

DRAFT Minutes of Somerset Area Council meeting held 25th June 2011

Present: Ann Foxhuntley, Chair
Rod Porter, Secretary
Paul Wright, Footpath Secretary
Gus Halfhide, Membership Secretary
Hugh Pratt, Countryside Officer
Rod Senior, Access Officer
Ruth Goodland, South Somerset Group
Marion Davies & Robin Downton, Woodspring Group
Diane Knight & Keith Oldham, Clevedon Group
John Ollerenshaw & Graham May, Taunton Deane Group
Kate Turner, S.W.A.G.
Bill Tate, Independent Member
Carleton Earl, Area Footpath Adviser
Adrian Kellett (Guest)

1. Apologies: Tony Goverd, President
Roger Conway, Vice-Chair
Jean Mantle, Treasurer
Edward Levy, Newsletter Editor & Publicity Officer
Les Stather, Webmaster
Tony Fawle, Sedgemoor Group
Guy Emery, S.W.A.G.
Mary Henry, Independent Member

Ahead of formal discussion under agenda item 4, Adrian Kellett was invited to speak on the proposed SOMERSET WALKING FESTIVAL

A member of Taunton Deane Group, Adrian is an active participant on the Somerset Area Campaign Team and has researched the background to other walking festivals around the country. However, these are so varied that there is no standard format, the only common denominator being the need for a devoted organiser.

The Campaign Team has been encouraged by the initial interest shown by outside parties and has put out feelers re possible sources of grant funding. The vision is that the walking festival will cover the whole of Somerset Area; involve the local authorities and other walking related bodies; require the support of our Group volunteers; cater for all ranges of walker, and probably be over a period of two weeks.

It is envisaged that an organiser will be recruited and paid on a self-employed basis. The key therefore will be obtaining sufficient funding for this - an estimated £30,000 over two years - plus marketing and other related costs.

Although 2012 will be dominated by the London Olympics, it would be good to see the walking festival launched at some time next year.

The Chair thanked Adrian for his input and he then left the meeting.

2. Minutes of meeting held 26th March 2011: Agreed.

3. Matters arising: Re Item 9, electronic communication with members, we need to know whether data protection requirements might have an impact on this.

4. Reports from Area Officers & Group Representatives: Reports were distributed ahead of the meeting. However, the following are either 'new' items or decisions made -

a) Area Holiday - The Tenby pre-reccy is complete and 11 walks planned for the weekend. The programme of detailed reccy is almost sorted and will be complete

before the end of August. However, Roger is still looking for some more volunteers to lead the walks, especially the long (12 mile) one on the Saturday.

b) Area Footpath Secretary - Groups are asked to report any cropping problems, especially maize, to either Paul or Carl.

Having first declared his interest as landowner, Hugh asked that the Ramblers' objection to a Diversion Order for a Wraxall footpath be reconsidered. However, the Chair stated that, as the objection had been formulated in a proper manner, she would not allow any further discussion. Area Council members accept collective responsibility for Officers' decisions and it is now for the Inspectorate to come to a decision on the matter. Hugh felt he was being denied the right to put forward his case and Ann stated that, if he was dissatisfied, he did have recourse to Central Office.

It is rare to have a contentious matter at Area Council and it is recognised that, apart from the Ramblers' Code of Conduct, there is no document in place setting out the rules of debate, etc. Perhaps some shortened equivalent of a Parish Council's Standing Orders is required and it was AGREED that the Area Secretary should look into this.

c) Somerset Walking Festival - Adrian's outline of the project and Mary Henry's written report were enthusiastically received, the main query being whether an inaugural festival could be achieved within the next 12 months.

It was AGREED that:

A separate bank account be opened with the Unity Trust Bank. However the procedure will take time, e.g., passing a resolution at the next Area meeting on 29th October and completing formalities.

To overcome this delay, Area will immediately earmark £200 of funding towards initial setting up costs with relevant invoices / expenses claims to be sent to the Area Treasurer for settlement.

Area's 2011/12 budget for Central Office funding should include an amount re part of the walking festival costs.

d) Countryside Secretary - Hugh's report drew further attention to the proposed Hinkley Point C nuclear power station now progressing through the various consultation and planning stages.

One hugely disturbing feature of the scheme is the proposal for 60 kilometres of overhead power lines. These will have a total transmitted power of 400,000 volts and be carried on 150 metre tall pylons.

A campaign initiated by Wraxall and Failand Parish Council has resulted in an extensive report proposing an alternative underground / sub-sea route. This alternative is preferred technically, economically and environmentally and it was AGREED that the Area Secretary makes Central Office aware of the position and enlists their support.

e) Area Webmaster - At present, all contact details on the website consist simply of a forename and telephone number. The Webmaster is reluctant to add personal e-mail addresses and requests firm guidance on whether specific authority is first required from each volunteer.

5. Report on General Council: This had been distributed ahead of the meeting and its contents were noted.

6. Adopting a more active approach to our budget requirements: A reminder was given re the 2011/12 budgeting timetable together with a request that Group and Area officers actively identify their requirements and, if necessary, 'ask for more'. For example, any increase in activity for the benefit of Ramblers - whether through a footpath working party or a membership/ publicity initiative, etc. - will also bring some increase in expenditure.

7. Involving Ramblers' affiliated members and other representative bodies: This agenda item was requested by Mary Henry who unfortunately was not present. However, there was general discussion around the following points:

Affiliated members

Central Office goes direct to affiliated members on any issue arising and is their main contact point.

Through address labels received from Central Office, we do have contact details for 11 affiliated members within our geographic area.

They are comprised of a wide range of organisations - from a town council to walking groups very akin to our own with footpath officers and working parties.

We currently do nothing other than send them a copy of each Area newsletter and Annual Report.

Representative bodies

A number of our members are individual members of various representative bodies.

These include the Somerset Local Access Forum, the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee, the South West Coast Path Association, the Long Distance Walkers Association, etc.

As such, we have previously received feedback on important happenings but there is no formal procedure for this.

There is little practical means of involvement between Ramblers' Somerset Area itself and any of the above bodies.

Outcome

No agreement was reached on how we now progress apart from gathering further information and then reviewing the position.

8. Items for discussion at the next Area Council meeting on 29th October:

Agenda items will include (i) agreeing banking, reporting and other arrangements for the proposed Somerset Walking Festival and (ii) deciding the format of the Annual Report and Annual General Meeting.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.05 p.m.