

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
RED ROPE SOCIALIST WALKING AND CLIMBING CLUB

Sunday 28th September 2014
Brecon Bunkhouse, Cwmfforest Farm, Brecon LD3 0EU

PRESENT: 24 members

Don Kinnibrugh, Dave Doody, Chris Drinkwater, Sherry Macliver, Dave Symmonds, Barbara Segal, Steve Wright, Olya Bowers, Gill Cox, Adrian Jones, Andy Bateman, Julian Noble, John Marsden, Ann Silber, Humphrey Southall, Steve Bonham, Grace Ogiliva, Dermot McKibbin, Simon Skeritt, Damion Oconnor, Nigel Green, Tony Benson, Andrew Wonley, Steve Bonham.

APOLOGIES:

Kate Ashbrook, John Dickie, Becky Bates, Janet Saunders, Adrian O'Connor, Paul and Phillipa Webster, Mark Wallis, Colin Knowles.

1. Humphrey Southall chair. Confirmed that the meeting was not quorate.
2. Adrian Jones – minute taker
3. Running order of the meeting was accepted.
4. Apologies were received and accepted

1 MINUTES OF THE 2013 AGM

Circulated extensively and posted on Web Site. Accepted unanimously.

2 AGM 2013 MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising

3. OFFICERS REPORTS:

a Membership. Steve Wright

Currently 284 members; a steady decline in membership over the long term appears to be happening; there were 377 members 10 years ago and it is a long term trend. Something needs to be done to stop this decline.

Routine tasks have been notification of new joiners to the regional contacts; monthly listing of all existing and lapsed members to regional contact; monthly update to Treasurer for BMC and MCoS returns; update of membership database to IT and MIS.

b. Administration Treasurer. Sherry

Total income for 2013-14 was £7553, total expenditure £6590. The shape of the accounts is very different this year: Paper MIS has nearly disappeared, saving £440 and the accommodation for last year's AGM was significantly less expensive than previous venues so the weekend resulted in a big surplus. Similar for this year. This year's AGM venue is of the same sort of cost but fewer members have booked.

Membership income looks low compared to last year and is reflected in lower affiliation fees, suggesting fewer members rather than lower-banded members. However the totals for the last 5 years have seemed to alternate between high and low £6220, £7897, £7206, £7876, £6673 with a mean of £7174.

Website hosting is currently £420pa for the Drupal hosting. Previously we were paying £72pa for hosting and £12 for the domain name. We have now decided to pay monthly for the time being while the future of the website development is under discussion. There was also a payment for the development work that has been done which properly comes out of the £1,000 grant we have agreed from our savings, although it appears in the current account for accounting purposes.

We are spending more on publicity and on training - welcome developments, but also more on NC meetings. The Sheffield meeting February 2014 was especially expensive on travel (£323).

BMC grant 2012-13 was £350 for website and newsletters. It was spent in 2013-14. This year's - 2013-14,

to be spent in 2014-5, is a total of £860 - £160 for group shelters (bought and to be distributed at AGM), £200 for training and £500 for website and newsletters. BMC affiliation is currently £11.75 per adult going up in January to £13.25. MCoS affiliation is £14.25 per adult, staying the same next year.

The regions are running self-sufficiently, neither claiming subsidies nor making donations to National funds. NC is considering making a small per person annual grant to each region.

The meeting accepted the accounts.

c. National Trips Secretary. Rebecca Bates

All trips this year have been full with most bookings made early. Next year there will be trips to Mill Cottage in Feb, Balgowan at Easter, Arran in May, Alex Mac in June, Clapham or Rosedale Abbey in August Bank Holiday (organiser needed), and to the new Welsh hut in Beddgelert in September.

d. National Trips Treasurer. John Dickie

All trips in 2014 made small surpluses except Elphin in June which was low-banded. The CIC February trip was abandoned due to bad weather and will not run again as the participants felt they have had too many years of bad weather. The bank balance is currently £2430.69 but we have a number of huts to pay for next year so the 'real' balance is somewhat lower.

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.

Would prefer to stand down in the near future and the new web site switch over would be an appropriate time to do so. Interest for this post is sought.

f. Ramblers and Campaigns. Don Kinnibrugh

Ramblers AGM Liverpool

Adrian, Dave Symonds and Don attended this, the fifth year that Red Rope has recently taken part. As usual, we had a stall providing information about Red Rope (leaflets, past bulletins etc), which attracted a fair amount of interest so our attendance was successful.

Campaigns

There have been few campaigns by the Ramblers recently at national level at which RR could participate so there has been little activity with campaigns for RR to be involved with.

However at local level, more involvement is possible, eg against Local Council cuts to rights of way budgets; help identifying existing rights of way that are not yet marked up on the Definitive Rights of Way map; and the Ramblers 'Pathwatch' project, aiming to walk and report on, every one of Britain's paths. The local RA could be contact for participation in these.

g. BMC. Chris Drinkwater

Nothing as such to report to the AGM. Has forwarded messages, communications, updates etc from the BMC to the NC throughout the year.

h. Training. Dermot

There has been a lot of activity on training since the last annual gathering:

Information has been circulated about BMC training courses for BMC affiliated clubs. (see www.thebmc.co.uk/club-training-courses-2014).

Articles presented for the bulletin on navigation and mountain training to raise the profile of training within the club.

Organized a week-end navigation course for 10 club members in Nant Peris in June 2014. The trainer came from Lupine Outdoor Adventure, a worker's Co-operative. The last bulletin contained an article on this week-end. There was a BMC grant to help defray the cost of the course.

A day's navigation training for London club members will take place in Richmond Park in October 2014. Participants will pay 50% of their rate for the cost of the course with the London Committee meeting the balance.

Has circulated information about the New Leaders Fund at Plas y Brenin (see www.pyb.co.uk/future-leaders-fund.phpghtml). This fund will subsidize club members who wish to undertake an outdoor qualification such as the Summer Mountain Leadership or the Single Pitch Climbing awards. (For more details of outdoor awards see www.mountain-training.org). The subsidy can range from 25% to 75% of the cost of the course depending on where you live. Applicants have to be given a reference to obtain an award. Red Rope should be able to give references to club members who wish to do one of these awards.

The national committee has agreed to increase the training budget to £1000 for the period up to 30 June 2015. A course in May 2015 for 8 club members has been organized to attend the new Mountain Skills course. A refresher course for those club members who are either thinking of doing an outdoor qualification or who are of a comparable standard will take place in March 2015 (see October MIS). All training recipients have to give a written undertaking to cascade this training experience within the club.

The national committee agreed in June to pay for the full cost of any club member who wishes to register to do an outdoor qualification. See the subsidized training policy document on the club website in the resources section for more details. This is subject to money being available.

The club has also agreed to subsidize club members who wish to attend courses run by either the BMC or the MCOS. The formula will be 50% for Bands A&B, 40% for bands C and D, 30% for Band E, 20% for Bands F and G, and 10% for band H. There will be a limit of £50. Further details are given in the subsidized training policy.

This new policy will be reviewed next year and is subject to money being available. It would be helpful if all members could read the new policy and give the national committee feedback for its meeting on 22 November. Dermot especially interested to hear from climbers about their climbing needs.

There was insufficient demand for a Red Rope First Aid Training course this year so this was not run.

i. MIS. Mark Wallis

MIS has been emailed out as pdf to all registered members every month. Has sent paper copies to those members not registered for email (about 25 of them) in April, June, and October; also mailed out the Bulletin and AGM papers in August. MIS expenses are much reduced thanks to efforts by the NC to promote electronic delivery (Excluding printing costs, 27 person A5 MIS mailout costs about £15. Full membership A4 mailout costs about £250. A full A5 mailout would cost about £175).

Thanks to Steve Wright's labours to keep the membership database in order as this is essential for mailing.

The meeting forwarded its thanks to Mark for drafting the MIS every month.

j. Bulletin. David Symonds

Requested that material continue to be sent through for the Bulletin. The them for the next Bulletin may be training so anything of interest please forward; also a review of Bob steel's pub guide books. A summary of each NC committee meeting minutes will also continue to be put into the Bulletin.

k. Publicity Officer - Janet Saunders

Handy Business Cards

New this year are the National Red Rope 'business cards' which also have all the regional contact emails on the back. A supply has been sent to each regional organiser. Use these to give to friends, and keep a few in your wallet, bag, or rucksack so you can tell your friends (or anyone you meet who's interested) about Red Rope and give them a reminder. They were cheap to produce so please don't hesitate to ask for more.

Leaflets, Posters and banners

We have a stack of A5 publicity flyers that can be used as mini-posters, given to friends, left in outdoor cafes, and on notice-boards. The flyers have all the region contact details on the back. Your regional contact has been sent some, and you can get more from Steve Wright (Membership).

Bristol group had a stall at a summer community event to help recruit members, and supplied them with a table-front huge version of the Red Rope car sticker. A presence at these kind of events is a good way to publicise the club and there are quite a few club banners and posters around that could be used. Further materials could be developed.

There's also a Red Rope Facebook 'community' site *Red Rope Walking and Climbing Club* where you can post pictures, news and views, these show up on your timeline and attract attention from all your other friends, so it's a good way to spread Red Rope awareness – please take a look, 'Like' it, and follow it. Its got 160 likes and is admirably looked after by Dave Doody.

We can do some things with leaflets and online, but the key person in recruitment is really – YOU, the member, so tell your friends, ask them out on a walk and get the word out.

I. The Hut

The Hut is 99% complete & virtually ready for use. However there are safety, fire, electrical and building regs to be signed off before it can be occupied. Because of this, it's not possible to have valid insurance, so unfortunately RR could not hire the hut for the planned Leicester Region trip 12-14th September.

All the building services - water, electricity and waste-disposal are now installed and working. The disabled toilet and shower-room are now finished. Two of the three bedrooms are ready: the upstairs bunk-room, with 10 beds; and one of the downstairs bedrooms (4 beds). The third room (to sleep 5) is currently still in use as a tool store-room. Externally: paths are being finished. A car park has been created. The stone cladding work is being finished, by a local craftsman building firm.

Pete Kos will be attending the opening ceremony, 4th October, as a representative of RR.

Ideas requested for a suitable RR gift to the Hut (we have £300 left in the 'Hut Fund' to spend on an item/s.) One idea is a framed, laminated O.S. Map of the valley (1:25,000) which can be 'centred' upon the hut. This apparently available from the Ordnance Survey. LMC have confirmed there would be space for it on an inner wall in the main room.

A meeting is planned with the LMC to discuss changes in bed night fees which they have recently increased

m. Gear Co-ordinator.

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

n Fee Banding Review

The sub-committee looking at fee banding has now reached some conclusions was put to the meeting (with a paper for circulation to attendees in advance) and then publicising for general discussion amongst members. Haven't been able to achieve this within the timescale required for formal motions so assuming that no fee or banding changes can be implemented before AGM 2015. Sherry has advised that there are sufficient funds for the club to bear the cost of the additional BMC charge (£1.50 per person per year) for 2014-15. Before submitting a formal motion next year to reduce the number of bands will reconsider the total fee income required before setting the fees for each band.

o. Web Development Team. Janet Saunders / Colin Knowles written report

The development of a new Red Rope website was partly completed this year, but the fledgling site that was produced, based on the Drupal system, proved to be so full of problems that the development committee considered these were too expensive to rectify. The current plan is to develop a Wordpress site, and this is proceeding, the effort is being led by Janet with help from Bronwen, (Coventry Group), who has developed a simple site already for West Midlands Group. The National Site is a little more complex, but should be achievable. WordPress is something in which some RR members already have some knowledge, and is a reasonably easy content editing system to use. It is also a standard used by many commercial developers, so if we need to pay for help it should be easy and relatively cheap to find. Hoping to have something ready by Christmas 2014. It will also be cheaper to host than the Drupal version.

Total budget was £1850, made up of £1000 from RR and £850 grant from the BMC. £500 spent on the Drupel work, leaving £1350.

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 agreed to remain in post for the year 2014-15, and were re-elected by the meeting.

Steve Wright (Membership), Don Kinnibrugh and Sherry Macliver (National Treasurer) are considering leaving post next year ie at the AGM 2015; subject to replacements coming forward. Dave Doody to leave NC once new web site is functional, which may now be within the year. So potentially up to four committee posts to fill at AGM 2015. Interest to fill these posts is requested.

3. MOTIONS TO THE 2014 AGM

The meeting was not quorate so no voting on the motions was possible. But they were discussed.

Motion No 1: Allowance for Parental Responsibilities and Children in Banding Calculations (From Bristol Group)

The Bristol Group notes that:

'The cost of raising a child have risen by 62% since 2003 and it is now estimated to cost £227,266 to raise a child to adulthood. [figures from the Centre of Economic and Business Research]. Parents are estimated to spend 28% of their income on their children, the biggest rise in costs being in supporting young people through further education. Single parents are estimated to spend 52% of their income on their children. Red Rope Banding costs do not take sufficient account of the costs of raising a child including the costs of supporting young people through further education.

And therefore propose:

A considerable increase in the allowance made for parental responsibilities and children in the Red Rope banding calculations.

Discussion

Ann Silber explained the Motion to the meeting with some background on child care costs, and a discussion followed. It is a complex issue. Whether it should also apply to carers was also discussed. It was agreed that the Fees Banding Committee would consider the matter in more detail and consider whether incorporation was viable or not.

Motion No 2 : Refund of trip charges to members who cancel their bookings.

(Proposed by West Midlands Group).

The West Midlands Group notes that:

When a region organises a trip they have to commit funds for accommodation which are often not refundable. Cancellations can therefore lead to serious financial consequences for the region as it may be difficult to find a replacement and this becomes more difficult with shorter notice.

The current system encourages people to book early in order to qualify for the 10% early booking discount. It seems unreasonable that nothing is then forfeited if a person drops out more than 4 weeks before the start of the trip.

There may be circumstances such as ill health or losing a job where it would be reasonable to offer a more generous refund but this can be at the discretion of local club officers in consultation with the trip organiser.

And therefore propose:

Refund will be 100% if a cancellation is at 12 weeks or more before the start of the trip, 50% if less than 12 weeks but 4 weeks or more before the start of the trip. No refund will be given if the cancellation is less than 4 weeks before the start of the trip.

However in special circumstances refunds larger than this may be given at the discretion of local club officers.

Discussion

The basis motion was agreed to in discussion by all present. There appears to be no evidence that regions are losing money under the current cancellation system, but it was agreed (17 in favour, 5 against, one abstain) that discretion to refund full or in part should be used by regional treasurers (and NC for national trips) in situations of exceptional hardship for those cancelling less than 12 weeks out.

The matter will go to the NC to decide if this is to be taken forward, and brought to next year's AGM.

Discussion Items

Fee Banding

The Fee Banding Committee presented to the meeting the basis and outline charges for their 5 band (membership fee and bed night) system; to replace the current 8 band system. It will be 4 basic plus one 'high' band. The meeting agreed (5 against, remainder in favour) the basis of their proposals and that work should continue to bring this to the 2015 AGM for a vote.

AOB

Barbara and Steve are rearranging the Constitution and Policy. Should be complete by AGM 2015 and will be brought to that meeting for approval voting.

The AGM closed at 12.30.pm.