

AGM AGENDA

- 1 Chairman's welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Approval of the minutes of the last A.G.M
- 4 Matters arising from those minutes not otherwise on the agenda
- 5 Presentation of annual reports
 - A) Chairman's report and naming of best kept path
 - b) Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts
 - c) Secretary's report
 - D) Footpaths Officer's report
 - e) Walking Environment Officer's report
 - f) Membership Secretary's report
 - g) Editors report
 - h) Social Media Co-ordinator's report
 - I) Publicity Officer's report
 - j) Group reports
- 6 Adoption of accounts and acceptance of officers' and groups' reports
- 7 GUEST SPEAKER - **Julie Attard, Project Officer Charnwood Forest**
- 8 President's address and response

15 MINUTE BREAK

- 9 Motions/constitution changes previously notified (see page iv)
- 10 Affirmation of President and Vice Presidents (maximum four).
- 11 The President takes the Chair for the election of a Chairman
- 12 Chairman takes chair for elections of other officers
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Footpath Officer
 - Publicity Officer
 - Walking Environment Officer
 - Membership Secretary
 - Editor
 - Social Media Coordinator
- 13 New Chairman's remarks if a new Chairman
- 14 Elections of further members to serve on Area Executive Committee
 - a) Up to two representatives of Affiliated Organisations
 - b) Up to two 'elected' members from the floor
- 15 Confirmation of appointment of an Auditor / Independent Financial Examiner
- 16 Any proposed motions for General Council (see page iv)
- 17 Nomination of two representatives to General Council
- 18 Central Office Representative Richard May
- 19 Area Events (dates, hosts and formats)
 - a) Area walk – Saturday, late summer - Hinckley Group
 - b) Area Quiz – Friday night Oct / Nov - Melton Group
 - c) Next AGM - Last Saturday in January 2020 - Coalville Group

MEETING CLOSE

Open Forum if time permits

Followed by short walk for those wishing to participate and an informal meeting of the new area committee

Minutes of the 29th AGM

...of the Leicestershire & Rutland Area of the Ramblers Association, Saturday January 27th 2018 Park House, Glenfield

Tony Smith, the Chairman welcomed all present. There were 35 members in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from - John Howells, Mike Statham, Terry Bates, Tony W Smith and Donna Smith

The minutes of the 28th AGM - 28th January 2017 were approved. There were no matters arising from those minutes not otherwise on the agenda

The presentation of annual reports followed:

The **Chairman's** report had been published in advance but the retiring Chairman thanked all members for their support during his two years in office. He highlighted the success of the RA Roadshow we had hosted which had a record turn out. He also thought the RA Walking for Health seminar in Leicester had gone down well and although there was talk of the RA centrally organising some first aid training we had local arrangements in place which would be pursued. He was pleased he had been able to get round all the groups except Melton and had enjoyed his period in office. He closed by particularly thanking the President and senior officers for the help they had provided

He went on to name the winners of **best kept path** competition for last year, expanding on the paths in question. The winner was Rectory Farm near Eyebrook Reservoir and the runners up, to be given highly commended certificates, two farms near Gaddesby. He, the President and the Walking Environment Officer will arrange to make the presentations and do press releases. The Chairman then remarked that judging this had been a particular pleasure.

In the absence of the **Treasurer** there was nothing to add to his published report and the accounts for the year were screened. The report and accounts were accepted and approved by the meeting

The reports of the other officers had also been published in the newsletter but some updates were provided.

Martin James, the **Footpaths Officer** added to his advising further path diversions etc since the publication of the Write of Way. In response to questions he updated members on the two major Network Rail issues i.e. Barrow and Little Bowden.

Roy Denney, the **Walking Environment Officer** pointed out that of the work he does is largely in partnership with other organisations working to the same aims, often through the auspices of the Local Access Forum. In that body our Treasurer is their Chairman and he is the Vice Chairman so we are well placed to push the walkers cause.

Major issues this year have been working towards the now successful lottery bid for the Charnwood Forest which our guest speaker would expand on – Another major effort was on researching unrecorded and lost ways and that would be an agenda item later in the meeting. A lot of work is being done with HS2 to mitigate the effects of the new line. We have identified 42 problems to the footpath network and will be submitting detailed plans and suggestions next week to hopefully be followed up by meetings on each individual concern.

Ray Phipps, the **Membership Secretary** reiterated that membership was a major issue in line with national trends and groups commented on their own experiences. It was felt subscription was a major problem and that perhaps we need to market our campaigning work more to differentiate ourselves from other less expensive walking groups. It was suggested we could do more to enthuse very young children.

Roy Denney, the **Editor** just wished to publicly thank Jim Storer for managing the Area Web Site which receives many plaudits - As Editor he provides the content but all the technical stuff is done by Jim.

Jo Marshall, the **Social Media Coordinator**, put the site on screen and made a call for more material from groups and individual members particularly photographs.

All the **Group reports** had been published in advance but representatives highlighted some recent activities. Leicester group had organised a fund raising meal for the Air Ambulance that had raised £1780 and it was suggested this could be replicated Area wide. Lutterworth were in the midst of a major push for members and Hinckley had held a medieval evening in full period costume which was well received. Rutland were increasingly doing joint walks with Stamford. LRWG, Melton and Loughborough commented on problems of retaining and attracting members, a problem common to all groups although Loughborough had had a bit of an increase approaching Christmas.

Unfortunately Coalville informed members that the most notable recent activity was the death of a number of members.

The officers and groups **reports were then accepted** and adopted by the membership.

Roy Denney then gave a brief update on the '**lost ways**' project. The Access Forum has set up a databank of literally thousands of routes not legally protected but of immediate concern are those not in use, but which would be very useful, if we could find evidence that they were and therefore still are rights of way. We organised a volunteers evening and made a long presentation to 50 potential researchers and we have about 20 actively involved so far. We have prioritised the routes which would be of most benefit and are working through them. The claims with some evidence must go in within 7 years or we will lose the legal right to produce historic evidence.

The **guest speaker, Peter Tyldesley**, Director of Bradgate Park then gave an informative and entertaining update on the park and the wider Charnwood Forest. Bracken clearance in the park had effectively led to some re-winding as more unusual flora had appeared of its own accord. The park was making increasing use of volunteers doing work that would otherwise require well over 20% more full time staff, he went on to expand on the ambitions and challenges of making the lottery grant for the Forest work and improving access was a large part of this.

The **President** then responded to this presentation and thanked our guest before thanking the retiring Chairman and other activists for their endeavours.

New positions. After a short break the members affirmed Peter Williams as President and Mike Statham and Alan Loasby, as Vice-Presidents for another year. The President then took the Chair for the **election of officers**. Members had been nominated for various roles by the Area Executive Committee and these were approved en block.

Chairman - Martin James Secretary – Kim Valance Treasurer – John Howells

Footpath Officer - Martin James Walking Environment Officer – Roy Denney

Membership Secretary – Ray Phipps Editor – Roy Denney Social Media Coordinator - Jo Marshall

The members were asked if anybody wished to take on the vacant role as Publicity Officer but there was no volunteer.

The **new Chairman** then took the Chair and said he wanted to see mutual support between the groups especially helping the smaller groups, he wanted to see a major membership drive,

Elections then took place of **further members** to serve on Area Executive Committee with Andrew Thomas of Leicester CHA being adopted to represent affiliated organisations and Trevor Martin the ordinary members. A further representative of each could be co-opted during the year.

Nominations of **Group representatives** to the Area Executive Committee were to be advised.

Confirmation of Chris Tipper as our **Auditor / Independent Financial Examiner** followed.

There had been no motions for **constitution** changes

Martin James and Tony Smith were nominated as representatives to **General Council** and the meeting supported the funding of one observer and authorised one further if interest was shown and candidate was agreed by the AEC.

The **Central Office Representative**, Paul Rhodes then addressed the meeting.

He said the new National President was assisting greatly with videos and photographs and initiating much more communication via email. London was to have a major recruitment push. Roadshows this year would be concentrating on support for volunteers and the next East Midland event would be in Lincoln. They were to heavily promote a walking festival which will coincide with the National Forest Walking Festival giving promotional opportunities. They are also to consult on what people feel it means to be a Rambler and what they want out of the organisation. There is to be additional high level staffing at CO to support these drives.

Area Events were then agreed

a) Area walk – hosts Leicester, Sunday 2nd September

b) Area Quiz – hosts Hinckley Friday 2nd November

c) Next AGM - hosts Leicester Saturday January 26th 2019

Rosemary Stokes then, as an ordinary walking member, thanks all volunteers and officers for the work they do.

Meeting closed at 1.20

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT

Many Groups and Areas are finding it difficult to fill positions and the reasons vary wildly. Some times it is because there is an all powerful figure in a major position who has been there for ages and new people don't want to just be passengers on his or her ride. Many groups and areas have solved this by having rules which make senior officer stand down after a given period as our Area has. This does itself throw up problems though. One benefit of it is that people are not afraid they will get trapped in a job but the big downside is that when we cannot find a replacement the incumbent who would be perfectly happy to carry on is not allowed to do so.

There are pluses and minus for both positions and we are looking at a possible hybrid and will offer a constitution change to the next AGM.
The present rule reads

7. HONORARY OFFICERS

The Honorary Officers of the Area shall be the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary and such other officers as the members shall from time to time determine; to be elected at the AGM.

All the above Honorary Officers shall retire at the AGM following their election, but shall be eligible for re-election with the exception that new holders of the positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer shall not be entitled to hold the same office for more than three consecutive years; neither shall they be eligible for election to a different one of these offices until the expiry of one year from the date when they last held one of these offices.

The Area Executive Committee are proposing this should in future read:

All the above Honorary Officers shall retire at the AGM following their election, but shall be eligible for re-election with the exception that the holder of the position of Chairman shall not be entitled to hold that office for more than three consecutive full years.

MOTION TO GO TO GENERAL COUNCIL

Lutterworth Group have flagged up concerns I am sure we all share, about shrinking membership. At the same time walking is increasing as a pastime and they want more effort to get other walking groups to affiliate to the Ramblers. As your Walking Environment Officer I need to be able to approach as many 'walkers' as possible to help with various campaigns and if we had more affiliates that would help.

We are therefore offering a motion to go before General Council next year if our own members approve it at our AGM. We have to agree a form of words but also submit some supporting notes so the following will be discussed at our AGM:

Motion

This Council is concerned that the fee to affiliate to the Ramblers is putting off potential groups. Council thinks that having access to the wider walking public through these groups gives us a better scope to enlist campaign helpers and potential new members. Many potential affiliates do not want our insurance offer or a chance to shape our policy. They do want to support our campaigning on behalf of walkers and parish councils wish to thank us for help provided.

Council recommends that if the present package for affiliates is to be continued as it is then a role as a 'Supporter' should be introduced. All they would receive is one Walk magazine each year and any Area Newsletters.

Council is of the view that this would reverse the trend of declining numbers of Parish Councils supporting us and give Areas a bigger catchment for campaign volunteers and recommends that the Board of Trustees consider a subscription for such a 'Supporter', set at one half of that of a full member

Supporting Note

Our Area has seen a decline in local parishes which had affiliated to thank us for our efforts protecting local paths. We have also seen affiliates dropping away due to the cost when they want little from us. The British Mountaineering Council is one example where there is a restricted membership. Members of affiliated Clubs get just one edition of their magazine and that edition contains material of particular interest to affiliates.

Under our suggestion there is nothing stopping groups from being full affiliates but it gives us an avenue to talk to the wider walking community. Walking is a growing activity but our membership is shrinking and aging and we need to broaden our reach. In addition if we keep reminding these non member walkers of the work we do we may attract individual full members

Our biggest competition for members now seems to be the U3A walking groups and a modest-cost supporter involvement might encourage them to link with us

OFFICERS REPORTS

SECRETARY

At last years AGM I was elected Area Secretary. I'm enjoying the role, and want to thank everyone for their cooperation and support. I'm a member of Melton group, and its great to be able to meet and chat to the other groups.

I enjoyed supporting the recent Radio Leicester Countryfile Ramble where I and others did the Mountsorrel To Frisby On The Wreake stage of the Leicester Round.

In 2019 I want to do the Round again.

EDITOR

We were increasingly making use of electronic media to promote the Ramblers and walking generally but the advent of new data protection rules means keeping email addresses without explicit permission is not allowed which makes such communication more difficult. Members having joined to be able to walk with us require us to tell them what walks are available and as such we have a contractual obligation to inform them which is permitted. There are a number of grey areas where it is a judgement call

I continue to feed the content of the web site to Jim Storer to whom thanks is due for continuing to manage this for us. One thing I cannot now do is show personal emails as a means of contact unless again I have specific permission.

We still try keeping members up to date between newsletters by emailing them but we only have a comparatively small number of authorised email addresses and each circulation a number bounce back due to changes of address not advised to us. If you do receive an email and do not wish to do so in future let us know.

As for content, it is your newsletter and website. Any interesting stories to tell, interesting event, forthcoming epic or rare creatures seen share it with us. Also a walker friendly tea room or pub

WALKING ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

Reporting this role is a bit tricky as the very nature of the role is working with other bodies to promote the aims off the Ramblers. As such I serve on the National Forest Access & Recreation Committee although Mike Statham is actually our representative. I represent two other bodies on that committee but all with the same broad aims. I am also on the committee of and Editor of the Leicestershire Footpaths Association.

I am Vice Chairman of the Access Forum based at County Hall and Chair their Planning & Travel Committee. They also have a Committee researching and seeking the protection of our footpaths and I act as secretary of that. I am also a board member of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park and on the Steering Group of the local Nature Partnership working on a lottery bid to finance improvements in the Charnwood Forest hopefully including better access. I am also Access Development Officer for the county orienteering club. As you can see these roles all overlap and the best way to report what has been done this year involves things I played a part in with all these bodies.

During the last year we have offered advice to a number of local authorities and major developers to try to secure the best possible outcomes for all users of rights of way and open spaces. Our advice to local government is on their strategic plans and substantial planning applications which could impact on rights of way or afford opportunities to improve the network. We have also continued to promote and encourage more people to use rights of way and open spaces for their general health and wellbeing, and sustainable travel to the benefit of the environment.

We have an ongoing dialogue with HS2 and also the early stages of one with the potential new Rail/freight interchange by Burbage Common. John Howells and I visited HS2 in October and went through the design suggestions for every affected right of way. I also do have ongoing meetings with the bus companies.

We continue to monitor the Network Rail crossings situation and await a public enquiry into one at Barrow upon Soar which we have vigorously opposed.

Then Lost Ways project works to enhance the network of the public rights of way as opportunities arise and to seek sufficient historic evidence to submit an application for a route to be recognised as a permanent public right of way. We set up the processes and collected the base data and have staged training taster events to encourage volunteer researchers. We have a team of volunteers researching specific areas or routes and these people are mostly Ramblers members

This group has a budget for research purposes made up of donations from several user groups including the Ramblers with a contribution from the County Council. Once a year we all get together on a fairly casual basis to talk about progress made and swap good ideas and we have one coming up. If this newsletter reaches you in time and you are at all interested in helping please come along and have a chat without commitment. The meeting is at Park House the home of Glenfield Parish Council on Stamford Street. It is November 27th gathering from 7.00 and to finish by 9.00 The officer responsible for this project from Ramblers HQ is to join us.

In addition to these ventures, 5 years ago I initiated a new walkers' map of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park and did all the surveying legwork. These proved very popular and they are now sold out apart from the odd copy in some outlets. As such I am working on an updated version which will be hopefully out by Christmas. This time it will be a weather resistant paper.

The first edition we tried to keep the cost as low as possible but now it is an established product we feel people will pay a little extra for a more, durable version

TREASURER

Report for year ending 30TH September 2018 - The area has continued to be prudent with the resources given, the groups having less funding than in the previous year. Clearly digital communication is driving costs down; please continue to work towards a paperless postage free communication system for your members in as far as GDPR permits.

During the year we did send 2 observers to the General Council and the feedback from our members who attended was that the money was well spent, helping them understand some of the more technical aspects of the Ramblers and at the same time being able to network with like minded volunteers.

In 2000, Parliament decided that the old unrecorded ways should be extinguished to provide certainty to landowners, but 25 years more years would be allowed for the legal record to be brought up to date. As a result we have a partnership with Leicestershire Footpaths Association, Leicestershire County Council, the BHS and the LBRS formed to identify old rights of way and have all contributed to fund to ensure volunteers have the recourses to record evidence.

It has been a pleasure to work with group treasurers and the Area Executive Committee all of whom have been professional, ensuring returns our completed accurately and on time.

I would like to thank Chris Tipper for once again being the independent examiner of the accounts.