

## **Minutes of Somerset Area Council meeting held 29th October 2011**

**Present:** Ann Foxhuntley, Chair  
Tony Goverd, President  
Rod Porter, Secretary  
Jean Mantle, Treasurer  
Paul Wright, Footpath Secretary  
Gus Halfhide, Membership Secretary  
Rod Senior, Access Officer  
Edward Levy, Newsletter Editor & Publicity Officer  
Les Stather, Webmaster  
Mary Henry, Independent Member  
Ruth Goodland, South Somerset Group  
Marion Davies & Robin Downton, Woodspring Group  
Diane Knight & Sue Ferguson, Clevedon Group  
John Ollerenshaw & Graham May, Taunton Deane Group  
Kate Turner, S.W.A.G.  
Carleton Earl, Area Footpath Adviser

**1. Apologies:** Roger Conway, Vice-Chair  
Bill Tate, Independent Member  
Tony Fawle, Sedgemoor Group  
Guy Emery, S.W.A.G.

**2. Minutes of meeting held 25th June 2011:** Agreed.

**3. Matters arising:** None.

### **4. Reports from Area Officers & Group Representatives:**

Most reports were received and distributed ahead of the meeting and the following are either 'new' items or decisions made –

a) Roger Conway's written report on the Area Holiday: 'This year's event at Tenby was a great success and the 56 attendees enjoyed wall to wall sunshine and summer temperatures. The Imperial Hotel provided a friendly and comfortable environment and a super location right on the sea front. Several members also managed a daily dip in the sea after returning from the walks.

Most of the party gathered at Amroth on Friday afternoon where there were two walks (4½ miles & 6½ miles) with a mixed terrain covered.

The two main walking days were themed with Saturday concentrating on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path with three separate walks (6½ miles, 7½ miles & 12½ miles). The first two involved a train ride and then a walk back to the hotel and being the Coast Path all can be described as strenuous, but very enjoyable.

The Sunday walks all took place around the creeks and inlets from Milford Haven (5½ miles, 6½ miles, 11 miles & 15 miles).

After checking out of the hotel on Monday, many of the group headed for Kilgetty to walk two versions of the Miners Trail (6 miles & 7½ miles) before travelling back to Somerset.

Next year's holiday is already booked and will be at Symonds Yat (7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September) and again there will be themed days (Wye Valley & Offa's Dyke).'

*To avoid any misunderstanding, it was suggested that any members arranging their own accommodation should be advised of the need to contribute towards the general costs of the holiday, e.g., recce expenses, etc.*

b) Area Access Officer – Rod Senior reported that he had a very good meeting with Natural England at which they discussed the whole Somerset coastal access stretch. Natural England staff will start walking the route in December and complete this in March. Andy Stephenson of the Rights of Way team is Somerset County Council's seconded officer.

c) Area Footpath Secretary: It was unanimously AGREED that Somerset Area formally notifies Somerset County Council that it is considering seeking Section 130 Orders requiring footpaths WN31/4 and WN15/16 be cleared.

d) Area Membership Secretary: Central Office is now reporting membership changes on a weekly basis.

A question was raised re the current position of Legs Explore (Group SO70) which has no current members but retains a dormant bank account. It was hoped that some parents would re-activate the Group and it was AGREED to ask them for their plans. If a response is not forthcoming by the date of our next meeting, a decision will be made on transferring Legs Explore's funds to Somerset Area.

e) Clevedon Group: It was good to see Diane mobile again after her recent operation and her report was as follows-

'The Thursday morning walks have not, unfortunately, proved popular but our regular weekend walks, on Saturdays and Sundays, continue to be very well attended.

Andrew kindly made his house and garden available for a barbecue and the weather was kind to us, eventually. The pre-lunch walk was cancelled, due to rain, but the forecasters were right when they said the rain would stop about mid-day, so we were able to proceed with the barbecue lunch.

For Walk in the Woods Week we staged a walk on Saturday 8 October. Unfortunately, it did not attract any new walkers.

The details of the vacancies for the Group's Committee will be included in the next programme, which will be issued within a few days, ready for the AGM on the 19 November.

Our second holiday this year was based at Hawes, in the Yorkshire Dales and the Group was able to enjoy the benefit of Area's membership of the YHA which resulted in a discount in the accommodation charge.

Expenses continue to be reduced by the electronic issue of Group Programmes and News Items. Any communication made is issued *blind carbon copy* so that members' addresses are not publicised to all recipients.'

f) SWAG : The Group's committee wish to put a proposal forward at its AGM whereby membership would be 'freed' from any age restraint. It was AGREED that Area approves an alteration to the Group Constitution as follows –

*In clause 1, delete '(20s & 30s)' so that the second sentence reads 'The name of the organisation shall be The Ramblers' Association, Somerset Walking and Activity Group, and it shall be within the Association's Somerset Area.'*

The Area Secretary will advise Central Office without delay to ensure that there is no objection to this change.

**5. Proposed Somerset Walking Festival:** There was a long discussion on the Project Plan that had been distributed and now required the agreement of Area.

Members felt that the Project Plan contained an insufficient level of detail to properly determine the issue. It was therefore AGREED that:

Area Council members submit their written comments on the Project Plan to the Area Secretary as soon as possible and no later than 26<sup>th</sup> November. These comments will be collated and forwarded to the Project Leader.

The Project Steering Group prepare a detailed phased Project Plan including timetable, risk analysis, etc. and present this to the next Area Council meeting in January.

In the meantime, subject to confirmation from Central Office, the Project Steering Group be authorised to prepare and submit applications for grant funding. To do this without Central Office support would appear contrary to Ramblers' Guidance For Treasurers (FIN015).

**6. Arrangements for the Annual Report and Area AGM:** It was AGREED that (i) the Annual Report be produced in the shortened format used last year and (ii) nominations for

office should be in writing and received by the Area Secretary no later than the day prior to the AGM.

The AGM will be on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February and hosted by Woodspring Group at Shipham. Details have been advised to Groups and also included in the new edition of Somerset Rambler. Arrangements for a guest speaker have not been finalised but one possibility is to book a volunteer speaker from Westonbirt Arboretum. There would be a fee of £40 plus travelling expenses and it was AGREED that the Area Secretary goes ahead with this.

Several Area Officers have been in post for a number of years and now feel it is time to stand down. Succession for volunteer positions is always a difficulty and members are urged to actively seek out and encourage colleagues who may be prepared to step forward and take on an Area Council role.

**7. Items for discussion at the next Area Council meeting in January 2012:** Agenda items will include (i) coming to a decision on a revised Somerset Walking Festival Project Plan and (ii) if agreed, appointing a Walking Festival Committee with agreed terms of reference.

As separately advised, several matters are in abeyance and these will also be on January's agenda, i.e., increasing the use of electronic communication; clarifying data protection requirements; introducing standing orders, and engaging with Ramblers' Affiliated Groups.

*The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.*

### **Dates for 2012 meetings**

The meeting room at Taunfield Close has now been booked for the following dates:

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January

Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October

### **And finally**

It is the January meeting that considers any motion that Area wishes to forward to April's General Council. Therefore, if you feel that some issue should be progressed to General Council, please contact me without delay.

Rod Porter  
Somerset Area Secretary  
01823 - 321783  
[rodporter2002@aol.com](mailto:rodporter2002@aol.com)

11<sup>th</sup> November 2011