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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SUNDAY, 19th NOVEMBER 2017
AT THE USK CENTENARY HALL
COMMENCING 2 PM**

Members Present:

In alphabetical order:

Adrian Sheehan, Andrew Wilmot, Ceri Williams, Olimpia Evans, Colin Wallace, Dave Fereday, David Evans, Denise Humble, Derek Humble, Fred Fee, Helen Elliott, Iris Buckingham, Ivor Barclay, Jan Lavis, Jan Waagener, Jean Butt, Joan Lang, John Smith, Ken Poole, Linda Westerberg, Liz Salmons, Lorna Hall, Mary Raymond, Mike Fallaize, Pam Jones, Paul Coleman, Paul Mellor, Peter Elliott, Richard Atack, Roger Binding, Sheila Holmes, Sid Carnell, Steve Williams, Sue Shea.

Apologies for Absence:

Julie Davies, Lesley Mooney.

1. WELCOME BY ACTING CHAIRMAN (COLIN WALLACE)

The acting chairman welcomed everyone to the South Gwent Ramblers AGM; all apologies were noted.

Colin went on to say that he was pleased to report that the past year has been very successful both financially and with regards to events. These will be expanded upon by each of the nominated officers.

Colin would especially like to mention at this time members who are either no longer with us or have had health issues. In the last year, those who may remember him, David Paige passed away. David had not walked with us for some time but in the past, he had been an excellent rambler.

Our thoughts are also with Maureen Fee who has had her own Annus Horribilis. On the morning of our departure to Newquay, Maureen came to the Civic Centre to see us leave, which was a very pleasant surprise, as Maureen had not been well enough to walk with us for some time. While we were away, we learned that after the coach departed, Maureen walked into Newport

Centre, where she fell, breaking her patella, which resulted in her being hospitalised for surgery. Back at home now, we all wish Maureen a speedy recovery. Fred took a few minutes to update everyone on Maureen's current condition.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank everyone who continues to help keep our walking club going. Those who help with the catering at various events, the walk leader today and all the members who have led walks, organised our many events or tuned out for walks this year.

2. MINUTES OF LAST AGM DATED 14TH NOVEMBER 2016

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 14th November 2016 were approved without amendment.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

No matters arising from the committee minutes dated Tuesday, 24th October 2017.

All matters arising are discussed below under Item 4, Officers' Reports.

4. OFFICERS' REPORTS

4.1 Treasurer's Report (Roger Binding)

The accounts of SGR for the period for 2016/2017, having been duly audited by Denise Humble and circulated to all members prior to the AGM, were approved. *Refer to attachment (Appendix A).*

At present, we have £1,129.34 in our Unity Trust account. As you can see from the printed accounts for 2016/2017 ending 30th September, the sum was £894.56 (taking into account all cheques issued before that date, even though some had not been presented). However, since then, all but one cheque has been presented and further pre-walking expenses paid out, £80.00 has been received from RWH in respect of the Walking Partnership and a further £176.78 received in respect of the expenses for hosing the Greater Gwent Area AGM (held on 6th November 2016). This should have been received much earlier, but the original cheque apparently went astray. In respect of this matter, our surplus was nearly £200.00 in real terms.

We have applied for a budget fund of £1,210 for 2017/2018 from the Greater Gwent Area. This is significantly higher than previously as we consider we will need two sets of toner cartridges in the coming year. I am pleased to inform you that, at the recent Greater Gwent Area AGM, I was informed that it has been accepted by Ramblers Association HQ, despite the fact that HQ have a long-term wish to apply a significant graduated percentage reduction over the coming years resulting in group balances eventually being about 40% of their respective annual expenditures with a minimum of £500. The first half of the funding is about to be received.

We are continuing to donate to the Wales Air Ambulance and Ruperra CT. In respect of the latter, we have increased our donation to £37.00 to match the revised membership fee for affiliated groups. The Trust do valuable work in restoring and maintaining Coed Graig Ruperra, including such tasks as path maintenance, coppicing and wildlife protection.

Jan Waagener proposed that we should consider raising the donation to the Wales Air Ambulance from £50.00 to £100.00. Roger said he would also like to increase the donation to the Ruperra Trust. **Action: Discuss at the next committee meeting.**

As a matter of interest, Greater Gwent Area has a specific sum set aside (£500.00) available for groups to use for walk leader training. Please contact Adrian Sheehan for further details.

Roger thanked Denise Humble for her invaluable assistance in helping him to maintain the accounts throughout the year.

4.2 Footpaths Officer's Report (Derek Humble)

The diversion of the Usk Valley Walk is just awaiting a signature before opening and most of the land clearance on the new route around Woodward's Farm is complete. The views from the diverted route are better than those from the original, so everyone wins.

The solar farm at Court Farm has been completed and we have a bigger margin alongside it for the Langstone Penhow Circular Walk as the plans for fewer panels had to be submitted to be allowed at appeal.

One footpath at Hartridge Farm Lane is likely to be extinguished as it is on the land for the new gypsy site, and terminates at a dead end. Anyone who wants to be able to walk across this site had better let me know at today's meeting or it will be too late.

There is still no definitive outcome from the Public Enquiry regarding the proposed bridleway at the Old Mill, Langstone.

A planning application for retrospective change of use to a waste transfer station has been refused for Croescarneinion Farm near Bassaleg (known as The Farmer's Daughter) where there is a footpath around the farm. This activity has been carried out for some time without permission, but residents have welcomed the opportunity to object to the increase in traffic and noise.

The application for a four-wire zip line at Celtic Manor has been withdrawn, due to concerns over noise and many organisations requiring surveys on wildlife, and disturbance of historic remains.

A new Hilton Hotel is planned for the Coldra where a footpath runs from the A48, terminating at the edge of the A449. This used to continue to Catsash Road but was blocked by the widening of the approach to the Coldra.

There are plans to improve access to Wales Coastal Path at the Lighthouse Inn and to form a Gateway with facilities for car and bike parking, food kiosk and interpretation signs.

Twenty-five footpaths at Fox Hill, Rhiwderin have been closed for eighteen months to enable the felling of larch trees, the only trouble is that NRW do not have permission to carry this out until the Planning Authority agree.

As usual there have been several minor modifications or diversions, but nothing of any importance to footpath users.

4.3 Rambles Officer's Report (Dave Fereday)

As I implied at last year's Annual General Meeting I believe that the Walk Coordinator's Report is a complete waste of my time compiling it. As I said last year the real Walk Coordinator's Report is the Walks Programme that is issued three times a year, which in the six years I have been fulfilling the role has never had an unplanned blank weekend.

Does the Report really matter? Does anyone even listen? I would suggest no as every year I mention that there is a shortage of leaders for the short walks and then during the next twelve months the situation continues precisely the same.

What has been particularly strange this year is that though there has been, I would suggest record numbers of members on the longer Sunday walks, the response to my recent request for walks for the Winter programme has been deafening silent. Hence my urgent request for volunteers to fill the current empty dates. Indeed, in the seven days following my original request there was just one reply. So, it appears that though many people are happy to walk with the Group, the majority of those people are not willing to lead.

As I mentioned above, that there have been no gaps in the programmes for many years. One reason is because if there are any gaps I usually do a walk myself or someone like Ian will fill in. However, during the next programme, I will be away for a few weekends, as indeed is Ian. Consequently, there could possibly be some gaps. However, this does not concern me as I will be away.

Colin said that Dave had a valid point. It may be that some individuals may not feel confident to lead a walk but we were reminded that there is money available for individuals to be trained from the Greater Gwent Area. An alternative to this would be to offer on the job training for walkers who lack confidence.

Peter Elliott suggested that the walk leader should give pre-walk guidance on walk etiquette. The walk leader when reaching, for example, a junction should always wait until he/she can see the back marker whom, it was proposed, should be wearing a high vis vest.

Action: Action: Discuss at the next committee meeting.

Ceri offered to put on some shorter walks for those who did not want to or were unable to participate in the longer walks. For further walk suggestions please refer to Dave Fereday.

4.4 Membership Secretary's Report (Joan Lang)

Total paid-up members 122. We have had a few new people join us on our walks recently and we are hoping they will decide to join us as fully paid up members soon. There are a few memberships pending.

Although most people decide to join on-line, Joan reminded everyone that she has printed membership forms if anybody would like to have a few for distribution.

4.5 Publicity Secretary's Report - vacant

Nothing to report.

4.6 I.T. Officer's Report (Fred Fee)

Websites - Another 5 years of server time was purchased which carries our websites, keeping the sites up-to-date with events and walks and any other matters arising during the year. Fred confirmed that he frequently checks that messages from the SGR websites are routed to the relevant committee members and act as the default destination.

Publications – Fred uses a few scripts to turn Dave Fereday's hard-won walks data into a suitable format for display on-line and to automatically format the data and the list of events to make the programmes. Recent changes in Applescript required revision of the scripts that are used for formatting the data.

Dave Fereday uses a single-sheet Ramblers Association spread-sheet to tabulate the walks data. Fred has added custom sheets for amending the data into a format suitable for extraction by the scripts.

The Ramblers Association site has a page that allows a Group to upload its walks onto the Ramblers Association website. Walks are upload, and results checked. Unfortunately, the Ramblers Association uses out-of-date security measures which interfere with our system, and Fred temporarily must change his hacking defences to use it.

The programmes are then transmitted by email to members who have already gone digital-only and by post for others. To keep costs down, anyone willing to go digital please inform Fred.

Fred said he also formats and print Newsletters from copies edited by Ken Phillips.

During the year the laser printer became less reliable than usual and Fred was able to purchase a new printer and toner (ink for laser printers) for a price less than replacement toner for the old printer. The new printer gives better prints, more quickly and with less expense. It has a reputation as solid office printer.

Communication with members - Fred keeps the South Gwent Ramblers email list up-to-date and relay messages from members to keep everyone informed. Messages from outside the group arrive from the Greater Gwent Area and the website and are relayed to members. Some adverts arrive from the website and Fred said that he acts as a filter for them.

Ex-officio activities - Fred organised a trip to Salisbury and the venues for a walk and lunch event between Christmas and New Year. To be discussed in more depth under the heading Activities.

Other matters – Again, South Gwent Ramblers were well represented in Newport CC's "Walk the Port" walking festival with Fred and Derek leading walks, ably assisted by Ted, Ivor and Roger and members of Newport CC. Last year's record rainfall (more than an inch in the afternoon) was more suited to amphibians and decimated numbers taking part. This year, we were blessed with a very enjoyable day in bog-free conditions. Feedback from participants was very positive.

Unfortunately, family commitments and other events sapped me in the first half of the year and I indicated to the committee that I would stand down as minute-taker as soon as was convenient.

4.7 Area Representative's Report (Adrian Sheehan)

Greater Gwent Area has been low-key during the past 12 months. There were two Council meetings, 4th January and 19th April. Minutes available on request. The main item of discussion at both meetings was the Area allocation from Ramblers. Last year there was a cut in the Greater Gwent allocation in relation to what was requested. Area objected to this and the cut was partially restored. Groups still received what they had requested; the shortfall was made up from Area funds. For the coming year Greater Gwent has received what it applied for. Not the case for all Areas in Wales. The Area budget includes £500 for walks leader training. There are no specific plans for how this will be used. Groups are asked to make appropriate proposals to Area Council

Total membership of the Area is 777 as at 1st November 2017. This is slightly down on the overall figure for last year.

Group membership is: South Gwent – 122, Pontypool – 173, North Gwent – 61, Lower Wye – 158, Gelligaer – 125, Islwyn – 110, Others – 28.

The Area AGM was held on Sunday 5th November. At the AGM the re-election of the Area officers was agreed.

Chair – Keith Donovan (Gelligaer)

Secretary – Adrian Sheehan (South Gwent)

Treasurer - Gwyn Smith (Gelligaer)

Membership Secretary - Peter Hedge (Pontypool)

The Area Ramble was held on 17th September, hosted by this Group. Thanks to South Gwent for doing this.

There is an Area Newsletter which has reports from the officers, each of the Groups in the Area and a copy of the Area Annual Financial Statement. This should be available on the Group website.

A special mention should be made of Allan Thomas of Lower Wye who has received the Ramblers' National Volunteer Award.

The next Area Council will be held in January 2018, date to be confirmed. If there are any issues you would like to be raised, please get in touch with me or come along to the meeting. Any members are welcome to attend.

As Area Secretary I would like to draw peoples' attention to some of the issues which Ramblers' Cymru and Ramblers' UK have been concerned with over the past 12 months. Many of these you will be aware of from the Ramblers' magazine.

- There is a focus on support for volunteers. There is increasing training through webinars, improvements to the website and additional training events for first-aid and for walk leaders. In Wales two Area Support managers have been appointed. (One of these came to the Area AGM). Catherine Morgan from the Cardiff office is collecting information on training needs across Wales.
- Ramblers has produced an updated Walk Leaders' Checklist and In Case of Emergency cards. These are available on-line. If you would like weatherproof versions please get in touch with volunteer support on the website.
- Ramblers is re-establishing a Treasurers "sounding board" to look at ways of improving the reporting system.
- Ramblers Cymru have been meeting with Assembly members to discuss how to influence relevant policies.
- Ramblers is updating guidance for countryside protection volunteers. Please ensure that ramblers have up-to-date details of all Countryside officers.

Adrian made everyone aware of suspicious/spam emails currently doing the rounds. The Chair of Lower Wye informed the Greater Gwent Area that they had received an email, on the face of it from the Group treasurer, making a request for money. The request was not normal and, on investigation, it turned out that the real email address of the message was not that of the treasurer. Adrian himself had earlier received an email from a Group secretary. The address he saw was the right one but the real address behind this was not. As he had not reason to be suspicious initially he replied to the mail and was then hit by scamming mails.

It would appear that people using Ramblers email addresses for the purpose of scamming. As was recommended at the AGM, all personal email addresses should be removed/amended from your websites as well as the Ramblers webpages. There is a lot of advice on-line if anyone is not sure. If anyone has any other advice on this, they would like to share to please feel free to do so.

5. ACTIVITIES (*Colin led the discussions*)

5.1. Forthcoming Events

5.1.1 **12th December 2017** - The Annual Christmas Dinner will take place at the Newport Golf Club, Rogerstone at a cost of £15.00 per head.

5.1.2 **28th December 2017** - Christmas Walk & Lunch will take place at The Holly Bush Pub, Draethen. Non-walkers are welcome to join the walkers for a meal. Full details of the cost involved can be accessed via the SGR website <http://www.south-twenty-ramblers.org.uk/sgr-events.html>.

Please let Fred Fee know your menu choices for each of the above events as soon as possible. Extras ordered outside of the menu must be paid for by the individuals on the day.

The deadline for booking your place on the Annual Christmas Dinner is the 28th November.

The deadline for booking your place on the Christmas Walk & Lunch is 14th December.

5.1.3 **March 2018** – At the last committee meeting it was decided that the skittles match next year will be held at the St. Julian's Inn, Caerleon Road, Newport. A finger buffet menu will be fixed at £5.00 per head which includes the use of the skittle hall which will comfortably accommodate up to 50 people. Fred Fee to send a memo around to the group.

5.1.4 **1st to 5th October 2018** - The mid-week trip will be to The Royal Hotel, Scarborough. To secure this week a deposit has been paid. Individual deposits will be required on or before the end of February 2018. Further details will be released by Joan Lang in due course. **Action: Joan Lang**

5.1.5 It was proposed that suggestions for 2019 mid-week walking holiday be put forward to Joan Lang so that they can be discussed in more detail at the committee meetings. **Action: All**

5.1.6 **10th June 2018** - A day trip to Swanage was proposed by Roger Binding. **Action: Roger Binding to organise.**

5.1.7 **5th August 2018** – Annual BBQ. **Action: Colin Wallace & Sue Shea to organise.**

5.1.8 **12th August 2018** - A day trip to Lynton & Lynmouth was proposed by Paul Mellor and Joan Lang. **Action: Joan Lang & Paul Mellor to organise.**

5.1.9 **2019 day trips** - It was proposed that St. David's and the River Thames be taken into consideration as only a minority were interested in these trips for 2018.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Derek Humble thanked everyone who walked today for waiting for him. He arrived at 10:15 thinking that was the departure time when in fact the walk started at 10am.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS TO THE COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Colin Wallace
Proposed by: Derek Humble
Seconded by: Jan Waagener

Secretary: Sheila Holmes
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Roger Binding

Treasurer: Roger Binding
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Sheila Holmes

Rambles Officer: Dave Fereday
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Jan Waagener

I.T. Officer: Fred Fee
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Roger Binding

Membership Secretary: Joan Lang
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Denise Humble

Footpath Officer: Derek Humble
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Roger Binding

Auditor: Denise Humble
Proposed: Roger Binding
Seconded: Fred Fee

Area Representative(s): Adrian Sheehan
Ivor Barclay
Roger Binding
Proposed by: Colin Wallace
Seconded by: Roger Binding

Committee Members: Charles Goodreid
Julie Davies
Ivor Barclay
Jan Waagener

It was decided not to appoint anyone to fill the positions of Vice Chairperson and the Publicity Officer.

The newly appointed Chairman, Colin Wallace, thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting closed at 15:40 hours.

END OF REPORT