provision of rights of way. Annette Cotter said that she had sent a cheque to Bert Richardson but it had not yet been cashed. It was AGREED that David Allard would ask Bert to report to the Council on the Woodland Trust's reaction together with his recommendations for any further action.

(Secretary's note: Bert has reported that he has written to the Woodland Trust but has not yet sent the cheque. He will only send the cheque if the Woodland Trust accept the right of way condition)

Phil Escritt reported that he had met Nick Morgan of the Woodland Trust who had said that the Trust intended consulting walkers' representatives soon. At Nick's request Phil had provided the contact details for the main footpaths societies.

Item 7 – email addresses

Correspondence with Central Office makes it clear that it will not be possible to use emails for campaigning purposes in the near term. This is partly because of the muddle over membership records, partly the problem of maintaining up to date email addresses and partly the difficulty of obtaining the individual consents required by the data protection act. Council members spoke of the difficulty of maintaining up to date email lists. It was AGREED that sorting out the basic problem of membership records is more urgent than solving the problems of emails.

Item 12 – Officer General

Ray Peters noted that apart from the Countryside Secretary there were no written reports from officers at this meeting and that there were no papers supporting proposed decisions. There is no point in the Council agreeing to procedures if they are not then followed.

4 Membership Recruitment and Retention

Chris Clyne reported that the confusion over membership records makes it impossible to report with any certainty on the membership situation. Central Office is known to be taking this seriously but as yet there are no signs of any improvement. A key concern is the retention of new members.

5 Area AGM

David Allard spoke of the information he needs to complete the AGM booklet:

- Will there be a rep for N London and S Herts? – Philip Greswell to investigate
- He needs to know if any other reps will change
- Reports are required from the Chairman, Footpaths Secretary, and Countryside secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer.
- The Treasurer's report is outstanding from Finchley and Hornsey
- Reports are required from E Herts, Finchley and Hornsey, N London and S Herts
- Harold will provide a photo

As far as the wider AGM organisation is concerned:

- Edward Walker will lead a pre AGM walk (David Allard needs the details for the AGM booklet)
- Sarah Lea and Chris Clyne will organise wine and soft drinks and nibbles (there will be no tea).
- Robin King has undertaken to ensure that the heating is on

- Chris Beney will arrange the chairs
- It is assumed that about 70 people will attend

Bob Fenton has sent a written report which will be in the booklet so he will not need to read it out.

As a principle the chairman will ensure that people will not read out reports they have submitted in advance.

David Allard is prepared to stand as treasurer but there are no volunteers for chairman, vice chairman and secretary. The council discussed how these posts might be filled in extremis.

Peter Mellows, the independent examiner, wishes to stand down. It was suggested that if he could be persuaded to stand for one more year this could aid the transition to the new treasurer. Charles Davies was suggested as a possible successor. David Whiskin will approach him to see if he is willing.

6 Area Silver Jubilee

Robin King reported that he has had extensive discussions particularly with Graham Daniel, Bert Richardson and Harold Stokes. He has concluded that the celebration should be in two parts.

The first part would be a series of six celebration walks organised by individual Groups on the following dates:

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|------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Royston | Sunday 5 July |
| • Dacorum | Sunday 26 July |
| • Finchley and Hornsey | Sunday 9 August |
| • Watford & Three Rivers | Sunday 23 August |
| • North London & South Herts | Sunday 6 September |
| • East Herts | Sunday 27 September |

Each walk would start at 10am, be approx 5-6 miles and preferably end at a pub.

The second part would be a larger celebration in October, probably in the Stevenage area. North Herts Group would be requested to assist in the organisation.

Every Group should include all these walks in their programme. There was no agreement on whether Groups should continue to run their own walks on these days

In discussion it was suggested

- Some people might not be prepared to travel a long way for a 5 mile walk
- Groups could consider organising three walks on the same day, say 5/10/15 miles

- This would make it difficult to all finish at the same time and place
- This could be overcome by figure of eight walks with an optional extra in the Afternoon

It was AGREED that all the walks must reflect a coherent vision and that a budget of £1000 should be allocated for leaflets and advertising etc.

The Council ENDORSED Robin's proposals and asked him to continue developing the details.

7 Groups should send walks programme to every member

Some RA members have complained that they have not received their Group's walk programmes. Annette said that all members were constitutionally entitled to receive these programmes.

The Council AGREED that every Group must send its walk programme to every member.

8 STILE – report from sub-committee

Harold Stokes reported that the sub- committee had approved the proof copies of the autumn edition of STILE and the editor had reported that the final version had been sent to the printers.

The sub-committee had worked out a timetable for a May edition and all its members were willing to serve for another year. The Council AGREED that the sub- committee should continue with the same membership.

Chris Beney said that the proof version had been produced in colour although the final version would be monochrome. He thought that the use of colour should be seriously considered. The Council AGREED that the sub- committee should investigate the use of colour and report back to the Council including an indication of costs.

Annette Cotter very much regretted the inclusion in the autumn edition of an article on the right of way through Lemsford Mill forecourt. This property is now owned by Ramblers Holidays who donate substantial sums to the RA. She asked for the article to be withdrawn.

Mark Westley said that it reported the successful action of a footpath secretary fighting to get a historic route re-opened.

Members of the sub-committee said that they had considered it to be a legitimate story for STILE. As the edition was with the printer it was now too late for any action to be taken.

9 Officers' Reports

Chairman and Secretary – nothing to report

Treasurer

The area accounts are being examined. The next step is to prepare the budget. She awaits the accounts and budget from N. Herts.

The area budget for next year will be based on this year plus 10% plus known extraordinary items. The timing means it will not be possible to submit it to the Area Council for approval

The deficit this year is £2800

The treasurer left the meeting at 20.50

Footpaths Secretary

A new volunteer Dennis Zwolinski will take over some parishes south of Hertford. We still need volunteer(s) for some parishes north of Hertford.

There are no particularly contentious footpath issues but Mark continues to be concerned about the County Council's use of creation orders when they are part of a package including diversions.

Access Officer

There is concern that the government may drop the coastal access provisions from the forthcoming Marine Bill

The Local Access Forum is now down to 9 members and support is now being provided by the county Rights of Way Unit. In common with other LAFs it is becoming more concerned with rights of way than access. Nigel Agar commented that it did not appear to be reporting to county councillors.

A recent LAF had a presentation from the chairman of Natural England who appeared to be pro walkers. The next meeting of the LAF is on 2 December at Hatfield Sports Village.

Countryside Secretary

The proposed wind farm at Weston remains contentious but it is difficult for the RA to take sides.

N Herts Group will undertake a walk in their spring programme through the area of Lilley Bottom under threat from development.

Membership Secretary - See item 4 above

10 Reports from Group representative

Group representatives reported successful AGMs. In particular

- E Herts had appointed some new officers.
- Dacorum had made donations to reduce their surplus in accordance with the Council's resolution

The N Herts budget has not yet been approved by its AGM. The budget will be sent to the Treasurer as soon as it is approved.

11 General Council

It was AGREED that David Allard and David Dickson will be our representatives subject to approval by the Area AGM

12 Central Office Open day on 11 November

David Allard has had no requests

13 AOB

In the notice explaining the changes to the General Council it is stated that "other organisations have started to take over from the Ramblers in setting the agenda on walking". Phil Escritt asked who these other organisations were. There was speculation but no definite answer.

The meeting closed at 21.30

Subsequent Meetings

2 February, 20 April, 7 September, 9 November 2009
Area AGM 10 January 2009

Phil Escritt
Minutes Secretary