

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE AREA COUNCIL OF THE RAMBLERS  
HELD AT THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, SHREWSBURY, ON SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup>  
May 2017**

**PRESENT:** Peter Carr (Chair), Trevor Allison( Area FP Sec.), John Newnham (Vice-Chair), Phil Barnes (Area Website), Ken Dunning (Chair Market Drayton), Anne Suffolk (Chair Telford & E. Shrop.), Anne Sumner (Telford & E. Shrop.), Darren Hall (Chair S. Shrop.), Colin Chandler (Chair Oswestry), Bob Kimber (Oswestry Rep.), Tony Eccleston (Wem Walkers), Bill Hodges (Shrewsbury Rep.), Kate Dyson (Bridgnorth Walkers), Gill Steed (Area Sec.)

**Apologies:** Neil Moore (Whitchurch Walkers), Jeff Vaughan (Area Treasurer), Sue Jones (AONB), Gill Pursey (Hill Walkers), Sarah Riley (SYR Footpath Officer)

Peter Carr (Chair) welcomed Kate Dyson the Bridgnorth Representative to the Area Council.

- 1. Minutes of the last meeting:** The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

**Matters Arising:** p.1, item 2 p2. Sue Jones and Marion Law attended the CPRE Brexit Conference. Marion had reported (to the Executive Officers) there was very little reference to Access.

**p.2 p3 Wat's Dyke.** Peter Carr said he had contacted Ron Williams but had not had any further communication. Trevor Allison, Area Footpath Sec. said he would see what he could find out. **Action: Area Footpath Sec.**

**p2.** Item 3 Campaigning during the Local Election deferred until later in the meeting.

**p.3 Marketing the Ramblers.** Peter Carr (Chair) asked if the Group committees had been able to discuss this. S. Shropshire had, Shrewsbury referred to it in the Group Report, Market Drayton had, Telford & East Shropshire had deferred it until their next committee meeting, Oswestry had not discussed it. Peter Carr publically thanked Anne Suffolk for turning the 'Shropshire Welcome Letter' into something which was more 'panache'. Peter agreed with Bill Hodges that it was too long but said making it briefer proved difficult.

**p.4 item 5 Central Office Survey:** Peter Carr (Chair) said the Area and Group Chairs should receive information about this at the beginning of June.

**p.4 item 6 Ploughing and Cropping:** This was deferred until the Footpath Sec. Report.

- 2. Officer and Group Reports:** Ken Dunning said the Agenda was massive and he did not think there was enough time to get through it. Peter Carr said reading written Reports before the meeting commenced meant time could be saved by having a question and answer session.

- Chair's Report:** Peter Carr said he attended a Cycling UK presentation and it was clear they did not want to make all footpaths into cycle routes but make

some that were suitable into multi user routes. Darren Hall said Peter James and some of the South Shropshire Group were not happy with this. Peter Carr said events at Central Office were moving forward rapidly on this.

Anne Suffolk said she was pleased that Central Office now have a member of staff dealing with the Walking Festivals. Peter Carr said at the beginning of June there will be a lot more information about the Festivals coming from Central Office.

- **South Shropshire:** Darren Hall (Chair S. Shrop.) asked for it to be noted that some members in the Group were not happy with the possible cycling proposals because the safety of walkers is put at risk. Darren Hall gave an example of inconsiderate cyclists on the Long Mynd.
- **Telford & East Shropshire:** John Newnham (Vice Chair & Chair Shrewsbury) congratulated Anne Suffolk on producing a most informative Report about their campaign for public access and PROW over the site of the old Buildwas Power station in the Severn Gorge. Anne Suffolk explained the proposal is to put down a marker for a PROW footpath/cycleway/bridleway and to open public access crossing over at least one of the private bridges. Anne Suffolk said she was hoping to have a meeting with councillors after the General Election to show that it is in everyone's interest to have a buffer zone around the power station. Ken Dunning asked that we minute our thanks to Anne. Anne Suffolk asked about the procedures for claiming 'lost ways' and the status of 'white routes' such as the popular Sutherland/Dukes Drive in Telford. Trevor Allison said he could not help with 'white route' until he gets a list from Telford & Wrekin. Peter Carr (Area Chair) said the problem of route anomalies had been taken up by Central Office and was being headed up by Kate Ashbrook a former Ramblers President.
- **Wem Walkers:** Tony Eccleston (Chair, Wem Walkers) emphasised that he has encouraged Wem Walkers to report ROW issues to him and he endeavours to resolve them.
- **Whitchurch Walkers:** (attached to Agenda)
- **Shrewsbury Report:** John Newnham (Chair, Shrewsbury) said he was concerned about temporary closures on rail crossings where the council repeatedly renews temporary closures. Peter Carr (Area Chair) said there was an article in the Ramblers Walk magazine and the CEO's Newsletter about the subject of railway closures in the Essex Area. Central Office and Essex Volunteers were mounting a big campaign and we needed to await the outcome of this. Anne Suffolk (Telford & East Shrop. Chair) said Central Office would like to know of any closures. Trevor Allison (Area Footpath Sec.) said he has spoken to Network Rail and there are 84 closures to check in

Shropshire. **ACTION: Area Footpath Sec.to notify Central Office of the rail closures.**

Trevor Allison (Area FP Sec.) said the Longden FP72 Diversion Order has got to be reissued.

- **Bridgnorth:** Kate Dyson (Bridgnorth Rep.) said she had found the Group reports interesting. She said the Bridgnorth Group were keen to support the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme and were in the process of meeting interested parties.
- **Market Drayton: (attached to Agenda)** Ken Dunning (Chair, Market Drayton) reported their walks are well supported and that the Walks Secretary Steve Elliot was retiring having 'made a substantial contribution to the Group'. The Market Drayton Chair praised the work of their Footpath Secretary.
- **SYR Footpath Officer's Report: (attached to Agenda)** Sarah Riley (SYR's FP Officer) reported encouraging walkers to report any obstructions and that they were cutting back overgrowing vegetation during their walks. She said several members were interested in helping to check footpath obstructions and to report back. John Newnham said Peter Knight has been checking the 20 walks Guide around Shrewsbury and thought he would like help to make sure the signage and footpaths were okay. Phil Barnes said he would maintain contact with the SYR's Footpath Officer. Peter Carr (Area Chair) suggested that any Group who might need footpaths checking could let Sarah Riley know and if there was any SYR in the area maybe they would help check the route.

**ACTION: Phil Barnes**

- **Oswestry:** Colin Chandler (Oswestry Chair) said there was nothing to report.
- **Area Footpath Sec. Report: (attached to Agenda)** Tony Eccleston (Chair, Wem Walkers) said planning approval appeared to be given for a footpath diversion on the south side of Higher Heath but there was no way markers and walkers ended up on the wrong side of a fence. Trevor Allison Area Footpath Sec. said he would check it out and then report it to Shona Butter.  
**Action: Area Footpath Sec.**

Ken Dunning (Chair, Market Drayton) asked what was happening about the Ploughing and Cropping Campaign which was so successful in 2016. The Area Footpath Secretary said he had spoken to Shona Butter and she said she thought they could cope but would contact the Area Footpath Secretary if they needed help. Most of the problems are in the North of Shropshire. Tony Eccleston (Wem Walkers) reported finding 4 problems in the last few days. Trevor Allison (Area FP Sec.) said walkers or Groups should report new

4.

problems directly to the council preferably with photos and grid reference. Anne Suffolk said if it is in the Telford and Wrekin area obstructions can be

reported directly to the council using an app. There has been a change to the online reporting for Shropshire and Phil Barnes (Area Website Officer) was asked to change the link on the Shropshire Ramblers Website. **ACTION: Phil Barnes Area Website**

**AONB Report: (attached to Agenda)** Darren Hall said the Long Mynd and Stipperstones shuttle bus **will not** be running during the month of June but will be back in July.

- **Area Treasurer's Report: (attached to Agenda)** Peter Carr reporting for Jeff Vaughan (Area Treasurer) said the finances were healthy. Groups could now bid for their budgets but what they get will depend on the level of their reserves.
- **Area Membership Report: (attached to Agenda)** Peter Carr the membership remained stable, fluctuating around 1,200 members. He said he would like to see the membership increase.
- **Area Secretary Report: (attached to Agenda)** The Area Secretary clarified that Item 2 of the Report referred to the Executive Officers.
- The Area AGM will be held on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at Wellington Methodist Church at 2 pm. It was confirmed that the station was close by and there was parking available. More details would be given at a later date.

**Action: Area Sec.**

- **General Council Report:** Trevor Allison who was an Area Delegate said he was writing a Report on the General Council to be placed in the Area News Letter. Trevor Allison said the CEO, Vanessa Griffiths was a 'breath of fresh air' and that every motion was passed. Peter Carr said the General Council debates on the Motions were 'vigorous and not antagonistic'. Ken Dunning asked for more details about the motions. Peter Carr said there was a link on the CEO's monthly update. **Action: Area Sec.** Send link to those members of the Area Council who have requested it.

**Cycling Motion:** Peter Carr said he attended a presentation by Cycling Uk . They do not wish as had previously been thought to have all footpaths as cycle paths. They are looking for a small number of circular routes close to car parks, toilets and café facilities. They agreed that signage was a problem and there were some behaviour issues.

**Ploughing and Cropping Motion:** This was to be based on how the Shropshire Ramblers worked with the Shropshire Council last year. John Newnham reported that the council has reduced the number of stages. John Newnham

5.

asked if the prosecutions had to be done by the Council. The Footpath Secretary said yes.

5. **Area News Sheet: (attached to Agenda)** Anne Suffolk thought this was a good idea but there should be a border as some columns were unclear. Peter Carr said he was using Word and was unable to do this. John Newnham said he **would edit** the News Sheet. **Action: John Newnham (Vice Chair)** Colin Chandler asked how often the News Letter would be sent out. Peter Carr (Chair) said twice a year if he could get volunteers to take it on. Peter Carr said he would like it sent out by the end of the month to all Group Members. It was suggested that the new Shropshire Council Portfolio Member should be sent the News Sheet. **Action: Phil Barnes** to put it on the Area Website. **Area Sec.** Send to Groups and Portfolio Member.
6. **Safe Guarding Policy for children and vulnerable adults:** Peter Carr (Chair) said this would be included in the News Sheet to make sure all walk leaders and walk organisers are aware that children up to the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Walk leaders at the beginning of a walk should invite anyone who may have a medical condition to bring it to their attention in private. Darren Hall (S. Shrop. Chair) asked that a copy of the Guidance for Walk Leaders be sent to Gill Mortimer (S. Shrop.) and himself. **Action: Area Sec.**
7. **Group Members Email Addresses:** Peter Carr (Area Chair) said the problem of email addresses had been highlighted by the recent phishing attack. Although it was dealt with effectively by Central Office it showed that emails held by Central Office were different from those held by groups and caused a problem when cascading information. This resulted in some members receiving the information more than once. Under DATA protection rules if an email address is given to a valid officers of the Ramblers the said email address can be used for Ramblers information. **The Ramblers will never disclose the email outside of the Ramblers.** Peter Carr said all emails need to be held centrally. He also said there needs to be a process of updating email addresses and letting Central Office know. Ken Dunning asked Peter Carr to write this clearly to explain what is happening. Anne Sumner (Telford & Wrekin) said as Membership Sec. she was not allowed to give out members email addresses. Peter Carr said when joining the Ramblers you could opt out of having your email used by Ramblers Central. Ken Dunning said some members joined before there were email addresses. Peter Carr said he would find out what the policy was on this. **Action: All Groups (not**

6.

**Affiliated Groups) supply membership centrally with an update of their data bases. Action: Area Chair**

**8. Post- Election Letter: (attached to Agenda)** Peter Carr said after speaking to Marion Law (President), Jeff Vaughan (Area Treasurer) and John Newnham (Vice Chair) the Pre-Election Campaign had been with-drawn due to the cost of postage. Peter Carr produced a draft letter for Groups to send to the successful candidates to register the Ramblers interest after the Local Election. He said it was a template and Groups can change it as they wish. It was agreed Groups would find out who their Councillors were and make contact with them. **Action: Groups**

**9. How do we rejuvenate ourselves? (attached to Agenda)** Peter Carr (Area Chair) said the Area Executive broadly supported the document. He had also spoken to the CEO and she was very enthusiastic.

- **Membership Retention:** There was a vigorous debate on how to increase membership. The new Ramblers Welcome Letter which is sent out by Ramblers Central to new members in the Shropshire Area was welcomed although some felt it was still too long. Anne Suffolk said from a marketing perspective we need data on why members do not renew their membership. John Newnham (Shrewsbury Chair) said Amanda Hartley Newton (Shrewsbury Group) suggested cross over walks with walking for health. He also asked what other Groups were doing to increase membership. Ken Dunning (Market Drayton Chair) said he always makes personal contact with new members on their first walk and that this personal contact was very important. Kate Dyson (Bridgnorth) said that successful Groups should be given the opportunity to share good practice. Peter Carr asked for feedback from the Groups. He also said he would like to attend the Group committee meetings to talk about how we rejuvenate the Ramblers? **Action: Area Sec. contact Groups.**
- **Festival of Winter Walks:** Peter Carr said the Ramblers National Walking Festival will be an important feature within the Ramblers. With the funding from the Peoples Postcode Lottery there is now a full time member of staff to focus solely on walking festivals. He said Areas and Groups will need to co-ordinate activities once we receive more information from central office. John Newnham said there had been two very good articles in the Guardian about walking. Peter Carr said they had been written by Nicky Philpott from

7.

Central Office. **Action: Area Sec. put Walking Festivals on the next Area Council Agenda.**

**11. Any Other Business:** Peter Carr (Area Chair) asked if the Area Council members would like to hold the meeting on a different day or even in the evening. After a short discussion it was decided to keep to a Saturday.

- Both Ken Dunning and Colin Chandler apologised saying they would not be able to attend the next Area Council.

**10. Dates for future meetings: Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

**The meeting closed at 1225.**