

# Forest of Dean Group

## MINUTES OF 39th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 10th NOVEMBER 2017

**PRESENT:** Peter Robbins in the Chair – plus 29 attending (list attached).

**APOLOGIES:** were received from 26 members (list attached)

**MINUTES:** The Minutes of the AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016, which had been circulated earlier in the year, were approved, adopted and signed.

**MATTERS ARISING:** There were no matters arising.

**1. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Peter welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Brian Payne (Area Chair) and Bernie Gill (Area Vice-Chair). He went on to thank all those who had contributed to making the FoDR Group a very successful and growing walking group over 2016/17. Peter wished to especially thank the retiring Treasurer, David Pollard, and all members of the committee for their work over the past year. He thanked Ronnie Walker for editing our newsletters and for arranging the very successful holiday in North Wales in April 2017. John Baker was thanked for his work as Footpaths Officer and to all those monitoring footpaths across our patch. Peter gave special thanks to Maurice and Pam Cullis, who were retiring from the committee at this AGM, for the many years of contributing to the running of the group and for allowing the use of their home for committee meetings.

Peter recognised the vital role of walks leaders which had made a wonderful variety of walks available to members throughout the year. Walks had not only taken place across the Forest of Dean but also in the Wye Valley, Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, Elan Valley, Gower Coast, Newport Wetlands, Carmarthen Fans , North Wales, Bristol and London.

Peter referred to other activities which had taken place over the past year. The Christmas Lunch and pre-walk had been well supported, the leadership course delivered by Richard Holmes had resulted in new leaders and an advanced First Aid course meant that 16 of our walks leaders were now trained to deal with emergencies in remote areas.

Looking forward to the year ahead Peter thanked Jenny Robbins and Sue Marshall for organizing the Skipton holiday which will be in May 2018.

**2. SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Jackie Huck reported on her third year as Secretary referring to general secretarial duties undertaken in support of committee meetings and activities. She thanked Malcolm Shergold (Webmaster) on behalf of the committee and the wider membership for his

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support in ensuring emails are correctly routed and for his work to maintain and develop the group's website. She also thanked Pam Cullis for her continued support throughout the year.

Jackie reported on the system which had been set up to support the distribution and sales of our leafleted walks and book, Exploring Historic Dean. She stated it was working well and that was thanks to John and Jean Sheraton, Carol Lambert, Barbara Fisher and Margaret and Ronnie Walker who, along with Jackie, were all linked in with local outlets. This arrangement was supported on the finance side by the Treasurer, David Pollard and Malcolm Shergold continued to deal with sales via our website.

Jackie was also pleased to report how well the system was working for ensuring each of these trails remain accessible to walkers. Chris and Adrian Wasley look after Soudley Circles, John Sheraton looks after Beechenhurst Trail whilst John Bevan, Ian Walding and Irene Lowthain look after the Highmeadow Trail. Special thanks were added for the coordination role Chris Wasley undertakes (reporting problems or issues to either the Forestry Commission or for action by volunteer members of our Group) and to Derek Sheppard and Maurice Cullis for their maintenance work.

Jackie referred to the work John Baker had undertaken in his role as Footpath Officer over his first months in post. Although John would talk in more detail about his work later in the agenda, Jackie wanted to make members aware of just how much work John does on our behalf to ensure access to our lovely Forest of Dean is not eroded. She thanked John for giving so much of his time.

Finally Jackie reminded members that 2018 would be the Group's 40th Anniversary. A special walk and event would be organized for next September to mark this milestone. It was hoped that as many previous members as possible would be able to join us on that day. Jackie went on to give a very special mention of Susan Warren's plans to lead a walk on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her leading walks for the Group. As a founder member, Susan has led countless walks for the Group, and it is doubtful there are many Ramblers' walk leaders who could match this personal achievement.

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT:** In David Pollard's absence, Ronnie Walker confirmed the accounts for 2016/17 had been audited and signed off by him as independent examiner. The required return had also been submitted to Area Treasurer. Copies of the Income, Expenditure and Balance Sheets for both the general running of the Group and The Publications and Projects Account were made available to members. In response to questions from Alan Fisher, Ronnie confirmed that the amount of £579.44 was largely due to costs of renewing our website provider however this now gave us three years running costs. Also that £350 under "walking promotion" was the amount of funding for the First Aid training held in February 2017. No further questions were raised therefore the financial accounts were accepted.

**4. FOOTPATHS OFFICER REPORT:** John Baker reported on his good working relationship with GCC and its contractor, AMEY. This had enabled him to have a positive influence in the reporting of access problems and maintenance of footpath issues. He went on to describe the nature of the issues he had been involved in citing access issues at Yorkley Woodside, erosion of footpaths

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around Tidenham Quarry, blockages to a Bridleway in Churcham and a non compliance issue in Joyford which had now been referred to the Secretary of State. On average he reviewed 40 planning applications per month and would object if a PROW was compromised.

John had been active in ensuring our Group had links with GCC and Lydbrook Parish Council regarding the closure of Stowfield Bridge, Lydbrook and the campaign to have it re-opened. He updated the meeting on the current position and expressed his thanks to Brian Payne who had written giving Area's support.

Finally, John has drawn up a short audit form which would be issued to walks leaders requesting they note down any access problems encountered during reccies on PROW in the Forest of Dean District Council area.

5. **WALKS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT:** Ian Walding thanked members who had put on walks stating that over 100 walks had been led over the past year ranging from 3 miles to 13 miles and across many different areas. He reiterated Peter's positive comments about the Group's walk leaders.

6. **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Lynn Stockley started her report by reminding members that no Membership Secretary had been appointed at last year's AGM and Jackie had taken over this duty temporarily in addition to her General Secretary duties. Lynn had taken over this role in June.

Membership was currently 211 from a start point at the beginning of the year of 204. This represented a healthy but fluctuating membership. Since June Lynn had put in place an improved and smoother email system based on using Mail Chimp. This allowed for personalization of broadcast emailing and gave feedback on the system's effectiveness. It also meant that the system could more easily be handed over should the Membership Secretary change.

**Full copies of officers' reports are available on request to the Secretary**

7. **Resolution: a proposal for a revised approach to handling printed walks programmes and newsletters:** Jackie introduced this item by explaining the background and the rationale for the proposal. She outlined the current process and what was needed to be streamlined so that the logistics are less complicated and easier for a volunteer to deliver. The aim was to use email communication to as many members as possible and significantly reduce the number of hard copy posting. This change would affect about 40 out of a membership of over 200 and it was considered that many of the 40 may now prefer emails but had simply not been asked. Jackie emphasized that any member wishing to continue to have posted communications would still be able to.

The proposal was accepted with the removal of the need to send a SAE and therefore relevant members would receive a questionnaire and any change would take effect from June 2018.

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**8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

Brian Payne took the Chair for this item until the new Chair for 2017/18 was elected

<b>Position:</b>	<b>Nominee:</b>	<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Seconded by:</b>	<b>Voted:</b>
Chair	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	Alan Fisher	unanimously
Secretary	Jackie Huck	Peter Robbins	Jenny Robbins	unanimously
Treasurer	Ronnie Walker	Peter Robbins	Malcolm Shergold	unanimously
Membership	Lynn Stockley	Jackie Huck	Peter Robbins	
Footpaths (FoD area and committee member)	John Baker	Alan Fisher	Malcolm Shergold	unanimously
Footpaths (Cross Border)	Jenny Robbins	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	unanimously
Publicity	vacancy			
Walks coordinator	Ian Walding	Barbara Fisher	John Sheraton	unanimously
Webmaster	Malcolm Shergold	Alan Fisher	Philip Stockley	unanimously
Committee members	John Bevan Sue Marshall	Peter Robbins	Jean Sheraton	unanimously
Newsletter Editor	Ronnie Walker	Pam Cullis	Ian Walding	unanimous
Area Representative	vacancy			

**9. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:** Alan Fisher was appointed independent auditor for 2017/18

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** Margaret Walker drew members’ attention to the April 2018 holiday in the Llyn Peninsula and stated that details had been posted in the newsletter. Further information could be obtained from Ronnie Walker.

Margaret Walker also asked for walks leaders to double check the published mileage for their walks so that attendees are better able to make judgments about their ability to take part in a walk.

Bernie Gill was given the opportunity of saying a few words about Area; its role and links to local Groups. Area is the conduit between CO and local Groups in terms of money, issues and communications. CO must comply with the requirements of the Charities Commission to use resources for Ramblers’ charitable aims and not to have excessive funds held without an identified purpose. This had resulted in a review of monies held by each local Group and, in some cases, a



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capping of the second part year funding allocation. Bernie had urged all groups to have appropriate plans for spending any reserves held and this applied to the FoD group. Bernie went

on to inform the meeting of national consultations on joint use footpaths and CROW review and urged members to respond.

In response to the fact that membership is dropping at national level, it was noted that Ramblers national leaflets made no mention of local walking groups and this was considered to be a missed promotional opportunity. Area would feed this back.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Signed:.....

Date:.....