

Members present - Dawn Bishop, Phyllis Clayton, Fred Fee, Dave Fereday, Derek Humble, Joan Lang, Ken Phillips, Adrian Sheehan, Colin Wallace.

Phyllis chaired the meeting.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Tony Phelps.
2. *Minutes of last meeting* were adopted.
3. *Matters arising from the minutes* are covered by discussions below.
4. *Officers' reports*
 - 4.1. *Secretary* Colin Wallace presented the following list of documents that he had received:
 - 4.1.1. Colin noted that **Ramblers Cymru Welsh Council will meet on 12/13 April 2014** at Newtown, Powys. Ken will follow this up.
 - 4.1.2. An email from Ceri Thomas (Ramblers Cymru) included **blurb which could be added to to programmes and other publications**. Fred noted the contents.
 - 4.1.3. From the Ramblers Association, an email on a **Ramblers Working Group, Affiliate (sic) Groups**, set out a framework for the working group and asking for volunteers. A brief discussion about a local affiliated group, Newport Ramblers, ensued. They have a neutral stance, remaining affiliated but choosing not to use their affiliation. No-one knew what use they could make of their affiliation.
 - 4.1.4. **Volunteer News and Support Newsletter 2013** contained a miscellany of news on matters of interest to Ramblers Association volunteers.
 - 4.1.5. Ramblers Cymru **Rights of Way and Access Group questionnaire** noted current aims of Ramblers Cymru and asked for amended aims. It also asked what we thought was meant by Walking Infrastructure. The meeting had no opinions.

- 4.2. *Treasurer* Ken Phillips reported:

Our bank balance at 31st August 2013 was £1163.61

We have received all our allocation from area of £505. This means we have a loss of £281.19 so far this year. However this includes the loan repayment to Area for 2012. so our actual budget figures for 2013 were pretty accurate.

I have submitted a budget request to Area for 2013/14 amounting to £790. (see budget report for details). Ramblers Cymru have informed us of the need to reduce our cash reserves in the next few years and our budget includes two projects which will have that effect. We have also increased our publicity budget. The budget has yet to be approved so things could change.

- 4.2.1. Ken has allocated £250 for new publicity materials. Fred noted this and will act on it.
- 4.2.2. A discussion ensued as to how to fund and obtain a walks leaders course and first aid training primarily for walks leader but also for any other interested members. Ken said that the Red Cross do first aid courses. Dawn mentioned that the local Mountain Rescue can

Speak on first aid with an emphasis on the aspects of first aid which are particularly useful in mountain and like terrain.

4.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

There have been a number of enquiries relating to footpath matters since the last report, some seeking evidence of path use by ramblers, and these have been answered following consultation with likely users.

Regarding the request for information regarding walkers on Llanbadoc Commons by a local councillor, I was unable to find anyone with a sufficiently detailed recollection to help.

The problem of misdirection along the footpath at Iron Bridge Cottage by the landowner seems to be easing as he is starting to co-operate with the Right of Way Officer from Caerphilly County Council, and has removed his own direction signs.

There have been some minor applications for new fences etc. abutting Public Footpaths and a couple of re-applications and variations on conditions (time limits) on housing applications and a major refurbishment at Pencoed Castle.

The Diamond Jubilee Walk at Bassaleg was officially opened by Derek Brockway on 1st September when 75 walkers attended.

Much clearance work has been carried out by the volunteer group following an unusually late and productive growing season.

4.4. *Rambles Officer* Dave Fereday noted that shorter walks attendance was poor but that of longer walks was good and asked the meeting if they could illuminate why this was so and to consider the provision of shorter walks in the next programme.

4.4.1. Ken noted that on some days when there were two walks, the walks were of similar length and vigour. He asked whether walks on the same day should be differentiated more. Dave said that he was in the hands of those who volunteered walks and generally could only deal with what was offered since it was difficult to ask volunteers to change dates. Derek asked if a single moderate walk of, say, 8 miles would be better than two similar walks.

4.4.2. Ken wondered if shorter travelling distances to shorter walks would encourage greater attendance.

4.4.3. Ken also noted that sometimes one volunteer would bag three walks in a programme and this could deter other volunteers.

4.4.4. Fred suggested asking members what their favourite walks were to get an idea of the kind of walks which are popular.

4.4.5. Ken said that there was some confusion among members about interpretation of walks grades, with some interpreting the vigour of the walk without considering its length and being caught out when a long moderate walk was harder on them than a moderate shorter walk. Fred will update the programme and the web sites with an explanation of how to interpret grades.

4.5. *Membership Secretary* Dawn Bishop apologised for not being able to supply figures on membership. Her work commitments mean that she has little free time. She said that she could not therefore continue in the post and unfortunately had to resign. The committee thanked her for her work in the time she was in post.

4.6. *Publicity Secretary* Fred Fee

Programmes were produced and distributed to members, Tourist Information Offices in Newport and Abergavenny, and to various organisations who place our walks in their in-house magazines.

Today Gwenda Owen (Ramblers Cymru) rang me to say that most people are aware that Ramblers Cymru provide walks, but not many were aware of Ramblers Cymru's other work, for example in maintaining footpaths. I said that I would think about what could be done.

Robin Hilborne sent me a web address for a National Trust walks route database and I circulated it.

4.6.1. Derek suggested that Fred could contact Newport County Council about possibly publicising our work and their work in maintaining footpaths for all the other agencies that use the paths. He gave Fred the name of a contact and Fred said that he would pursue the matter.

4.7. *IT Officer's report* Fred Fee

I received requests for information about joining South Gwent Ramblers from the web site and from Newport County Council in-house magazine.

An additional web site for smartphones is now up and running. It mirrors most of the data of the main site in a small-screen format.

As a cornucopia of adverts for travel and other ways of spending time and money arrive from the Ramblers Association web site, I circulate them by email.

5. *Events calendar &c* Ken

5.1. Fred edited and sold a calendar last year and Ken asked him if he was willing to do another one. Fred eventually agreed.

5.2. 2013 is the 30th anniversary of the founding of South Gwent Ramblers. Lorna Hall will be able to order a 30th birthday cake from Marks & Spencer's to help us celebrate.

5.3. At the AGM we usually discuss events, particularly coach trips. Ken noted that the September coach trips in the last two years have not been well supported. He wondered if we needed a September trip next year? Dave suggested the usual June and July trips with Ray and Kath Cantwell doing a trip to Weston-super-Mare in May.

5.4. Dave suggested opening a debate at the AGM to discuss a change of the date for the midweek walks since some members attend the meetings of the Newport Local History Society on alternate Wednesdays. Dave suggested Thursday as the day. The meeting agreed to the idea of bringing this up at the AGM.

5.5. Ken noted the following re forthcoming events:

5.5.1. The Ramblers Association were holding a *Great Welsh Walk* week in an attempt to regenerate the extent of the publicity achieved with last year's walks to celebrate the opening of the *Welsh Coastal Path*. Dave will look into it.

5.5.2. *AGM* The Usk Centenary Hall has been booked for 27 November.

5.5.3. *Christmas Dinner* at the Parc Golf Club is booked for Thursday 12 December.

5.5.4. *Christmas Lunch* is booked for Friday 27 December at the Carpenter's Arms, Coed-y-Paen.

5.5.5. The *Okehampton* trip coach trip is booked from from Sunday 2 to Thursday 6 February 2014.

6. *Next committee meeting* on 23 January contingent on voting for the committee at the AGM.