

**THE RAMBLERS
HERTFORDSHIRE & NORTH MIDDLESEX AREA**

MINUTES OF THE AREA COUNCIL MEETING
9 November 2009

Members Present

Nigel Agar, David Allard, Chris Beney, Chris Clyne, Graham Daniels, David Dickson, Phil Escritt, Philip Greswell, Norman Jones, Sarah Lea, Tony Read, Bert Richardson (chairman), Harold Stokes, Edward Walker, Mark Westley.

Agenda Item

1. Apologies – Sue Jacobs, Ray Peters

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 7 September 2009

Robin King is omitted from the list of members present

Item 4 Financial Matters - In no 5 in the list of agreed points on page 3, Robin King should be named as representatives to the Leeds meeting and not Chris Clyne

3. Matters Arising.

Item 5. Stile – Report from sub-committee

The chairman congratulated the editorial group on the quality of the recent edition of Stile.

Norman Jones commented that he had only recently appreciated how much work David Allard had done on the content of the Area website. The chairman expressed his thanks to David on behalf of the entire Council

Item 6. North Herts Young Walkers

Norman Jones reported that the Group will base its constitution on a standard Group constitution. There appears to be nothing to prevent it holding an inaugural AGM. Harold Stokes said that there will be no overall financial implications as the North Herts Group will transfer the £100 it had included in its budget to the new Group.

Item 11. AOB

The Council expressed its thanks to the North Herts Group and particularly to Carol and Harold Stokes and Robin King for the very successful celebration on 17 October.

4. Area AGM

The Council discussed the arrangements for the AGM which will start at 2pm on Saturday 9 January 2010 in Woolmer Green Village Hall. The arrangements agreed in the Council meeting on 23 February 2009 were confirmed and the following additional points AGREED.

Mark Westley will lead a walk of about 6 miles starting at 10.00 am. Bert Richardson will lead a shorter walk starting at 11.15 am.

The Council requested the secretary seek to arrange for:

- the barrier to the car park to be open at 9.30 am,
- the toilets to be available before the walk commencing at 10.00am
- the hall to be available for people to eat lunch or change clothes 12.00 pm.

Len Bannister (the member of the Board of Trustees nominated to liaise with our Area) will be invited to speak early in the agenda. The objective will be to reach the appointment of officers no later than 3.15 pm and stop for refreshments by 3.30 pm. After the break Mark Westley will speak on "Ancient Byways of Hertfordshire" for about 40 minutes leaving time for questions. The meeting should close around 5.00 pm.

David Smith, a former chairman of the North Herts Group, has agreed to stand as Area Council chairman for not more than three years providing he has the close support of a vice chairman with experience of the Council. Harold Stokes is willing to stand as vice chairman to provide this support. Both Bert Richardson and Chris Beney stated that they were happy to stand down in their favour and the Council AGREED its full support for these nominations.

The secretary has received AGM reports from Royston and Finchley and Hornsey plus accounts from North Herts. **He needs the AGM reports from all the other Groups and the Area officers as soon as possible and NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER.**

5. Ramblers National Financial and Strategy Issues

Norman Jones's letter to Len Bannister arising from the discussion at the last Area Council and Len's reply had been circulated in advance. The organisers' report of the informal meeting in Leeds was distributed at the meeting.

Bert Richardson reported that the Leeds meeting had been well supported. It had been constructive and well run. There were no calls for any breakaway and a committee had been formed to follow up the conclusions. They may nominate some new people for the Board of Trustees. Graham Daniels had been struck by the fact that the Trustees were not bound by any General Council resolutions. A key issue was the relative emphasis to be placed on the traditional activities of rights of way and access compared with initiatives to encourage more people to walk.

In a general discussion some Council members thought that the Ramblers should concentrate on traditional rural walking whilst others felt it would gain more influence and members by reaching into urban areas. There is a big jump from getting people walking to getting them to join the Ramblers. The Ramblers does not have a good image in some quarters. As a campaigning organisation we must be assertive but we are sometimes seen as intransigent.

There is some evidence that the central organisation has listened to the complaints and is reacting. The Council AGREED to take no further action at this stage, to monitor the situation and decide how to react to any actions that the Leeds Committee may propose.

6. New Information from Central Office

Two new **Volunteers Newsletters** have been distributed by email. They give pointers to new information on the Ramblers website. Some Council members have not received them.

Some of this information e.g. civil liability insurance contains significant changes which Groups need to be aware of. The web address for this information is:
www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/insurance

A series of **regional meetings** is to be held. Norman Jones will attend one in Birmingham. The Council requested that in future details of any similar meeting should be made known to Group so that others could consider attending.

The **General Council** will be held on 10 and 11 April 2010 at Royal Holloway College, Egham, Surrey. Each Area can appoint two delegates and one additional person. The Board of Trustees has recommended that at least one of the delegates should be someone who has not attended a General Council before.

Norman Jones and David Dickson would like to attend. It was suggested that either the new chairman or vice chairman should be delegates. Details can be agreed at the Area AGM.

It was AGREED that resolutions for the General Council may need to be discussed at the Area AGM and the secretary was requested to make suitable provision in the agenda.

7. Officers and Representatives Reports

Treasurer

David Allard had submitted a report in advance. Central office has agreed to restore the £1812.50 previously deducted from the 2008/9 budget. North Herts have requested £1000 for STOOP and £500 for HOOP. The Friends of the Hertfordshire Way have requested £1000 for publicity and signs. David recommended that the maximum we should pay is £2000.

Following a discussion it was AGREED to allocate £500 to the Hertfordshire Way and a total of £1500 to North Herts subject to both organisations providing a detailed breakdown for the next meeting. Harold Stokes pointed out that this is a new requirement.

Footpaths Secretary

Mark Westley said that an officer in North London & South Herts Group has received a request from central office for information about footpaths secretaries. He asked for any similar requests to be referred to him.

There are a few vacancies for footpath's secretaries. He requested that the invitation for volunteers should continue to be included in each edition of Stile.

Countryside Secretary

Philip Greswell reported on developments in the East of England Plan, the Luton Noise Action Plan, the proposed housing north of Harlow and Local Development Frameworks. He will shortly be distributing an email with more details.

Phil Escritt said that recent proposals by St Albans District Council for housing development in the Green Belt could directly affect several rights of way.

Membership Secretary

The membership records are improving but are still far from perfect.

Chairman

The Greater London Forum needs more support. Bert Richardson pleaded for additional representatives from the London based Groups.

The coastal access provisions have been passed by the House of Commons and are now to moving to their final stages in the House of Lords. He was concerned about the number of compromises that have been included.

Next year is the 75th anniversary of the Ramblers and each Area is being invited to plan an event. There are several possibilities suggested on the Ramblers web site. Harold Stokes agreed to look at this site and make some proposals.

Groups

The Area and all but one of our Groups are using the Unity Bank. This is not mandatory and the Council decided to take no action on the remaining Group.

The Council noted that there had not been a representative from Watford and Three Rivers at any Area Council meeting this year.

9. Items from Last Meeting

Use of email. Philip Greswell explained his findings and recommendations previously circulated. Harold Stokes said that the Stile sub-committee would look into this issue. It was noted that Central Office is becoming more positive about making e-mail addresses available.

Stationery. David Allard and Mark Westley have developed a letter heading which is being used for the Footpaths Committee. It is suggested that others use this format. Sarah Lea said that it does not work with Microsoft Works.

10. AOB

The next Local Access Forum is on 3 December at the College Lane Campus of the University of Hertford at 7.30 pm. It is due to discuss the draft good practice guide on structures on rights of way.

The meeting closed at 21.30

Phil Escritt
Minutes Secretary

11 November 2009

Next Council Meeting 1 February 2010,
Area AGM 9 January 2010