

Ramblers East Cheshire Group Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 24th November 2018 at Macclesfield Tennis Club (subject to approval at the AGM 2019)

There were 45 members that signed the attendance register (with guests 50 people were in attendance).

Welcome

The chair welcomed members to the AGM and thanked them for attending.

1. Apologies for absence

The following members sent their apologies: Dave & Jane Collorick, Brian Griffiths, Keith Anderson, John & Pauline Handley, Benita Kassas, Claire Sependa, John & Jenny Irwin and Graham Walker.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 11th November 2017

The minutes were accepted unanimously as a true and fair record of this meeting (proposed by Helen Richardson and seconded by Ruth Harrison)

3. Matters arising from the AGM held on 11th November 2017

None

4. Annual Reports from Officers (posted in the website for reference)

4.1 Chair

During her address to the meeting the Chair highlighted:

a) The systems that ECR are using to safeguard data are in compliance with the new Data Protection regulations that came into force early this year. Also, each member had to update their personal details in the Ramblers Association database to comply with these regulations and to continue to receive notices of events by email from ECR – this caused a situation where some members had not been receiving emails but most have been resolved. To help we are now putting the notices about trips and activities in our website under the heading “Information for members”

b) A “Plea for help “ questionnaire was sent to the membership. Although not many people replied we had offers from volunteers to join the Committee, lead walks including stroller walks, organize different types of social events and to become footpath inspectors

c) Congratulated the Footpath Committee, our FP Inspectors and the Database manager for the unprecedented achievement of 100% completion in the Inspection of our paths.

d) The use of the permissive path at Charles Head has been extended for a further 5 years.

e) The number of walks that ECR put on each week is amazing. The Committee are looking at putting on some sort of training and developing a “buddy” system to encourage new walk leaders to volunteer. The Ramblers Association are planning to set up a walk leaders training events (free of charge) to be rolled out across the country.

f) The National and ECR websites get very positive feedback especially from new walkers when looking for walks in our area. Also, Committee members are placing leaflets in GP’s surgeries, libraries , etc. in our area so that new walkers can access our programme and decide which one they would like to join – for this

reason we encourage that walk details are posted in the ECR website 2 weeks prior to the walk to allow posting in the national website. However this is not compulsory and is up to each individual leader to enter the walk details onto the ECR website as and when they see fit.

g) Committee members have been handing out new Medical Emergency Cards on walks to encourage walkers to carry medical information with them.

h) The Cheshire East Area AGM was held on 16th November 2018 and two representatives from Ramblers Association were in attendance. The meeting was hosted by South Cheshire (minutes are awaited). The concerns on Lost Ways expressed by our Footpath Committee were discussed and supported by all three groups and a meeting will be set up with the Central Office coordinator on this matter early in the New Year.

i) Thanked all the Committee Officers and all volunteers for their dedicated hard work, time and effort in organising all our varied activities.

A question from the floor relating to the coverage of third party liability insurance provided by the Ramblers Association asked whether any person in a walk is covered in case of an accident. The view is that the leader and back marker only are covered by this insurance provided that both are current members of the Ramblers Association.

4.2 Treasurer

Key points made during the address were: a) Overall we had a very small deficit of £381.67 although the bank balance at year end stands at £4801 (down from £5182 in the previous year). b) Only a minor amount of routine footpath maintenance have been carried out this past year amounting to £700. c) ECR budget application

for next year totaled £1200 and has been approved by Central Office. d) Members were encouraged to use the internet bank payment facilities for our self funded events to minimize the cost to ECR of the bank charge of 30p per cheque paid into our Unity Trust Bank when using a clearing bank (including the Post Office).

There were no questions from the floor.

4.3 Membership Secretary

Over this year membership has remained stable throughout with 593 members showing high retention and a steady supply of new members. The national membership continues to decline at a rate of about 2% each year.

There have been concerns reported by Walk Leaders that in a few instances there might have been a person joining a walk and not being a member of the Ramblers Association (this is being followed up with Central Office). This example raised the question as to how many persons are walking in our group who are not members. The Committee will look into this matter further and consider using the newly available Walk Register App from the Ramblers Association (with this app Walk Leaders can register members and non members on walks either by scanning the code in the cards or inputting details manually). The Publicity Officer and the Webmaster were thanked in particular plus all others for helping to publicise and encourage our activities. Walk Leaders and members on walks were encouraged to welcome new members and make them feel comfortable on walks.

The following members that had passed away in the past year were remembered with a minute silence: Michael Bull, Margaret Atherton, Len Wakefield, and J. Cook

There were no questions from the floor

4.4 Social & Events Secretary

There has been a great variety of events over the last 12 months and a massive “thank you” goes to everyone involved in the organization and running of events for ECR and the two volunteers involved for the last 3 years in the Walking for Health initiative. The Committee decided to put on a trial stroller walks programme which run on alternative Fridays and dovetailed into the Walking for Health programme. This has been very successful and, therefore, this programme will run next year – a volunteer has come forward to act as coordinator. There were 3 coach trips organized in 2018 (cf. 2015 and 2016 when there was one trip in each year). We already have two dates on next year programme for coach trips. Also, we have 2 weekends away planned which are open to all and 2 weekends for long walkers. Two evening meals were organized in 2018. The social calendar for the first half of 2019 will be out soon with all the dates.

There is a vacancy for Social Secretary or Social Coordinator – it is not necessary to sit on the Committee to fulfill this role. Anybody interested please contact the Chair.

There were no questions from the floor.

4.5 Footpath Committee Chairman

The following were highlighted: a) the Committee is completing its 33rd year of operation b) for the second consecutive year managed to inspect all 1,276 paths in our group area of 33 parishes c) consulted on 11 proposed diversions in the year to end September 2018 d) a new member has been coopted into the Footpath Committee e) one of the two Officers in Cheshire East Rights of Way team has handed his notice – the Footpath Committee will lobby the Council to appoint a replacement asap.

There were no questions from the floor.

4.6 Publicity Officer and Lost Ways project Manager

This year articles have been published in the Macclesfield Express every single week – walk leaders are asked to keep up the supply of articles for next year. A suggestion was made to post these articles in the website – will be explored further by the Committee.

There are 19 “lost ways” in our area that are worth pursuing for various reasons. The next step is to research documents held at the local Council Offices to provide legal support of the existence of the right of way in the 19 paths then the process of making an application can start. Three volunteers have offered their services to work on this project together with the Project Leader. The concerns from the Footpath Committee were raised at the recent Cheshire East Area AGM – see 4.1 (h) above.

There were no questions from the floor.

5. Other Reports

5.1 Footpath Maintenance Projects Team

The Coordinator provided a review of the work conducted since the last AGM. Because of the Coordinator personal commitments some work was conducted in December 2017 but no projects were undertaken this year. However, the Coordinator proposes to recommence project activities in 2019.

There were no questions from the floor.

5.2 ECR Walk Statistics (posted in the website for reference)

The group continuous to run over 300 walks per year. The statistics show that the group depends too much on Walk leaders that volunteer to lead multiple walks in the year in order to maintain this large number of walks provided to the membership. It was

noted that the Weekend Medium Walk Coordinator needs more volunteers to lead walks.

Ralph Atherton was thank for the 20 years that he has been compiling these figures and producing annual reports for AGM's. This task will be taken over by Andy Davies.

There were no questions from the floor.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

The following stood for reelection and were elected unopposed (proposed by Ann Thompson and Ian Mabon):

Jane Gay (Chair), Adrian Flinn (Secretary), Colin Finlayson (Treasurer)), Sue Munslow (Membership Secretary), Kathryn Carty (Committee Member), Dave Barraclough (Footpath Committee representative), Colin Park (Publicity Officer and Lost Ways Project Manager), Maggie Swindells (Committee Member) and Keith Anderson (Committee Member).

We need a volunteer to take up the vacant Social & Events Secretary position.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner (Auditor of Accounts)

Ken Hobbs was reappointed unanimously (proposed by Mike Harding and Mike Murphy)

8. Motions

None.

9. Commendation Awards

Two awards from the Ramblers Association were presented in recognition of outstanding contributions over a long period of time serving as volunteer in ECR to:

- Alan Catherall joined 33 years ago leading walks, as a member of the Committee and a valuable member of the Footpath Committee (retired from this Committee after 25 years). Also, Alan was involved in negotiating and securing many rights of way in our area.
- Peter Cummins has been an active member of ECR since 1981 (37 years ago) and was a founding member of the Footpath Committee in 1986 until retirement in 2016.

10. Any other Business

None.

The meeting closed at 4 pm

Adrian Flinn – ECR Committee Secretary

13th December 2018

Dates of Meetings to be held in 2019 (venues to be confirmed in late summer):

- ECR 2019 AGM – date to be confirmed later
- The Area AGM – date to be confirmed later