

Forest of Dean Group

MINUTES OF 36th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7th NOVEMBER 2014

PRESENT: Mr. A Fisher in the Chair – plus 28 members attending (see list) including Mr. B Gill (Area Chairman).

APOLOGIES: R. Goodman, D Lane, D Pollard and P Elliott.

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting, which had been circulated earlier in the year, were approved, adopted and signed.

MATTERS ARISING: There were no matters arising.

1. CHAIRMANS REPORT: (A Fisher) Another busy year, a good holiday with accommodation and walks around Aberystwyth and a couple of social events that have not been so well attended. Regarding the Upper Forge Bridge project, in Rods absence I can report that there are still some legal aspects to complete before the bridge and diverted footpath are formally adopted by Gloucestershire County Council. We still have approximately £3800 in the Publication and Project account for which we need to find a suitable project or projects in the FoD.

I would like to thank the Committee and all our enthusiastic walk leaders for their hard work and everyone who has supported the group over the last year. You may be aware that I will not be standing for re-election this year. I have been Chairman for the last four years and inherited a couple of difficult problems at that time. I believe that we are now in a better place. We have updated the website and now send out about half as many programmes and the newsletter by post with consequent savings in compilation time, postage and printing costs. We have a very good programme of walks which is remarked upon by other Ramblers and walkers. In addition a number of keen members have joined over the last few years and have offered themselves to fill a number of vacancies. I wish the new Chairman and committee all the best for the future.

2. SECRETARYS REPORT: (J Burden) This has been a quiet year for me. I have forwarded various e-mails that come through the Ramblers and our own website to the appropriate people and apart from take and circulate the minutes at the committee meetings I have done very little else to warrant being called a “Secretary”.

However, I do have to report to you the deaths of two of our members this year. Marion Goodman, who passed over in May, will be known to many of you even though she hasn't walked a great deal since her stroke a few years past. Sadly this bad news was quickly followed by the death of another of our members David Jeanes in June. David was our Treasurer from 2002 until 2005 and had suffered ill health for some considerable time. They will both be sorely missed.

I organized a holiday to Aberystwyth to which AF alluded. I know you all enjoyed it because just about everyone either telephoned or e-mailed me afterwards to tell me so. I should also thank our Chairman who organized the walks for this trip. I am grateful to Mike Ingleby for taking on the holiday bookings and you will know that he has already been very busy booking our next year's Spring trip to Dunster which I am really looking forward to.

3. TREASURERS REPORT: In the absence of the Treasurer the Chairman said he would take any question on this report. A Waldie asked what LPE legal fees meant, and AF replied that Lydney Park Estate had asked us to contribute to their legal fees over the Upper Forge Bridge project. S Faircloth asked how expenses could exceed income on Projects? AF replied that we had started with money in the bank and it was still coming in from sale of leaflets etc.

4. FOOTPATH SECRETARYS REPORT: (S Constable) It has been a year of turmoil for us. The PROW Officers were contracted out to Amey in April but did not have their working contractor in place until July. They still appear to have few systems in place and we are having problems following up any recorded issues on FP's. More

Forest of Dean Group

recently a few old diversions have been confirmed so hopefully we can be looking forward to being more in touch next year. I was amused by one of the few consultations asking if we had any objections to the Order diverting the small part of the FP in Lydney so that the Norchard Bridge and new FP would join up.

The planning applications from the FODDC come electronically about 2 or 4 a week but few require comment or site visits. One recently for a pig fattening unit with a FP on the track transporting the weekly cargo to and from and passing right by the entrance to the unit was passed by the planners without taking any note of our comments or those from the PROW Officer. The FODDC planning Officers have had more than their fair share of being taken to appeal by applicants which has caused a huge workload and we have noticed fewer conditions being added to confirmed applications where we have objected or made suggestions where a FP has been in some way compromised. The FOD Councilors for planning also seem to be in disagreement on some major proposed developments which seriously affect FP's primarily the Northern Quarter and 2 housing estates on greenfield sites at Lydney.

Our own committee has felt the loss of Jill Byrne our Area Secretary who was forced to retire in August due to ill health. She will be greatly missed for her help and experience. She has not yet been replaced but the Gloucestershire FP Secretaries are getting together 3 or 4 times a year so that we can discuss various FP developments which affect us all. Dave Street has been working as a consultant for the Lydney town Council and is currently working on a FP and cycle way network as part of their neighborhood plan. Roger Cox continues to look after the north of our region as best he can through his group made up of parish representatives.

My personal commitments have made it impossible for me to be proactive in FP issues but have I kept on top of all the consultations. The weather this year has been very kind not only to us but also to brambles and bracken, secateurs on walks is ever more important. Several Parish Councils have a FP officer and some are very active. If you can keep in touch with your local parish councils on FP's in your immediate local area I feel this will be the way forward i.e. local people looking after local FP's. I fear that working through Amey to get FP's cleared will not get any easier in the coming years because of budget and manpower restraints. I have a FP meeting arranged in Lydney Tues 17 Feb at 10am and any one is welcome to come along, we are always pleased to have other opinions and be able to use local knowledge.

5. WALKS CO-ORDINATOR REPORT: (M Cullis) We have had 105 walks from January to the end of October, and are averaging more than 2 a week. We are known as the most active group in Gloucestershire and our full programme is commented on by other groups. I thank all the leaders who make this possible.

6. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARYS REPORT: (B Jones) The membership of the Forest of Dean ramblers at 31st October 2014 stands at 221. The number of new members joining since the last AGM is 25. During the year, there have been 17 e-mail enquiries and from this number, 10 became members. Following the forest of Dean Festival in April, 33 e-mails and letters were sent to the interested parties who gave their details on the day, unfortunately with little take up. Members have been circulated throughout the year with newsletters & programmes, first aid course and holiday details.

7. PUBLICITY OFFICERS REPORT: (B Fisher) I have submitted 16 reports and photographs to various publications, of these 5 have been unsuccessful, 2 I am unsure of and 7 have been published. I have also investigated on-line advertising to no avail. I have also organized a walk with Walking for Health as they now come under the Ramblers umbrella, this is a short 4 mile easy walk on 15th November 2014.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS: The Chairman said that we had 3 nominations to fill the positions becoming vacant this year. Mike Ingleby was standing for Chairman proposed by B Jones and seconded by S Faircloth – unanimous. AF then stepped down and MI took the Chair. MI said that Jackie Huck was willing to take the Secretary's position and she was nominated by Pam Cullis and seconded by MI – unanimous. David Pollard was

Forest of Dean Group

standing for Treasurer nominated by AF and seconded by M Cullis – unanimous. The remaining committee members are willing to stand again and MI asked for an en-bloc vote for M Shergold, B Jones, S Constable, I Walding, B Fisher, M Cullis and J Bevan. This was unanimously agreed. MI asked if anyone else would like to join the committee and Pam Cullis volunteered, she was nominated by Jackie Huck, MI seconded, also unanimously agreed. MI went on to say that we also now need an Auditor and asked if there were any volunteers for this position, Ronnie Walker was persuaded, he was proposed by A Waldie and seconded by MI.

MI then briefly outlined his reasons for joining the Ramblers 2 years ago and commented that he had lost 3 stone during that time and felt a lot healthier. He also had received good feedback from other groups concerning our programme and thanked the walk leaders who contributed. He mentioned the Dunster holiday in the Spring and the Christmas Lunch with two walks one short and one long which had recently been organized.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: D Street said that with R Goodman stepping down someone else would have to take on the footpath maintenance and way marking that RG now did. AF said that a co-ordinator was needed and it was not necessarily a committee position, but they should keep an over view on path maintenance. MI asked for volunteers, and 2 members of committee said they did not feel able to take on this responsibility so it was left that committee would co-opt a recruit at a later date. D Street re-iterated that it was an important job and someone must be found to do it.

MI asked if we had any volunteers for Area Rep and SC said she currently reported back to committee on Area matters. S Warren suggested that as MI was new to committee he might like to attend some Area meetings and discover what they did.

MI agreed to accompany SC to the next Area meeting. R Cox said he had run out of the way marking discs used for the Gloucestershire Way and they had been especially made for the job, but no-one else appeared to have any and he asked if Area could help with this. MI remarked that this would be a good opportunity to see how Area dealt with such a problem.

Bernard Gill (Area Chairman) then rose to address the meeting. BG said that he was trying to encourage communication between groups to exchange information on what they found worked for their group. He agreed that there was too much paperwork and too many e-mails from Area that were no help to anyone. However, Central Office was pushing for more publicity to bring in more members. He felt that if work such as the Upper Forge project was publicized more widely the general public would recognize that the Ramblers was more than just a group of people out for a walk. The walk finder had been re-vamped but currently that made it harder to use instead of easier and it was still a work in progress. CO had been spending money in different ways, sometimes adding a small amount to a large project so that Ramblers name was included, and sometimes funding larger more noticeable projects to get the point across. Area had used some of "Lillian's Legacy" recently to help promote paths for the disabled.

BG went on to say that he hoped Area reps would be willing to take on responsible positions on Area Council and he felt that was why it wasn't working at the moment, everyone was too busy with their own group to wish to take on more work. But he felt that's what Area reps should do. MI said he would discuss this with committee.

The meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.