



South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area Ramblers

AREA COUNCIL

October 28th 2020 starting at 19:00

Using Zoom : (Copy & Paste the URL Link below into your Browser)

<https://zoom.us/j/97706073492?pwd=eXJhRG8yM2tpZFRmQW9ydIFuY3NEQT09>

Meeting ID: 977 0607 3492

Passcode: 416240

Minutes of the SYNED Area Council (by Zoom) – Wednesday October 28th 2021

AC2020/10/01/01 Present: Cath MacKay (Sheff, VP); Phil Ryder (Roth Metro); Allen Pestell (Area Chair, B&P); Judy Gathercole (Sheffield); Gavin Johns (CNED); Les Seaman (Area Access); Dom (Sheff 20's); Jeremy Kenyon (Sheff 40's); Isobel McCormick (CNED); Catherine (Sheff 20's) and Malcolm Dixon (acting Area Sec, Sheffield).

AC2020/10/01/02 Apologies: David Gadd (Donc); Cynthia Ashton (Coop Ramblers); Christine Whittaker (Area News/Website); Terry Howard (Sheff, VP); Philip Lee (Dearne Valley Ramblers – DVR AGM); Nikki Speakman (B&P); Christine Hewitt (SVIW).

AC2020/10/02/01 Les Seaman was elected as Chair and welcomed everyone to the Meeting. (Allan Pestell initially had technical problems taking part in the discussion)
Malcolm Dixon took the Minutes. The Meeting was also recorded.

AC2020/10/02/02 Last ACROW Meeting had been Feb 24th 2020. Minutes had been distributed.
True Record: CM, MD. AGREED

AC2020/10/03 New ACROW Agenda Items:-

01 Access: LS reported that Dogs would remain banned from Moscar, Bamford, Hallam Derwent Edge Moors under their new ownership.

Still waiting results of the Appeal by landowners against DEFRA & PPPB request that they remove plastic matting at CutGate. Had gone to Planning Inspectorate.

Riggs High Road Burial Ground: Reports that an access road & path had been laid down. But development was only granted subject to there being an ecology Impact report being made. But neither LS or CM had been informed about it being done or its conclusions despite being objectors to the scheme.
LS would get in touch with Planning Officers and see what had happened.

02 Countryside

CM reported on proposed housing development at derelict Hepworths/Wraggs site in Loxley Valley. There had been 900 objections inc PPPB and Friends of Loxley Valley and ourselves. Scheme had been unanimously rejected by Council as contravened a lot of their policies. Wasn't a brownfield site and hadn't been earmarked for housing and Sheffield already had enough land for this.
Developers were appealing and had to do so by Nov 4th. Then would be 5 weeks for counter objections to make their case. Probably would go to a Public Enquiry under new regulations.

03 Rights of Way Matters

01 NFU/CLA Proposals to Divert Paths in Fields containing Livestock

Had been some progress on these proposals as Ramblers had now made their objections public, whereas had previously done so in private, along with other outdoor organisations. NFU/CLA were now trying to get their proposals added to a Bill that was going through Parliament, assuming Ministers accepted them.

It was considered aross overreaction to problems caused by dogs and would have detrimental effect on our use of paths on a day-to-day basis.
NFU continued to ignore Health & Safety concerns of farm workers and the need to breed more docile cattle. Central Office (CO) were now on the ball on this issue & it was hoped they would keep all members informed, so we could campaign & take up the issue with MPs if it became necessary.

02 Sheffield RoW Digital Mapping & DMMO checking

Sheffield RoW Dept in process of updating their Definitive Maps and need help with checking that they've done it correctly. Created a spreadsheet of last 50 years of statements and now need volunteers to help them check that they have got any changes made since had been added correctly. Intended that all maps & statements would be scanned in and once checked they would have created an up-to-date digital definitive map that would be available online to the public. Making footpath work & reporting much easier. It had gone quiet on this as down to bare minimum of resources & staffing in RoW unit. Agreed we support this in principal and would help seek volunteers once they were required. Also discussed in the Local Access Forum.. SB had already sorted out some anomalies and was looking at splitting maps into manageable portions for volunteers. Horseriders were wanting more information to be available than was currently held: gradients, gates & stiles. But not likely to be included & as wanted to keep it relatively simple. That might come in later once the digital definitive map had been established. Qn on training & process – still to be finalised. Qn on number of entries – 200+ upto 500. Would be purely a desktop exercise mostly done online. No fieldwork required. All paper documents would be retained and kept securely if ever required for legal reasons. GJ would check if Derbyshire CC had similar plans.

03 Sheffield RoW Dept – Resources & Staffing

Following retirements & a recent staff death, SB virtually left on his own. TH understood staff would be available from next March for the Department & the LAF. Legal work on hold at the moment with work concentrated on problem footpaths. Path maintenance problems accumulating. Sheffield's own Fix it team of path volunteers had restarted but already had a list of jobs to be done. In Chesterfield had some reorganisation and RoW work now came under Highways. But no work being done as no Council staff available, due to Covid, to accompany volunteers - unlike in previous years. JK trying to set up county wide cross committees to take local walking & footpath network more seriously. Plenty of awareness of issues but lacking in cash to do something about it. GJ said there were minor grants available in Derbyshire to Parish Councils that could be used for footpath work, but not all PCs aware of this. Similar schemes available in South Yorkshire parishes, eg in Wickersley.

04 Lost Ways Project

In response to CO's view that there were "100's of Lost Paths" in our Area, TH had made proposal that we send money to CO to employ a research worker to actually look into them. Proviso on the donation being that work had to be done in our Area. Had tried asking for volunteers, now felt we needed professionals given time limitations. Would also like to know where all these 'Lost paths' were. David Gadd had offered to be the Area Coordinator for our Area and had been in touch with the LW Team in CO. Felt it would be very labour & time intensive doing this research work. Needed to be very targeted. A donation from our funds would probably be only a drop in the ocean of what's required. CO would want tight control over any contractual arrangements and possibly wouldn't be prepared to allow an employee to concentrate on one area. So we would needed to find out what they were prepared to do. Needed to use short term contracts. Lost Ways project had dragged on for so many years and now was coming to its end (ie 2025) without much progress to show for it despite the public enthusiasm. Could possibly look at a targeted initiative – just employing someone to scan in all the Sheffield related Enclosure awards & statements and put them online and give other people access to them. LWP had said they had identified which paths were 'lost' by comparing old and modern maps, but hadn't passed down the information of where these paths were and how many there were of them. Having that information would be a good starting point and we could prioritise which of these paths were worth doing more research on and the logistics of doing that work. Sec was asked to contact DG to ask him to be the LW Coordinator for the Area and to contact the LW Team at CO requesting this additional information.

05 Monsal Trail JK was concerned over fresh proposals to reinstate the railway over this stretch of disused line between Bakewell and Buxton now a very popular walking and cycling trail. A bid had been put in to get finance for this project (upto £100m) by East Midlands Connect and High Peak MP but scheme was not supported by Derbyshire CC. Needed to keep an eye on this with view for a possible joint campaign with cyclists.

06 Sheffield Groups Footpaths Joint Committee – footpath work continued to be done by the individual Groups when & where they could, but not felt there was a need for a Committee to be involved.

07 Area/Group Path Wardens Scheme JK reported that it was up and running. Number of Reports had been logged and some stiles had been repaired as a result. 100 reports from about 2 or 3 very active Wardens. Together they made a valid point to local Councillors of why more money & resources needed to be put in Rights of Way work.

The Path Reporting Tool (www.jez.cc/paths) could be used by anyone in the SYNED Area not just Sheffield. Provided accurate location & photo of problem as part of the Report which saved Officers time in having to go out and look for themselves.

In Chesterfield all the Parishes had path wardens, who could investigate any problems reported. Also walked their paths on a regular basis and reported any problems themselves to either Mel or to Derbyshire CC.

08 Any Other ACROW Business

01 Sheffield Local Plan Due to not having met since February, ACROW had missed the chance to make comments on the Sheffield Local Plan Consultation which closed on Oct 13th. Friends of the Loxley Valley were one of many local Groups who had responded especially concerned with Green Belt Protection.

02 Government Planning Reform proposals Consultation had just ended.

There had been overwhelming opposition across the Country to removal of local input and control on any planning proposals in the White Paper. Which was proposing that any objections would have to be done on a central more general basis.

Needed to keep an eye on this and any future proposals. Probably wouldn't go away despite the opposition.

AC2020/10/04 New Area Council Agenda Items:-

01 LS asked to continue as Chair. 11 members still present. Feb 24th AC Minutes had been distributed. Chesterfield membership figures were corrected.

02 It was felt that we should record our "Thanks" to David Gadd who had stepped down after at least 12 years, for all his dedicated work for the AC. It was suggested we make a presentation to him at the AGM, possibly family orientated. AP would contact him.

Feb 24th AC Minutes accepted as a "TRUE RECORD"

AGREED

AC2020/10/05 Group Reports

01 Rotherham Metro PR reported: that the Group had restarted Walks Prog on September 1st. Maximum numbers on walks decided by the walk leader upto a maximum of 20.

All in accordance with Ramblers guidance and instructions. Working well so far.

Footpath maintenance work had also continued. No limits on numbers doing that.

Normal 12 month walk programme was being used as a base and reviewed on a monthly basis and keeping all walks within South Yorkshire (ie Tier 3). Everyone registering for walks. Risk assessments being done.

Larger walking parties splitting into groups of six when going through built up areas. No issues so far.

Carried Ramblers letter to say they were an organised group and were allowed to have larger groups.

Tried to keep 2 metres apart, although it was difficult to maintain at times. It was upto individuals to decide what they were happy with. Need to avoid stopping and chatting. Needed to be responsible and sensible.

We are all adults and could make our own minds up

02 Chesterfield NED IM reported: that Group had restarted in October when normal walks programme would have started. Didn't want to have to do Risk Assessments (RA's) for small Groups so had recommended an upper limit of 15. Had longer & medium walks on Mondays & Wednesdays using cars and public transport. Shorter walks on Saturdays designed to attract new members and will start fuller programme in January. Sunday walkers didn't want to do RA's, so weren't official walks. Doing them in bubbles of 6 starting at staggered times or going in opposite directions, but not insured. Lot of leaders refusing to do RA's.

Also Sheffield based members couldn't walk with the Group and they were having to re-route walks out of South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire as they were in Tier 3.

03 Sheffield Group JG reported: Group had started walks on July 19th. Rolling programme with walks put in at short notice. Originally just 6's going out and leaders repeating walks. Had started going with upto 10, 12 & 15 at walk leader's discretion and using public transport. Quite a lot of regulars not coming out as either not happy to or were going out in unofficial groupings without RA's and insurance. Group was trying to adapt as rules kept changing and were now just walking within South Yorkshire boundary and back to mainly just groups of 6. People did what they were comfortable with. Group had lost leaders partly over Covid concerns but mostly over Risk Assessment issue which was a concern if they became a permanent feature as had been mentioned. Members had offered to help write RA's for other leaders, but not many taken this offer up. Slight increase in new members – some coming out on walks. Also sold quite a few copies of Sheffield Country Walk booklet.

04 Sheffield 20's Dom reported: that the Group had restarted walks in mid-July. Mostly on a weekly basis. Had struggled for leaders. Many naturally nervous over Covid. But able to give a week's notice of most walks. No issues with doing Risk Assessments and no issues over Group sizes. Leader says what size group they are happy with and people book up accordingly. Seems to be going well at the moment.

05 Sheffield 40's Jez reported: walking programme going fine, with walk leaders deciding on numbers. Keeping within the tiers. Special concern over social distancing when stopped for lunches. Using Facebook to advertise walks and had got a massive increase in numbers on that site – 700 for a Group that only has 200+ paid up members. Mostly people who are interested in walking and what to know how to start. Have taken in about a dozen new members when Chesterfield 20's was absorbed in May but got around 8 more since then. Going against national trend. Hope this continued after the Covid restrictions were lifted. Wayne Grounsell would be standing down as Chair at their end of November Group AGM.

06 Reminder that all volunteers should be registered with the Ramblers on their Assemble volunteers website. Walk leaders should be registered especially as they would get personal insurance cover in addition to the third party insurance. If they hadn't done so already, Secretaries should send list of names upto CO and keep the list upto date. Could check names had been added by going on Assemble:-
<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/assemble.aspx>

07 Concern was expressed over the insistence by the Insurers that Risk Assessments had to be done prior to all walks, and that it was intended that this would continue after the Covid restrictions were relaxed at some future date. Quite a number of leaders saw this as an unnecessary imposition and were refusing to lead for many of our Groups, which was depleting our walks programmes. Walking was a relatively risk free activity and most walk leaders did recce's and recognised and warned about any possible hazards as they walked the route. Having a piece of paper with boxes ticked wouldn't make any difference. JK pointed out that he knew of other insurers who could provide equally good cover without the need for RA's to be done. We needed to take this up with Central Office and get them to re-negotiate the conditions.

AC2020/10/06 – Group AGMs

01 Sheffield had decided to postpone theirs UFN as couldn't get a safe venue, and were not allowed to meet indoors now and felt Zoom precluded quite a lot of members and might not attract any new ones.

02 Dearne Valley Ramblers – was being held that same evening, presumably by Zoom. Some Committee changes were expected as Secretary, Sue Haywood, had indicated she wished to step down.

03 Sheffield 20's – had held theirs via Zoom the previous week. It had gone well, including voting. Had advertised the AGM on Facebook and possibly got 5-6 people in addition to the Committee but less than they would usually get. Hadn't been able to elect a new Chair for the Group.

04 Rotherham Metro would be held on Zoom on the 9th. ECs were done on Zoom. Only four people had come forward to be there along with the Committee which was disappointing but still plenty of time.

05 Chesterfield – would be holding theirs on Dec 5th and sending out an email invite with the Zoom URL in. Also postal copy sent out to those who didn't take emails.

Although Constitutions said we should hold AGMs, CO, on Charity Commission advice, were now saying that although they would prefer them to go ahead there was no legal reason to hold them, at least at Group level and could be suspended on Covid grounds. However, still wanted Area AGMs to go ahead, preferably by Zoom, as these led up to the General Council level of governance. GC was itself postponed from April until September. Was due to be held at the Birmingham NEC next year on April 17th as a one day socially distanced Conference.

Age didn't seem to make any difference as to using the new technology to encourage people to 'attend' meetings. Seemed the 'fear' of being co-opted onto Committees outweighed such concerns.

Charity Commission guidance didn't say you couldn't have AGMs but you could have them virtually and follow your organisations's guidance on these matters. Left it upto the Charity to decide. Left it open.

AC2020/10/07 – Officer Reports

01 Chair – AP reported that he had been contacted by CO for his views on the Planning Reform White Paper and had said he wanted current situation to continue with local control of planning to remain.

02 Secretary - MD had produced a membership update based on (end month) figures from the Insight Hub.

	SD01 CNED	SD02 Donc	SD03 Sheffield	SD04 RothMet	SD05 B&P	SD07 DVR	SD50 Sheff20's	SD52 Sheff40's	SD96 SYNED	NATION
2019										
Oct	371	224	522	238	144	151	210	239	2172	102151
Nov	371	226	525	239	142	156	211	240	2181	101939
Dec	369	229	521	240	143	154	210	238	2179	101941
2020										
Jan	367	232	514	236	139	156	203	239	2159	102029
Feb	368	238	517	236	141	158	201	232	2162	101818
Mar	368	231	509	234	140	156	197	232	2135	100998
Apr	366	226	512	231	137	152	190	225	2102	99561
May	355	220	506	232	137	148	183	241*	2069	97993
June	350	220	502	232	137	147	178	240	2049	97314
July	349	224	504	233	137	140	173	240	2045	97616
Aug	355	228	510	232	133	146	169	246	2066	98116
Sept	353	228	507	229	135	150	167	251	2064	98717

Although our own Group membership fluctuated and had had some increases, there was concern that the overall national membership figure continued to fall – some 3,400 over the year. Had to be worrying as not only losing members & influence, but also income. Trustees had to do something.

03 Treasurer – GJ happy to report all returns had come in on time and had been sent off to CO.

He had circulated a report with the Agenda, which showed we had a current balance of £3,293.

Three Groups had deferred their Q1 payment, so Area wouldn't be taking a second quarter payment from CO. Still £9,989 in the BAWI fund which could pay for the second phase of work when Sheffield RoW were ready to go ahead. Was protected so CO couldn't take it. Ivy Cowen Trust Project still had £17,267 in funds and looking for something/s to spend it on. We were in year 2 of a five year project.

Still had plenty of 'Clarion Call' booklets in stock. Possibly needs promoting afresh. Good Xmas present. But not worth doing a reprint yet, but plenty in funds.

SYNED Area had purchased a Zoom Pro Licence which it was hoped that our local Groups would take the opportunity to use themselves. Needed to book through the Secretary but should be able to run their own meetings. (still TBC!)

04 Area Newsletter – CW wanted to know how many copies of the Area Annual Report individual Groups needed for those members who didn't accept emails and couldn't take the PDF version of it.

AC2020/10/07 – Area AGM – January 23rd 2021

Noted that members couldn't travel to Sheffield now it was in Tier 3. Also people wouldn't want to congregate inside in large groups. Crookes Club was available although people would need to book a place. Concert Room could be opened in Covid secure conditions, although bar would remain closed. Would also be restrictions on movement inside the Club. Given the age profile of area members most would not want to meet inside a club anyway. Also various concerns raised related to our using public transport to get there.

Feeling was that it would be preferable and safer to hold the AGM using Zoom. People would still need to book a place to get the Zoom URL and quite a few would feel excluded as a result but not much choice at moment with Covid restrictions.

We could delay the decision but needed to send out details in good time, preferably in the Area Annual Report which was about to go to the printers.

Proposed that the Area AGM be held on Zoom m: GJ S: IM

AGREED

Sec to make the necessary arrangements & inform the Crookes Social Club.

AC2020/10/08 – Any Other Business

01 – Should we have an Area Council before the Area AGM to decide on arrangements? See who wanted to stand for positions, etc? November 23rd had been the date previously booked for an AC to be held at the Quaker Meeting Rooms. Was this still acceptable – using Zoom? Yes – to start at 7pm.

Needed to send out a Notice for the Area Annual General Meeting and the fact that it would be using Zoom. Could also ask for Nominations for Area Officer positions and also for the two Delegates to go to the General Council at the NEC next April 17th (but might be by Zoom by then).

Secretary would arrange to send out the various notices and say that nominations were now open and could be sent in by post or email for these various positions to be voted on at the AGM itself

02 - Also had to consider whether to send in any Motions. Last year's Motions had been remitted to the Trustees by the GC by Zoom held in September. So didn't know what progress had been made on them and could appeal against their decisions at next year's GC.

Possible Motions on renegotiating the Insurance and also concern over the fall in membership.

GJ suggested that JK and AP both bring draft wording of these two possible Motions to the AC on November 23rd for us to decide which goes forward to the Area AGM and the subsequent GC2021.

Meeting Closed : 21:10 (2hr:15:51) 186 MBs WAV File now available