**The Ramblers’ Association Norfolk Area**

Minutes of the 47th Annual General Meeting of the Norfolk Area of the Ramblers’ Association

held on line at 2pm on Saturday 13 February 2021

**Present**: Richard May (Chair) with 16 Norfolk members and Malcolm McDonnell (Trustee)

Prior to the opening of the formal meeting, the video from Kate Ashbrook (Ramblers’ Chair) and Tanya Curry (interim CEO) was shown - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVhNOo7vA30&feature=youtu.be>.

1 Chairman’s welcome and introduction Richard welcomed everyone to the meeting, saying we had had a fantastic year, discovering we’re good at being flexible and keeping in touch with isolated members. People had discovered solo walking: we can recruit them, but we need to be ready.

2 Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Jenny Atterwell, Sheila Bulmer and Val Fendick.

3 Minutes of the 2020 AGM The minutes were approved as a true record.

4 Matters arising There were no matters arising.

5 Treasurer’s report for the financial year ending 30 September 2020 - Peter James

The Income and Expenditure Account, duly checked by Independent Examiner Christina Brooker, had been circulated before the meeting. It was proposed by Ken Hawkins, seconded by Tony Smith and **agreed** to approve the financial report.

6 Appointment of the Independent Examiner (Auditor) for 2021/22

It was proposed by Peter James, seconded by Ken Hawkins and **agreed** that Christina Brooker be once more appointed as the Independent Examiner.

7 Reports of other officers - the full reports are included in the composite Annual Report.

7(1) **Area Secretary** - Ken Hawkins

Ken referred briefly to the continuing work of Vic Cocker and himself on the Norfolk Local Access Forum and the limited progress on the England Coast Path in Norfolk.

7(2) **Area Membership Secretary** - Barbara Cattermole

Barbara had nothing to add to her written report. Richard then went on to announce the winner of the award for increasing membership. 5 groups had increased membership: in order of percentage increase, they are Sheringham, Mid Norfolk, Hike Norfolk, Great Yarmouth and (the winner with 11.48%) Wensum.

7(3) **Area Footpath Co-ordinator & Rights of Way Subcommittee Secretary** - Ian Mitchell

Ian had nothing to add to his written report.

7(4) **Working Parties’ report** - Peter James

Peter noted that little work had been done because of the pandemic.

7(5) **Social Media Officer** - Marita Bulto

Marita reported that she spent time responding to contacts to inform them about the activities of The Ramblers.

7(6) **External Communications** - post vacant, no report

7(7) **Internal Communications** - post vacant, no report

7(8) **Area Access Officer** - post vacant, no report

7(9) **Volunteer Co-ordinator** - post vacant, no report

7(10) **Walks Features Editor** - Sue Walker

Sue had little to add to her written report. She asked for anyone who could, to send in walks that could be done ‘from home’, as most of those published so far were Norwich based. Some walks in the King’s Lynn area had been offered last year, but had been without all the information needed for publication, and the person offering them was no longer available.

8 Elections of Area Council Members

Richard May stood down, and Ian Mitchell took the Chair. There being no other nominations, Tony Smith proposed that Richard be re‑elected: this was seconded by Ken Hawkins and it was **carried**. Richard then resumed the Chair to conduct the remaining business.

In the absence of other nominations, those remaining posts for which the current postholder was willing to continue, were considered *en bloc*. It was proposed by Richard May, seconded by Alan Bowell and **agreed** to accept all nominations.

There were no nominations for the vacant posts of External Communications Officer, Internal Communications Officer, Area Access Officer or Volunteer Co-ordinator.

There being no other nominations, Richard May proposed, Peter James seconded, and it was **agreed** that Sheila Bulmer, Sue Walker and Julian White be **re-elected** as committee members (subject to their consent in the cases of Sheila Bulmer and Julian White).

The list of those elected is as follows.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chair | *Richard May* |
| Vice Chair | *Ian Mitchell* |
| Treasurer | *Peter James* |
| Secretary/Minutes Secretary | *Ken Hawkins* |
| Membership Secretary | *Barbara Cattermole* |
| Footpath Co-ordinator | *Ian Mitchell* |
| Social Media Officer | *Marita Bulto* |
| External Communications Officer | *vacant* |
| Internal Communications Officer | *vacant* |
| Area Access Officer | *vacant* |
| Volunteer Co-ordinator | *vacant* |
| Committee Members | *Sheila Bulmer, Sue Walker, Julian White* |

9 General Council issues

9.1 Richard May reported that the 2020 meeting had first been postponed, then later convened on line to meet minimum legal obligations only. He had been re‑elected as a Trustee until 2023. All motions had been remitted to the Board, and responses were awaited. The 2021 meeting would also be held on line, but would otherwise be a full ‘normal’ meeting.

9.2 One motion was proposed by Ken Hawkins to be put to the 2021 General Council:

*This General Council is concerned at the damage caused to Restricted Byways by the passage of motorised vehicles and calls upon the board of trustees to conduct a countrywide survey of the problem and make recommendations for action.*

During the discussion, Ian Mitchell, who seconded the motion, noted that he was not aware of many problems on Restricted Byways occurring in Norfolk or Suffolk, and Tony Smith questioned whether we should then propose this motion. On being put to the vote, it was carried by 16 votes to 0, with one abstention.

9.3 Peter James and Julian White offered themselves as delegates to General Council. It was proposed by Richard May, seconded by Ken Hawkins and agreed to appoint them. Richard would be attending as a Trustee.

10 Discussion items/any other business

10.1 The forthcoming Area Newsletter was discussed, it being agreed that that the press date would be put back to 13 March, the next Area Council meeting date.

10.2 Mike Holmes reported that Sheringham had experienced difficulty in getting walk leaders, and a significant factor in this was related to the requirements concerning risk assessments - both their production and the need for them to be retained for 12 months. Others had found a similar reluctance, though it was also noted that risk assessments should always have been done, and it was likely they would remain a condition of being insured. It was suggested that examples be circulated to assist anyone daunted by having to prepare one. Reference was also made to the on line training for walk leaders, which had been found useful.

The formal meeting was then closed. Malcolm McDonnell (Trustee) then spoke on

* + the progress of Don’t Lose Your Way - now thinning out from 49,000 miles, with £80k raised from crowdfunding, plus more from other sources. DLYW was now seeking volunteers to make claims, and developing tools to assist them. In the meantime, The Ramblers was continuing to press for an extension to the 2026 deadline
  + issues around the shared use of paths, noting plans in Wales, which The Ramblers supports on a case by case basis
  + the criminalisation of trespass, which The Ramblers opposes
  + the NFU proposals for diversion of rights of way, which The Ramblers had opposed and which the government had declined to support
  + the Agriculture Act and the Environmental Land Management Scheme, where The Ramblers had secured inclusion of access as a ‘public good’; government was now working on the details
  + the Environment Bill, which was still in progress; The Ramblers had sought amendments which had not been selected for voting, but had been assured would be considered by Ministers
  + the fall in membership during the first lockdown, which had then recovered, but had now fallen again
  + a change in the office location, and the need for some redundancies

He ended talking of a plan for membership growth in the coming years, but his on line connection failed before he had quite finished.

Richard May concluded the meeting by thanking all for their attendance, and regretted that he was not able to invite everyone to partake in the usual refreshments.