

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE THIRTY THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE AREA OF THE RAMBLERS HELD ON SATURDAY 28th January 2017 AT THE GATEWAY CENTRE, SHREWSBURY**

**PRESENT:** Thirty-two members and officers of Shropshire Area including Alan Austin (Powys Area Chair), Graham Evans (Staffordshire Area Secretary), Gerald Moss ( North Wales Area Representative).

**APOLOGIES:** Valerie and John Malam, Anne Suffolk (Chair Telford and East Shropshire), Bob Kimber (Oswestry Rep.), Kate Dyson (Bridgnorth Walking Club Rep.)

Peter Carr (Area Chair) welcomed members to the 33<sup>rd</sup> AGM of Shropshire Ramblers and our guests Alan Austin (Powys Area Chair), Gerald Moss (North Wales Representative) and Graham Evans (Staffordshire Area Secretary). Peter explained our first Ramblers Trustee speaker Jez Kenyan resigned. Alan Norton (Trustee) replaced him and he also resigned and was replaced by Christine Boston (Trustee) who did not resign but was unable to attend.

Peter Carr congratulated Shropshire Council's ROW officer Emily Parsons-Jones on the birth of her daughter.

Peter noted that some of the long standing Area Council Members were standing down and he appealed for members to replace them. Firstly he thanked Bill Hodges who was standing down after many years volunteering for the Area Council. Bill has been a member of the Area Council since 1994 when he was Vice Chair. He became Chair in 1998 and Vice Chair again in 2001. In 2009 he became the Liaison Officer and added Access Officer in 2010. Peter presented Bill with a gift in thanks of his service to Area. Peter was pleased to report that Bill has agreed to continue on the Area Council as the Shrewsbury Rep.

Peter went on to thank Joy Nesbit who has served on the Area Council as an individual member for many years after standing down as Chair of the South Shropshire Group. Finally he thanked Ina Roberts who has been a delegate on the Shropshire Area Council since it was first formed from the old Midlands Area 33 years ago. Ina is a dedicated Rambler who walks regularly with the Bridgnorth Walking Club and reports to their AGM about what the Shropshire

Ramblers have been doing. Ina also leads walks for the local Walking for Health in Bridgnorth and is a useful source of information about local footpaths. Peter Carr said the Shropshire Ramblers appreciated her dedication and wished her a happy retirement from Area Affairs.

On behalf of the Ramblers and Shropshire Area the Chair formally thanked them all for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the Ramblers and walking in general.

Peter Carr went on to say the Ramblers is much more than just Group walks. It has four charitable objectives which are:

- Protection of our paths
- Protection of our countryside
- Promotion of walking
- Education of the public

Peter Carr said mostly we hear about walking but only about a third of the Group membership engage in walking. He said there was a need to engage the other two-thirds and let the general public know about all our activities. Peter illustrated the importance of footpath and countryside work by explaining a P3 group installed a kissing gate on the edge of Oswestry. On checking the catch was working he discovered an elderly man in the field. Peter asked him if he was alright to which he replied he wished to thank whoever had installed the kissing gate as for the last 15 years he had been unable to climb the stile and now he could access the countryside. Peter said improved access is appreciated by many users of this path. He said campaigning need not be about the big issues but local ones can make the difference and it is the membership that helps us do this. He called upon all members to play their part.

#### **1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 13<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

David Aston proposed and Peter James seconded that the minutes be accepted as a true record. All in favour.

2.

2. **Matters arising: Item 2 (p1)** Peter Carr (Area Chair) said the Trustees had decided not to pursue the motion about bicycle bells and no information had been given as to why.

**Item 6** (p2-3) Peter Carr said the call for a change in the Area Reports was in place and everyone received the Full Report.

(p6) Peter James said that Kate Ashbrook said she would press for an improved process for s130A. He noted that whether directly or indirectly Central Office pressuring Shropshire Council had had some small measure of success on the ploughing and cropping campaign.

3. **Officers' Reports: Jeff Vaughan (Area Treasurer)** said the budget from Central Office had been cut again but the Area Funds were healthy. This year Area could help fund Groups with low reserves. However, next year he will need to press the Central Office for the full amount. He noted there was no evidence in the Trustee minutes to show the Ramblers were in any financial difficulty. Peter Carr (Area Chair) said he had not seen it discussed or agreed by Trustees in any minutes. Alan Austin (Area Chair Powys) said the Ramblers had no financial problems but the Powys Area had been affected by cut backs and they were awaiting an answer to an appeal about their budget. Graham Evans (Staffordshire Area Sec.) reported the same problem. Peter Carr said people were aware subscriptions contribute towards campaigning but feel that group funds should not be cut.

**Trevor Allison (Footpath Secretary)** said the contact in the ROW department at Shropshire Council will be Rob Purcell as his predecessor Emily Parsons-Jones is on maternity leave for a year. A new officer has been appointed to deal solely with Planning applications affecting ROWs This allows other officers to concentrate on other problems. He noted there was an issue where applicants for planning do not declare a ROW. Trevor reported a decision was expected shortly about the enquiry about ROW at Frodesley. He noted as a positive step that the Planning Agent had contacted him about moving a ROW. He has also received an email from the Planning Officer about a footpath at Harley. He has objected to Minsterley Motors applying to have passing spaces

removed. The Tankerville footpath which was legally a dead end now has a ROW along the route.

**2026 Lost Ways:** Trevor is presently looking at every ROW in the Shropshire Area to see if it meets a public highway. If it does not it could be lost.

**Shropshire Way:** Trevor said there has been an agreed route in the South for the Shropshire Way and he is now identifying all the paths where they meet and where way marking needs to be. He praised the Clun PPP's group for the wonderful work they had done.

**Cropping Campaign:** Trevor reported the Cropping Campaign is an on-going process and this year it will be run by Rob Purcell. He emphasised that reports need to be very accurate. Peter Carr said there is a potential motion to General Council asking Ramblers to mount a national campaign based on the Shropshire Campaign. Peter said the cropping campaign had been very successful and he would like to thank everyone who took part, especially Trevor.

There were a number of questions about specific footpaths which Trevor addressed. Peter James said Dennis Nesbit had fought valiantly to stop dead end paths being extinguished. Trevor Allison said the De-regulation Bill came in to operation in April to sort out farm footpaths which do not go anywhere. Peter Carr thought the Ramblers could ask for the 2026 deadline to be put back as no practice notes had been received. Peter said he would raise this with Ramblers Central Office. Alan Austin stated that Trevor was a legend across the Ramblers and he agreed there was an issue where applicants for planning do not declare a ROW. He asked that the applications be changed so that applicants are asked, 'Does this development affect a ROW?'

All the Reports were accepted.

4. **Appointment of an Independent Examiner.** Ken Dunning proposed and Heather Morris seconded that Mike Hill be appointed the Independent Examiner. All in favour.

5. **Reports from Groups and Affiliated Groups:** Peter Carr said these could be seen in the Area Report. Neil Moore reported the Whitchurch Walkers next Walking Festival was 12-14 May 2017 and Darren Hall said the Church Stretton Walking Festival was 22-25 June 2017.
6. **Nomination and Election of Area Executive Officers:** Bill Hodges said the Area should not overload Trevor Allison. Peter Carr agreed and said there was a need for more volunteers. Peter Carr said the officers named had agreed to continue in their posts. He asked for volunteers for Access and Publicity and Marketing. There were no volunteers. Ken Dunning proposed and Tony Eccleston seconded that the officers be elected en bloc. All in favour.
7. **Affiliated Group Representatives:** Peter Carr (Chair) said there were four Affiliated Groups and they elected their own Representative to attend Area Council. At the present moment Neil Moore represented Whitchurch Walkers, Tony Eccleston the Wem Walkers, Gill Pursey the Shrewsbury Hill Walking Club and Kate Dyson the Bridgnorth and District Walking Club.
8. **Appointment of Individual Members to Area Council:** Peter Carr (Chair) said there were vacancies on the Area Council for **three individual voting members**. Peter said coming along to Area Council was a way of finding out how the Area works. He asked for volunteers and noted that as the Shropshire Young Ramblers now had a membership of 60 they might like to get involved.
9. **General Council 2017:** It was proposed by Jeff Vaughan and seconded by Colin Chandler that Trevor Allison and Gill Steed be appointed delegates to General Council. All in favour.

Two visitors can attend General Council. Darren Hall agreed to attend as a visitor and it was agreed that the Area could send another visitor.

## 5.

Peter Carr (Chair) explained the delegates debate motions before the General Council and each area can submit one motion which affects the policy and direction of the Ramblers. The delegates also vote to elect

Trustees and this year there will be 5 Trustees up for election. Peter Carr said his name has been put forward as a Trustee. Sue Jones congratulated him and asked if he would remain on the Agenda Committee. He said it was possible as he would represent Rural Councils as he feels at present the bias is in favour of an Urban Agenda. Ken Dunning asked that congratulations to Peter Carr were formally recorded in the minutes.

#### **10. Motion to General Council 2017 from Shropshire Area of the Ramblers:**

*This General Council notes Cycling UK's Campaign Briefing for footpaths (with few exceptions) to be made available for cycling. General Council calls on the Trustees to enter, as a matter of urgency, into discussion with all interested parties; in particular IPROW, CLA, and NFU to establish a clear Ramblers policy in response to the Cycling UK campaign.*

Peter Carr (Chair) said we were seeking guide lines from the General Council as to the Ramblers stance on the Cycling UK Campaign. Bill Hodges brought forward a draft motion to the Area Executive in November 2016. Peter Carr noted five Areas and Kate Ashbrook representing the Ramblers Trustees were trying to come up with an agreed wording. They would submit this agreed motion from the Trustees and the five Areas to the General Council. Bill Hodges said for all footpaths to become cycle paths was impractical. Peter Greave, who is also a cyclist supported this comment but noted that Scotland has made access open to all users. There was a robust discussion. The motion was proposed by Bill Hodges and seconded by Sue Jones. 29 in favour, 3 against.

**Peter Carr (Chair)**, having got an agreed wording, sought subsidiary permission for Area Council to agree a joint motion with the Trustees and the five Areas. Ken Dunning proposed and Tony Eccleston seconded the motion. 30 in favour, 2 against.

6.

Peter Carr said when he gets the wording he will send it to the Groups and leave it for them to decide if they wish to send it to all their members.

**11. AOB:** There was no other business.

**12.Workshop:** After the meeting there was a short workshop on: What can the National Ramblers do for Area and Groups? What would Groups like Area to do for them? The information will be collated and copied to the Group Secretaries and the three visitors.

**13.DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS:** Area AGM 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Area Council Meeting Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Executive Committee Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017