

Minutes of Meeting

Title	Red Rope National Committee Meeting
Date	Saturday 26 June 2010
Time	pm
Venue	Nabs End YHA Camping Barn, Peak District
Present: Sherry McIver (Admin Treasurer), Dave Doody (IT Officer), John Dickie (Trip Treasurer), Adrian Jones (Secretary), Gill Platt (Manchester), Barbara Segal (Bristol/SW), Dave Symonds (Bulletin, Liverpool), Pam Case, Jonathan Bridge, Don Kinnibrugh	

Item No	Minutes	Action
1	Welcome, Introductions and appoint minutes taker and chair Chair – John Dickie Minutes - Adrian Jones	
2	Apologies for Absence Pat Durrant (Membership Secretary), Dave Jeffries (Sheffield), Colin Knowles (Hut Officer), Steve Wright (Training), Janet Saunders (Publicity), Chris Drinkwater (BMC).	
3	Minutes of NC meeting Manchester 27 February 2010 To amend figures in National Treasurer (admin)'s report, some mistakes in minutes	Adrian J
4	Matters Arising from previous minutes (unless on this Agenda)	
5	Reports from officers: National Secretary Adrian J See comments below under AGM National Treasurer (admin) Sherry Mc Expenditure has exceeded income by £1100 so far this year. Balance in current account is approx £10,000; £2550 in the Action fund. Major expenditures have been the NC meetings (£1000); Printing of the Bulletin, MIS etc (£1146) and affiliations (£3715). The hut fund in the bank stands at £6095 (including recent donations of £600 before the recent pledge letter). The letter had, thus far, produced 13 responses resulting in cheques for £1330 and a pledge of £50. The uncertain purpose of the Action Fund was questioned and discussed. Agenda item for next NC meeting "Future of the Action Fund" The NC meetings are costly, mainly travel and	Adrian J

	<p>accommodation for the weekend away. It was proposed all meetings in future be single day events, and a proposal for 2No meetings, not 3No. Some disagreement over the latter. Agenda item for next NC meeting</p>	Adrian J
	<p>National Trips treasurer John Dickie £2500 in account at present. All trips had been financially sound, except £400 loss for Crianlarich (which used old rates), was a public transport trip and complex to administer.</p>	
	<p>National trips secretary Becky Bates All 2010 trips have been well supported and successful. No problems with members paying full nightly charge on booking although there is less money available at treasuring time to pay expenses so may start asking for cash where possible. Plans have been finalised for next year and all trips have organisers - 4 to Scotland and a navigation weekend, details in MIS. Will add another family trip next summer. Interest was shown recently in a week long trip to Scotland offering lower level walks as all trips next year have a high level focus. Becky happy to book another trip if an organiser comes forward but need to emphasise that trips are booked in response to interest and wouldn't be comfortable booking trips if unsure of a committed organiser. Cheques for the full nightly charge to be post dated for 6 months before the trip date. This is to ensure cheques do not pass their expiry date, to make it easier for the organisers to send all cheques onto john together and also for john to pay in all cheques together. This could be 3 months before as members would still qualify for EBD and as because this is when cheap trains become available it is also when organisers can start to finalise arrangements. Last year AGM voted to pay full nightly charge on booking.(to be formalised at AGM) A thorough analysis of the may trips' public transport arrangements is planned in the Autumn. Updating the trip organisers pack and plan to add an appendix on winter safety with gear list. (Becky to bring a draft to next NC meeting).</p>	Adrian J Becky Bates
	<p>Membership secretary Pat Durrant Current membership numbers are a worry: Total membership stands at 261(same time last year it was 357) so has apparently dropped alarmingly. all local contacts got their membership list last month so are reasonably up to date. Breakdown of membership region by region to be requested of Pat for previous 2 years. To be available by the AGM if possible. Pat to be offered support in running the data base .</p>	Pat Durrant Dave Jefferies
	<p>Bulletin editor Dave S August (pre AGM) Bulletin nearly complete, it includes an AGM Promotional section and contributions from members. Will require AGM Motions by early August from the AGM Motions Committee . Winter Bulletin started. Old Bulletins on the Website to be removed, latest to be added, Dave Doody to action .</p>	AGM Comm Dave D

	<p>Dave proposes to stand down after production of the August 2011 Bulletin, a replacement will need to be sought.</p>	
	<p>MIS editor Mark Wallis AGM mail out date should be no later than 28/8/2010 (this allows 1 week for members to receive the papers). Mark was planning a paper MIS mailout at the end of August so this fits in well - we can mail both at the same time, plus a bulletin which should be ready at the same time. This will make most efficient use of postage. The only problem is that Mark is on holiday the last week of August and needs a clear week to get the printing done. So to meet this deadline needs electronic copies of all the paperwork by 7th August.</p> <p>It was agreed that Mark would be supplied with the AGM Motions by this date.</p>	<p>AGM Comm</p>
	<p>IT Officer David D BMC Liability Insurance schedule for 2010 added to Website. Various updates and maintenance. Website review group ongoing (see below) It was agreed by NC - Old Bulletins on the Website to be removed, more recent to be added.</p>	
	<p>Training officer Steve Wright A training weekend on navigation, aimed at improvers was held on April 24/25th In the Lake District. This was organised for us by Malcolm Donne, with the training led by Andy Godfrey, a professional mountain skills trainer and a new member of Red Rope. This was a well conceived and presented course and that all attendees were pleased with the outcomes - Attendee Evaluations were very favourable Andy proved the training for free, so Steve believes the cost of hiring the hut for the event was covered by the trip charges paid by the course members. This can be confirmed or otherwise by the National Trips Secretary.</p> <p>Suggestions for future events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The peak district would be a better location next time (taken note of for November trip) b) Organise single-day training sessions in the regions. These might attract members who walk regularly, but are unlikely to come on weekend trips, especially if they involve a lot of travelling Action: Steve will email regions to find out how much interest there is in this <p>A further navigation training weekend is in the process of being organised by Michael Hargarden and Jeremy Abraham in conjunction with the National Trips Secretary. This will take place on November 12/13th at Mandale House, Bakewell, Derbyshire. This course will be aimed at navigational beginners/novices but will also be suitable for those who wish to refresh their existing skills. Course members will pay standard national trip charges.</p>	<p>Steve Wright</p>

	<p>response, received very recently, was favourable.</p> <p>2. Request to Chris Drinkwater to get the V4 draft vetted by a legal expert; Chris has actioned this, (see BMC Officer report).</p> <p>3. The Appeal letter was sent out in May to 298 members. the response so far has been good. We have not yet met our target, so some further pushing is required, but it is certainly achievable from here. (The letter did not specify a deadline, Colin emailed the National list on 18th June and NC decided that email should be forwarded to regional reps to circulate amongst their members.)</p> <p>Colin's suggestions for further actions</p> <p>a) The National Committee could formally ask all the regions to hold a Fund-raising event.</p> <p>b) Get in touch with members who have lapsed over the last five years (could prove to be more generous than existing members).</p> <p>c) More regular connection with the LMC, and encourage RR volunteers join LMC working parties.</p> <p>d) Ask the AGM to endorse V4 (or V5 if LMC make any changes).</p> <p>e) Plan the post-AGM action when we meet the LMC at the BMC offices to sign the final agreement. How are we going to make the best of this publicity opportunity?</p> <p>The hut was discussed by the NC under item 6 below</p>	AGM Comm
	<p>Gear Co-ordinator Adrian O'C No report. The NC requested Adrian O'C produce a gear list for the website; Adrian O'C to action to Dave Doody</p>	Adrian O'C/Dave D
	<p>Archivist Andy B. No report No actions</p>	
	<p>Development and Recruitment sub-group In view of falling numbers (see membership report above), it was proposed a sub committee be created to action membership creation - to comprise Barbara plus volunteers to be requested at the AGM; Don Kinnibrough volunteered to assist. (Dermot not now able to assist in the short term.) Ideas include General Publicity – articles for magazines, contact with like minded organisations, efforts to retain non-renewing members. Similar regional initiatives required. To discuss at AGM.</p>	Don/ Barbara AGM Comm
6	<p>Hut Update, Pledges, Agreement V4 Since Colins report, LMC have emailed back favourably on the draft V4 Agreement. The NC discussed Colin's report and recommendations</p> <p>a) The NC supports or overall neutral on V4 of the Agreement and propose it be put to the membership (at AGM) for acceptance.</p> <p>a) b) The NC discussed, and rejected, the BMC suggestion of each party to the agreement (BMC/RR) taking</p>	AGM Comm

	<p>legal advice (too costly); and to proceed on trust. NC suggest reword or remove clause ‘‘this is a non legally binding Agreement’’.</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c) c) A RR internal issue, the NC consider ‘flexible bed nights’ issue to be an internal issue for resolution, in whatever manner, only after an external agreement is finalised.</p> <p>d)</p> <p>d). It was thought regional fund raising events unlikely to be successful or generate sufficient interest, most regions are too small to drive this. No action</p> <p>e)NC neutral on the £10,000 target.</p>	Colin, sub committee
7	<p>Funding award from BMC</p> <p>Janet applied and was successful in gaining £310 grant from the BMC for use in website work. They will want feedback on its use and receipts. Cheque handed over to Sherry; feedback form to Mike Hargarden (website group)for action.</p>	Mike Hargarden
8	<p>BMC Declaration of Membership debate</p> <p>The BMC currently recommends affiliated clubs to declare all of their members to the BMC. Clubs pay an annual subscription rate (currently £11.75 / per member) based on the number of members they list.</p> <p>The BMC Executive Council suggested that it might be appropriate to change its Memorandum and Articles so that clubs were allowed to declare only the members that they wanted to declare to allow some clubs to leave undeclared some of their inactive members on the basis that club membership of the BMC would be of no value to them.</p> <p>RR and other clubs identified a number of concerns over this suggestion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the lack of third party insurance, any member causing an accident in a hut or elsewhere would have no cover for a claim against him. • some members might wish to be undeclared because of a slight saving in subscription. If this happened, it would add considerable complication to the collection of annual subscriptions. • BMC would have to insist that any undeclared member handed back his hut key and took no part in club activities. <p>On this basis the idea was dropped by the BMC.</p>	none
9	<p>Ramblers National Conference, April 11/12 (RR representation)</p> <p>Don Kinnibrugh presented his report on attendance (attached). He voted on behalf of RR at the meeting and distributed some RR membership forms. It was agreed that attendance at the Ramblers AGM would continue annually - the cost was £155 which was considered reasonable.</p> <p>It was suggested by NC that Don stand at the RR AGM as the Ramblers Campaigns officer, which he agreed too.</p> <p>The NC agreed a Ramblers Campaigns officer action would be to encourage Regional Reps to be more active with</p>	Ramblers Campaigns officer

	Ramblers local groups.	
10	<p>RR Web-site review</p> <p>Mike submitted a draft report on the web site review prior to the NC meeting, subsequently withdrawn – a revision is expected later.</p> <p>The NC took the view that the current website is good, and does not need a substantial alteration. The proposed website which the review team have drafted is too complex, that the team should concentrate on design and layout, not content. It was suggested that the number of tabs be limited to say 10 or 12 to avoid complexity, and they continue to evaluate a members area.</p>	<p>Mike Hargaden</p> <p>Website Committee</p>
11	<p>AGM - Organisation of business, Motions, Agenda Committee</p> <p>AGM Motions and Agenda committee proposed – Adrian, John Dickie, and to invite Steve Wright to assist.</p> <p>Adrian has mailed all Regional reps requesting AGM Motions arising from their local AGM's (also feedback form requesting regional officers contact details, and accounts to Sherry)</p> <p>AGM motions to be received by end of July for committee review. To be forwarded to Mark Wallis/dave Symonds for printing /circulation.</p>	<p>AGM Comm</p>
12	<p>AGM October 2010 – logistics Gill Platt, Lockerbrook hall booked, catering and entertainment organised. Gill has prepared the booking form, these will be inserted onto the website and the Bulletin</p>	<p>Gill, Dave D, Dave Symonds</p>
13	<p>Any other business.</p> <p>None</p>	
	<p>Next Meeting:</p> <p>Type: AGM</p> <p>Date: Friday 1 and Saturday 2 October 2010 (two nights)</p> <p>Organiser: Gill Platt</p> <p>Location : Ladybower</p> <p>And see list to follow for future NC meetings</p>	

What's up with the Ramblers?

Britain's major campaigning organisation on behalf of walkers, the rights of way network and access to the countryside is the Ramblers Association (recently rebranded as simply 'The Ramblers', with a new logo). It has 124,000 members in hundreds of local groups, which in turn are grouped into about fifty Areas covering England, Wales and Scotland. It is a registered charity with a Head Office in London and a staff of 67.

Its AGM, called 'General Council', and attended by delegates from all the Areas, plus a handful from affiliated organisations like the Long Distance Walkers Association and Red Rope, takes place each spring. On past experience it is generally a consensual and businesslike gathering of enthusiastic activists (albeit, like most walking organisations, predominantly middle-class, middle-aged and white).

At this year's General Council, held at Royal Holloway College in Surrey, however, there were strong undercurrents of dissent. A new group calling themselves 'Concerned Ramblers' had produced their own manifesto critical of the organisation's Board of Trustees and senior management.

A focus of delegates' concern was the major financial crisis which hit the Ramblers in spring last year, blamed by the CEO and Trustees on a decline in income due to the recession, which led to the 'May Massacre' - redundancy for 17 out of 84 staff. This cost a quarter of a million pounds and represented a big loss in skill and experience to the organisation. It also led to closure of the Ramblers' offices in Scotland and Wales. Yet the 2009 AGM a few weeks before had been told nothing of this impending catastrophe, leading to charges of cover-up and lack of accountability on the part of the recently appointed CEO Tom Franklin and the Trustees.

The installation of a new membership database on the recommendation of consultants had also proved an 'unqualified disaster' for both the central organisation and local membership secretaries, and was a further source of conflict and discontent. Membership had fallen by 6% from its peak of 140,000.

Behind these problems, according to the dissidents, lie issues of governance - including the question of what the Ramblers are for. Though the RA first acquired charitable status in the 1960s, one complaint is that recent organisational changes to meet the requirements of the Charity Commissioners have made the management and Trustees less accountable to General Council (who represent the members, who are after all the former's employers).

Certainly, since I last attended a Ramblers' AGM with Red Rope ten years ago, the Executive Committee has become a 'Board of Trustees'; the constitution is now called a 'Memorandum and Articles of Association'; and the membership (in an organisation where much of the key work is done locally at grass roots level) are referred to somewhat disparagingly as 'the volunteers' (presumably to distinguish them from the paid staff at Head Office).

One motion (which was passed) called into question the advantages of charitable status. This does carry big tax advantages, and there are also opportunities to obtain government funding for 'healthy walking' programmes in urban areas and the like. But being a registered charity, the critics say, must not be allowed to compromise the Ramblers' independence, or deflect them from their core task of protecting rights of way and access to the countryside. Yet this, say the critics, is just what has been happening to the Ramblers.

Lack of priority for rights of way work, they say, has led to it being downgraded. For example the legal panel which used to sift cases for possible prosecution has gone. The RA's rights

of way staff are now called 'walking environment' workers. Their budget is only 10.6 % of the Association's total expenditure, less than that for 'Marketing and Communications'.

Other motions passed reflected some of these concerns. One called upon the Board of Trustees to increase the resources available for legal action; another to seek an independent review of the Ramblers' interpretation of the Charity Commissioners' requirements. Another called for the allocation of more expert staff and financial resources to rights of way and access work. (A 'no confidence' motion deploring the the standard of financial management and general running of the RA in the last two years, however, was lost - by one vote!)

"Concerned Ramblers," says their manifesto, "want the association to return to the not so distant days when ... our officers and trustees were frequently interviewed on the *Today* programme and were no strangers to TV studios ... One reason, perhaps the main reason, for our declining membership is that potential members do not experience the Ramblers in print, on film or on the air as often as they used to."

If today's Ramblers have a lower public profile, in short, this arguably just reflects the leadership's loss of direction.

How can Red Rope members help those who want a renewed focus on campaigning for countryside access and rights of way? This is certainly a debate that is going on within the Ramblers, rather than one taking place 'out in the open'. But Red Ropers can join their local RA group, so as to be aware of local issues; we can also take part in 'access action days' (such as took place in June over access restrictions in the South Downs).

We can also make sure that the club is represented at the Ramblers' General Council where Red Rope has a vote. There is plenty of interest in, and goodwill towards Red Rope among regulars there. Some still remember times past when Red Rope used to play an active role. (One person reminded me of a motion a Red Rope delegation once successfully proposed calling

for creches at future AGMs - to some amusement, since most attenders were long past parenting age!)

A more active involvement in the Ramblers could benefit both them and us.