

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
RED ROPE SOCIALIST WALKING AND CLIMBING CLUB
HATHERSAGE, DERBYSHIRE 1st October 2011

PRESENT: 41 members

Jean Luce, Jonathan Bridge, John Dickie, Becky Bates, Dave Doody, Colin Knowles, Chris Drinkwater, Don Kinnibrugh, Sherry Macliver, Dave Symmonds, Barbara Segal, Dave Jefferies, Liz Pickles, Steve Wright, Peter Goffin, Olya Bowers, Gerry Matthews, Gill Cox, Adrian Jones, Arthur Bowling, Andy Bateman, Gill Platt, Dermot Mckibblin, Jan Lancaster, Julian Noble, Werner Ullah, Ian Cutts, Liddy Goyder, Chris Smart, Dave Fisher, Damien Connor, John Marsden, Anne Maloney, Matthew Simon, Sally Mitchell, Ann Silber, S Clarke, P Kossowski, Humphrey Southall, Steve Bonham, James Welsh.

APOLOGIES: Janet Saunders, Mike Hargarden

1. Colin Knowles and John Dickie were nominated as Chair, alternating as appropriate. Colin confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
2. Adrian Jones – minute taker
3. Running order of the meeting was accepted.
4. Apologies were received and accepted
5. Minutes of the 2010 AGM (circulated extensively and posted on Web site) Accepted unanimously.

1. OFFICERS REPORTS:

a. National Secretary.

Principle tasks for the year have been, as usual, facilitator for the National Committee, and this has include organising the three National Committee Meetings, updating the Regions and NC Contact Sheet, and keeper of the Constitution. All committee posts have been full over this year, although one post (publicity) become vacant as of this AGM; a new officer will need to be appointed. (Detailed report attached). A vote of thanks was raised to Janet Saunders, retiring publicity officer.

b. Membership.

The membership system has been enhanced this year with improved information to the regional contacts, monthly updates to the national treasurer, automated updating of database to IT and MIS editor. Transfer of the bank account has enabled simpler banking of fees.

The total membership remains at it's fairly stable level (over the past 3 years) and is 317 currently. The largest membership remains London followed (not very closely) by Sheffield and the South West. Most regions (there are 13 regions – ic two Scottish ones with a combined membership of 28) seem to have an average of 20 members. By banding, 44% is A-D, and 56% is E-H.

Tasks for the future include helping the regions to expand membership, and linking our website to other walking websites.

c. Administration Treasurer.

Sherry circulated copies of the accounts.

Income to year ended June 2011 was has been healthy this year at £8082 (mainly subscriptions, secondary amounts being from the regions and interest).

Total outflow was £7837, being broken down to affiliation fees (£4159), publications (£1548), AGM (£214), regional subsidy £600, and National Committee costs (£1060).

At June this year, the current account stood at £9373, the Action Fund at £2241, Hut Fund at just over £9300(waiting to be paid to the LMC). Attendance at the Ramblers AGM was funded by the action fund.

The current account has been moved to the Co op.

Other concerns

The cost of producing and posting the paper MIS (£365 overall) is a concern, and largely avoidable if as many as possible are persuaded to take MIS by email to reduce postage/printing costs..

The regions have been disappointing in producing their annual accounts this year. These were requested in writing in July along with the AGM notifications; so far very few regions have provided accounts (or requested an annual subsidy). And a budget is to be produced.

c. National Trips Secretary.

Since 2010 AGM 8 national trips have been booked.

- October navigation trip to Peak District. Repeat July trip had to be cancelled due to organiser illness but will be re-scheduled
- 4 week long Scottish trips were all full and mostly booked 3 months ahead for Early Booking Discount. A Fort William cottage used in early Feb was cheaper at £7 than most huts £8-£9 so this will be repeated. A Youth Hostel booked for 3 nights at Easter was expensive with cramped facilities so may not be used again
- Family trip to the Peak District in June
- August bank holiday 8 night Lake District trip using two huts received positive feedback. Members liked having a week long trip to an area other than Scotland

With

- Less cancellations – full payment in advance is working
- Increased use of public transport – due to specific trips promoting it
- Trial of revised route card – members are filling these out in pairs or groups and they are generally seen as simpler to complete
- Consideration of safety officer role – is it fair for one person to take responsibility. This needs to be discussed further at NC but we will be requesting members views

Plans for 2012

- Feb CIC hut – winter climbing trip requested and filled up quickly
- Same half term week, Feshiebridge, Cairngorms – requested for last few years as winter conditions better on east. Cairngorm National Park well established for leisure (walks, canoes, cycle trails, reindeer centre!) so a good location for first winter trip
- Easter to Crianlarich – had a credit for this hut due to overpayment for children. Last time cars were not needed on this trip so it will use ferry-rule - cheaper transport charges if trains are booked early – 3 months in advance fares from London can be as low as £19. Take bikes on trains to ease access to the hills
- May, Skye. Not at half term but always popular – mid and low level walking limited
- August bank holiday, Lakes 8 nights – Borrowdale and Patterdale. Could also be run with ferry rule walking/scrambling/climbing is within walking distance of huts

Rebecca is happy to continue with the role of Trips Secretary into 2012.

d. National Trips Treasurer. John Dickie

Fund balance at August 2011 was £2622. There was an overall loss this year of £210, but this is not an issue as the account balance is strong. The average overnight hut cost was £8, probably nearer £9 for 2012, so the banding will be reviewed to ascertain whether any changes are needed to fully fund the trips. Cancellations are down due to the new rules on full overnight payment required in advance. Sherry has undertaken to audit the accounts for 2010/11 and report to the NC.

e. IT Officer. Dave Doody

Work has continued this year with ongoing routine maintenance of the website, keeping contacts up to date on the website list, and posting NC meeting minutes .

f. Ramblers and Campaigns. Don Kinnibrugh

Ramblers General Council (AGM) – Oxford (16th - 17th April)

Three Red Ropers attended this delegate conference – Don Kinnibrugh, Steve Wright and Barbara Segal. The objective was 'to maintain Red Rope's profile within the Ramblers Association.' Our stall was well stocked and received plenty of interest from the delegates, and two of us spoke in the policy debates on the

Sunday. A number of enquiries about Red Rope membership were also received.

(Red Rope was also represented at the 'Open Day' of the Open Spaces Society, to which we are affiliated, on September 5th. The oldest national conservation body in the UK, founded in 1865, the Society does an important job protecting rights of way, commons and public access generally.)

Encouraging Red Rope participation in the Ramblers and other access campaigns

This has been much more difficult. After decades of campaigning for a right to roam, culminating in the CROW Act 2000 and its implementation over the following years, and then the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (which paves the way for the creation of an all-England coastal footpath), the Ramblers' appetite for campaigning seems somewhat diminished – at least at the national level.

Last year the Ramblers Central Office leadership were criticised for neglecting campaigning for access in favour of less radical activities (eg accepting Government funding for promoting 'walking for health'). In January this year they were again criticised for not taking a lead in the campaign against the privatisation of Forestry Commission land.

It is clear however that there are many within the Ramblers who would like the organisation to return to its earlier radical campaigning tradition, and to its emphasis on access. Red Rope's role should be to support such groups.

Red Rope regions who are interested in getting involved with Ramblers campaigns should therefore best get in touch with their local Area or groups directly.

g. BMC. Chris Drinkwater

Various matters from the BMC.

This coming year the BMC will make available £11k for climbing instruction support, and £4k for website development – attention was drawn to this as something RR should apply for.

There is a BMC clubs seminar in October 2011, in Mid Wales. The BMC will give guidance on membership management and legal issues; recommended a representative from RR should attend.

The BMC are running several training courses over the coming year, including First Aid, Written Skills, Navigation, and Expedition Planning. See their website for details

h. Training. Mike Hargarden

Mike has organised and run some excellent and well attended navigation training courses this year, much appreciated by those who attended. Thanks to Mike for doing this and it is hoped these will continue into the future.

It was requested that Mike attend more NC meetings in the future, this would enable the NC to be kept more up to date with training. Some expressed a wish to see training ended into say first aid in the future.

i. MIS. Mark Wallis

No report received from Mark Wallis. But MIS editions came out regularly over the year by email and hard copy and on time. MIS is now on the website

j. Bulletin. David Symonds

The next Bulletin will be delivered in late February. Copy by late January is required, preferably earlier and this fits in with the 2 monthly MIS schedule and would welcome submissions.

Gill Platt suggested thinner paper may reduce postage costs. Dave agreed to discuss this with the printers to see what could be done. We also need to be careful that the correct price is paid for delivery.

k. Hut Officer. Colin Knowles

This report covers developments since the 2010 AGM

1. The Draft Agreement on hut-sharing between Red Rope, the Lancashire Mountaineering Club (LMC) and the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) was signed by all parties early in 2011.

2. The LMC had made significant strides in the building of the new hut near Beddgelert – Cae Ysgubor. Difficulties arose in late Spring 2011 when the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNP) ruled that building work must cease due to the LMC's non-compliance with the original planning agreement. This breach was unwitting, and at the direction of Building Control, who were overseeing the work. Detailed representations were made to SNP and the interdict of further building was withdrawn in September. This unfortunate delay will in turn delay the project by almost a year.

During this period of difficulty LMC were given full moral support by the National Committee, and the balance of the £10,000 due as per the agreement was offered. At that stage LMC declined the balance, preferring to ensure that the situation with the SNP was fully clarified. There appears now to be no reason for the LMC not to accept the balance from Red Rope.

3. The National Committee has also had oversight of the method we are using to manage the regional and national bookings of the LMC's existing Blea Tarn hut and the Tyndrum caravan, and the method for individual members to book.

4. A first trip under the new agreement has taken place to the Blea Tarn hut. When using this hut, please follow strictly the guidelines published on the LMC website

5. The site of the Tyndrum caravan is to be closed in the autumn of 2012. LMC are actively pursuing a replacement site for it. This does not affect its use in the mean time.

Reformation of the Hut Sub Committee

Red Rope now moves into a different relationship with the LMC. New terms of reference for the membership and purposes of the Hut Sub-committee, were agreed by the National Committee in July, and was put to this AGM for ratification. The new Hut Sub Committee is proposed as follows:

Hut Liaison Officer

Bednight Booker.

National Secretary

National Treasurer

This proposal was put to the AGM and voted; agreed by all unanimously

Election of these Hut Sub Committee officers follows - see below

m. Gear Co-ordinator.

Adrian O'Connor. No report, gear was safe.

n. Publicity Officer - Janet Saunders

The following has been under taken this year

Website – some input to the website development team this year.

New Members Leaflet. A New Members Leaflet specifically aimed at new joiners to tell them all about Red Rope, how things work, and encourage them to get involved has been designed and is being issued to all new members and renewals along with the membership card each year.

We also have a standing invitation to put up a display at Lockerbrook.

Janet wishes to retire from the role as of this AGM. The meeting thanked Janet for all her hard work over the year. The publicity post is now vacant, no nominations so far received to fill this position.

o Archivist.

Andy Bateman continues to store the archive until a new archivist is found.

p. Web Review Team

No report; this group may now reform subject to Motion No 2 below.

THE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ACCEPTED THE ABOVE REPORTS AND GAVE THEIR THANKS FOR

ALL THE HARD WORK DONE BY ALL OFFICERS.

2 NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL COMMITTEE

All standing officers were re-elected, except those standing down, who are

Janet Saunders – Publicity Officer

Voting of the new officers for the revised Hut Sub Committee was unanimous and was as follows

Bed Night Booker – Gill Platt
Liaison Officer - Dave Fisher

No nominations were received for the posts of Publicity Officer or for the Archivist, so these are left vacant; the NC may coopt a Publicity officer at a later date as this is an important role and this will be discussed at the next NC meeting in November 2011. (Andy Bateman agreed to retain the archive for safekeeping until a new archivist is found)

Short break.

3. MOTIONS TO THE AGM

Motion No 1. Method of payment of subscriptions, and for trips (from Bristol and SW region, proposer Julian Noble)

The Club notes that

- many members and possible members are no longer able to pay for trips or membership by cheque
- the club faces a serious decline in income and membership if this situation is not addressed
- that the National Treasurer has investigated both PayPal and Direct Debit as a means of dealing with this issue

and therefore proposes:

- a) The NC should as a matter of urgency arrange for an alternative and more usable system of subscription, renewal and trip payment to be established and
- b) That this new mechanism should be in place on a trial basis by April 2012.

Some discussion, comments from Sherry – that Paypal charge 3.4% + 20p per transaction; BACS transfer is cumbersome; and that RR is too small to warrant the software to support Direct Debit

THE MOTION (a – explore option) WAS CARRIED, all voted in favour, none against

THE MOTION (b – by April 2012) WAS REJECTED: 3 in favour, all others against

Motion No 2. Red Rope Web Site Update (from Bristol and SW region)

The club notes that:

- The existing club website is so old-fashioned that its appearance has a negative influence on the club's credibility.
- That at least five full-time IT professionals are members of the Bristol/SW Region

and so proposes that:

a) The club employs an independent contractor to develop a new web site for the club using the framework developed by the NC subcommittee subject to a ceiling cost of £1,000

b) That authority be delegated to the Bristol/SW region to form a project board to hire and manage the IT contractor

There was some discussion as to the merits of this, and cost. Sherry confirmed that RR has the funds to support the cost of the external development work.

An amendment to (b) was agreed by adding "subject to regular review by the NC"

THE MOTION WAS CARRIED, including the amendment: all voted in favour, none against

**Motion No 3. National Trip Treasurer
(from National Treasurer)**

This AGM resolves that the Constitution, Club Policy A(j), composition of the National Committee be amended to include the National Trips Treasurer as a member

The job specification for the National Trips Treasurer is given below for guidance, as agreed by the NC

National Trip Treasurer – Job Specification

It is proposed that the Job Description of the Trips Treasurer should mirror that of the National Treasurer and cover the following:

- 1) Administer the National Trips bank account and appoint co-signatories who are required to countersign cheques. The National Trips banks account is for banking members' trip charges and making payments for hut charges and other trip charges as necessary.
- 2) Liaise with trip secretary, trip organisers and trip treasurers for smooth running of national trips
- 3) Produce regular analyses of trip treasurers accounts to provide data for annual review of trip rates and transport charges
- 4) Produce financial reports for the NC and for each AGM, to be certified annually by the National Treasurer
- 5) Propose to each AGM the trip rates for the forthcoming year
- 6) Transfer funds to the main bank account when the National Trips bank account exceeds £2000.

Motion accepted unanimously.

**Motion No 3 Red Rope charge banding rules
(London Region)**

This AGM agrees the following changes to the Red Rope banding rules, so that the Membership Form will read:

"Membership charge

All Red Rope charges are scaled according to income.

Your 'income band' is based on your relevant income as follows:-

1. Work out your total income from all sources, including interest on savings, all benefits including child benefit and tax credit, and rent from lodgers or sub-tenants.

2. Include housing benefit up to £75 per week (£325 a month).
3. Deduct tax and National Insurance contributions **only** (not occupational pension contributions, SAYE, mortgage repayments etc.)
4. If you have dependents, e.g. children, one parent/carer per family may deduct a further £20 per week (£87 per month) from their income.
5. If your income varies from month to month, total the relevant income for the past three months and divide by thirteen (for weekly figure) or three (for monthly income).
6. Then find your band and your charge for a year's membership.”

Notes

London Red Rope believes there is a lot of confusion over the calculation of members' income bands. This motion makes it clear that child benefit is included in income. It also proposes that housing benefit should be included up to a certain limit. (Note that under the current rules the full value of housing benefit and council tax benefit is taken into account as 'disposable income'. As a result some members find themselves placed in unreasonably high bands.)

There was discussion over concern that point 4 of the London motion did not make enough allowance for the cost of bringing up children.

The motion further proposes that the term 'disposable income' should be replaced by 'relevant income', thus avoiding disagreement over whether deductions like mortgage repayments should be included. It also proposes a procedure by which members' incomes which vary from month to month should be assessed.

THE MOTION WAS CARRIED: 40 votes in favour, 1 against

The meeting closed at 6.30.pm.

RED ROPE AGM OCTOBER 2010 LOCKERBROOK
OFFICERS REPORTS
Where not reported in full above

National Secretary's Report

Overview

Principle tasks for the year have been, as usual, facilitator for the National Committee, and this has include organising the three National Meetings, updating the Regions and NC Contact Sheet, and keeper of the Constitution.

To Summarise

Activities

Despite some concern over membership numbers, Red Rope continues to deliver walking and climbing and camping activities at both local and national level

National Committee and NC Meetings.

There have been three NC and regional representative meetings since the last (September 2010) AGM; these were

November 2010 (Birmingham), 12 attended

February 2011 (Leicester), 10 attended

June 2011 (Sheffield), 12 attended

All committee posts have been full over this year. One committee member is however proposing to stand down at this AGM, - Publicity - and that post is therefore vacant. Nominations for the post has been received – election of officers will be dealt with later on in the meeting.

Major tasks of the NC Committee over the year

(not an exhaustive list by any means)

The Hut – An Agreement has been signed with the LMC for hut sharing with them, and progress is being made to the construction of the Beddgellert hut.

The Hut subcommittee has put in place a booking system for the LMC huts that we can now use (some have already done so). This has involved some reorganisation of the sub committee.

MIS - MIS now on the Web

Website – a website subcommittee has worked to generate proposals to reformat the website , still debating this

National Trips - continue to be well organised and fully booked , very popular

Publicity - A publicity sheet has been produced by the Publicity Officer (Janet), and it is hoped this will be a contribution to attracting new members

Regional Groups

Most regional groups remain busy and continue to deliver a varied day and weekend activity programme. West of Scotland and West Yorkshire Group, despite having RR members (allbeit small in numbers) , have ceased local activities and are temporarily without any local committee. Attempts will be made to rectify this.

Tasks for the future

Reformat the Constitution – draft already prepared, for the NC review

Generate new members, arrest decline in membership, there is a membership development sub committee

Thanks to Barbara Segal et al for organising the AGM and Gill Cox for catering.

Adrian Jones
30th September 2011