



**South Yorks &
N.E. Derbyshire**

**Draft Minutes of the SYNED ACROW and Area Council held on November 22nd 2021
at the Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield and via Zoom**

CHAIR: Allen Pestell Minutes taken by Area Sec: Malcolm Dixon

AC.2021.11.22.01: Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting

Present: Allen Pestell; Malcolm Dixon; Jeremy Kenyon; Nicki Speakman; Terry Howard; David Gadd; Judy Gathercole; St John O Donabhain (ACROW only); Phil Ryder.

And on Zoom (once link established): Les Seaman, Cath MacKay and Johnathan Revell.

Apologies received from: Gavin Johns; Phil Lee; Isobel McCormick; Mike Pye; Roly Smith;

ACROW.2021.11.22.01: Minutes of the ACROW meeting held on September 6th 2021 had been distributed and were found a True Record

ACROW.2021.11.22.02: Matters Arising

0 1) Lost Paths/DLYW Project – progress update

TH, DG & SJOD had all made comments on the maps produced by CO and were now waiting for Phase 2 when they could actually put their own routes on the map.

DG was puzzled that the system didn't allow him to see what others put in and presumably they couldn't see what he put in. SJOD understood this was to allow CO to find out if there was a consensus on the validity & usefulness of a path if they got similar reports from more than one person. But it had meant that DG couldn't check what Barnsley Group had put in.

NS thought it unlikely that Barnsley had put anything in as, due to lack of volunteers, they were just concentrating on their walks programme. But other people could be putting in routes in their area.

AP felt that the AC would have to look at the B&P situation, provide support for their committee and possibly look at merging it with another Group. But would leave that discussion until the Area AGM.

02) BAWI – Phase 2 & other projects – any progress?

BAWI-Phase 2 JK reported that a First Meeting had been held at Bradfield – just starting the planning work.

Looking at doing a similar amount of work as Phase 1 with similar sort of finance required (which we had in SYNED Account). Still waiting for Sheffield PROW Dept to sort itself out and become fully staffed as would need their help.

Had identified a number of stiles which needed work and also possible locations for benches to be sited which would be useful additions.

03) SYNED River Walks Project

Not really started on this yet – apart from collecting together a bag of leaflets – which could be scanned into a digital form. There was an opportunity to progress matters further if we followed up Simon Ogden's presentation at the Area AGM with some form of collaboration with him or one or more of the Trusts he helps run.

04) Dispersal or Disposal of Old Large Scale OS Maps

TH still had some left but mostly of Sheffield and Derbyshire. Nothing on Doncaster or Barnsley areas.

He warned they were heavy and you would have to supply transport to pick them up.

05) Co-ordination & Cooperation between the Sheffield Groups update

Only had an initial meeting on Zoom so far.

There had only been one issue to deal with, which AH had responded to on behalf of the Group to Sheff PROW. JH of PNFS had copied us into the Reports he made about paths to Sheff PROW. He was very active and knowledgeable and it was suggested we work with him on those issues we had in common.

Sec noted that both Sheff PROW and Legal Depts had the Sheffield FPOs email address so they would be sent any DMMO and other applications and could respond on SYNED's behalf.

06) Sheffield Footpath Warden Scheme

JK reported that it had been set up with a number of enthusiastic volunteers and a website they could use to report and record any problems. But then Covid had struck and things had gone quiet, although some issues had been reported and dealt with. JK suggested it might be an idea to call another meeting get some feedback from those volunteers still interested and possibly relaunch the scheme.

TH reckoned things might start improving now that PROW Dept had two more workers to do things, not just SB.

ACROW.2021.11.22.03: Other Access Matters

LS reported that Appeal by Landowner & Agent against PPJPB's request that they remove plastic matting across Cut Gate had been rejected by Inspector, probably with costs against them too. They had 12 months to remove all signs of the sheeting and other infrastructure and to replace with heather and other plants & natural cover to reinstate the moorland.

ACROW.2021.11.22.04: Other Countryside Matters

AP reported that it looked like development of the HS2 rail route had been stopped. May get othe local rail improvements & tram links instead. Trans-Pennine rail link (HS3) improvements had also been dropped. Bits and pieces elsewhere but still not clear if they will actually go ahead as opposed to being (long standing) aspirations such as electrification of the MML between Sheffield and London.

Concern over plans to convert the Monsal Trail back into being a rail line again. Strong lobby in favour of it but an equal one (inc PPJPB and LAF) to keep it as a walk & cycleway.

ACROW.2021.11.22.05: Other Rights of Way Matters

01) TH reported that he had picked up concerns at LAF & Walking Forums expressed by the PPJPB and others about amount of traffic, car parking problems, overnight camping issues and use of BBQs.

Felt we were getting to a crisis point. They were looking at increasing public transport provision and even imposing car free areas, with Park & Ride schemes.

But public transport had to generally become more reliable and cheaper as well as more numerous to get people out of their cars. We all had to help make the Peak Park more sustainable and balance visitor numbers with preventing some of their more damaging (even when unintended) aspects. Could people be spread away from the "honey pot" areas? Could other areas be made more appealing or better information be supplied to people about their attractions or improve their connections to bus routes. We needed carrots as well as sticks – but we did need something. And probably more than could be budgeted for at present levels of funding.

02) Doncaster Group had had their AGM the previous week. Had put two Rights of Way applications in along with usage evidence over two years ago, but had not heard of any progress about them. DG had emailed RoW Dept and was told they would get back to him. But hadn't. It was not as if they had been busy. But they were "on the list" but not being progressed. And now "White Lanes" had to be claimed along with the footpaths they connected to. TH reported on a similar case of a white lane where no one was sure if it was a road or a footpath and would now have to go through the process of being claimed again. He also thought they were other examples where the status of white lanes was contested and needed to be fought for.

DG reported on a friend who had put a claim in with user evidence for a path and was told she was 162nd on the waiting list. She had written to the Secretary of State who said it should be dealt within 18 months. But was still waiting more than 18 months later.

ACROW.2021.11.22.06: Any Other ACROW Business

01) Compilation of ACROW pages for Area Website – still waiting for this to happen. John Adler had been going to look into doing it when he was briefly the Area FPO, but hadn't progressed it before he had resigned. Needed to list what we wanted there - such as RoW and Access Law and downloadable forms for reporting Obstructions and/or Claiming Paths. Also information on the Lost Ways Project and the River Paths Project, etc.. Should also have links to the various Rights of Way Units in all the Local Authorities we cover. Would then need to collate it together and get JR to upload it to the website. (Could also look at what other Areas provided)

AC.2021.11.22.02: Minutes of Area Council Meeting held on September 6th 2021 AC had been distributed and were found to be a 'True Record'

AC.2021.11.22.03: Any Matters Arising

01) Walk Leading & Risk Assessments

Despite a number of people writing and objecting to CO (inc our Area President, David Blunkett see Appendix 'A' below) about the imposition of these, the CEO and BoT Chair had reiterated that they "were here to stay" as a way of our showing to our insurers that we were following good practice in walk leading. They said there had been a positive response to what they were doing from other walk leaders, who also welcomed the walk leading elearning courses. They had admitted it could have been better handled and say they were now committed to improving how they worked together with both volunteers and the insurers to ensure their approach to risk management was kept as simple as possible. They would continue to update their guidance.

Really wasn't good enough. CO weren't listening to their local volunteers. Would be raised at Area AGMs and at the General Council next April. There were at least two Motions being put opposing the current situation. If the Board and CO opposed them it would show where things stood. Could be debated openly at last. Were we a bottom-up membership run organisation or one with top down managerial aspirations?

Walking and walk leading was a very low risk activity and didn't need lots of form filling to happen. Surely could get third party insurance without all this paperwork. Wasn't known if other insurance companies had been asked, but surely it would have been good practice to get other quotes.

There seemed to be a debate over whether we needed additional insurance cover because we were now registered as 'volunteers' as opposed to just being members. There was opposition to this two tier system.

Most other walking groups managed without doing risk assessments. Their leaders still did recce's. Doing a risk assessment wouldn't, of itself, stop an accident happening as something unforeseen could always happen.

We did need to have clarity about what Third Party Insurance there was for leaders and for ordinary members.

Registered leaders would now get additional cover. All registered volunteers whatever they were doing would be covered. Volunteers doing maintenance work would also needed to be registered on Assemble to get cover. At a time when we were trying to encourage new members to join us on walks and needed new walk leaders to take them, we were finding ways to lose them or to go 'off programme' and just walk "as a Group of Friends".

But this would not be publicised as a Ramblers activity so we looked like weren't doing anything.

This was a disincentive to joining the Ramblers rather than some other Group. Indeed was an incentive to start their own group or organisation instead. Which meant our other worthwhile projects such as 'Don't Lose Your Way', other campaigns and footpath work didn't get the finance and support they required.

02) Sheffield Country Walk booklet – although paid for by SYNED - bulk of copies were still held by Sheffield and needed to be distributed wider especially before Christmas. Will be available at January AGM. Please publicise.

AC.2021.11.22.04: Officers Reports (as available)

01) Chair – nothing to report

02) Secretary (a) Area Membership update (end Oct) below. Generally there's been a slow increase. But still not got back to the numbers we had even just five years before. People were still joining but equally many were

leaving for any number of reasons, especially at the older age group. At least many of the new members wanted to walk, which was why we needed more walk leaders coming forward rather than being discouraged. We needed to be able to offer a greater variety of walks. Shorter walks and at different times of the day. We also needed members to become involved in helping to run the Groups at Committee level – to help make things happen.

Our higher membership fee also put people off from joining, again when compared to other local walking groups, who weren't supporting London and Regional Offices and staff. Fee had been frozen for last two years. Becoming dependant on Postcode Lottery money but that would end soon and was only for specific projects.

	SD01 CNED	SD02 Donc	SD03 SHEFF	SD04 RothM	SD05 B&P	SD07 DVR	SD50 Sheff 20	SD52 Sheff 40	not allocatd	SD SYNED	National
01/01/2016	473	230	614	266	180	105	231	230	0	2329	106,452
01/01/2017	439	224	590	259	167	114	258	233	0	2284	105,234
01/01/2018	424	204	580	246	152	117	233	240	0	2196	104,617
01/02/2019	410	236	564	251	154	147	225	250	0	2237	102,023
01/10/2019	371	224	522	238	144	151	210	239	73	2172	102151
2020											
End Sept	353	228	507	229	135	150	167	251	44	2064	98717
2021											
End Sept	363	231	505	212	143	142	157	268	52	2073	101130
Oct	367	228	500	210	148	144	156	277	52	2083	101173
Nov	373	229	500	213	149	142	158	279	52	2095	102281

New Groups found it easier to use social media such as 'Facebook' to attract new members and keep them informed of walks and other activities.

Unallocated Members would be written to, to see if they were interested in joining particular Groups or at least receiving information from them.

Noted we had quite a few members who lived outside SYNED area but still included in our lists.

(b) Emails – information from CO regarding the new branding & logos (see header), and a new website and a new Walks Manager that would (eventually) replace GWEM. The Insight Hub was also shortly going to be transferred to a new system.

Each Group & Area would be asked to supply a new landing page to connect to their own websites.

Still not clear how, or how well, the new national website would interface with local websites.

Beta version would be launched in January to allow for possible glitches with a full national launch hopefully sometime in March. Concern that CO staff still not consulting with or listening too well local web people, esp Ramblers-Web people.

03) Treasurer's Report – 22 Nov 2021 (previously distributed)

Action items from last meeting: CO has approved our budgets for the 2021 – 2022 financial year.

Please note that the opening balances are as at the start of the new financial year on 1st October 2021.

1. General Account

£
Opening Balance - 94

We have received the following:

Q1 Area Funding	1400
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Total	1400
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We have **paid** the following:

M Dixon – Zoom Licence	144
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Dearne Valley – Q1 Area Funding	275
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Total	419
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The current balance (22 Nov)	1075
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2. Bradfield Ancient Ways Improvement Project

£

Opening Balance	9989
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We have received the following:	Total	0
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We have paid the following:	Total	0
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The current balance (22 Nov)	9989
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3. Ivy Cowen (Deceased) Trust Project

£

Opening Balance	16767
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We have received the following:	Total	0
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We have paid the following:	Total	0
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The current balance (22 Nov)	16767
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Allocated Money

Lost Ways £1000

PD Access Fund £1000

GHB Ward Walk - £1000

Sheffield Country Walk Reprint - £500

4. Clarion Call Account

£

Opening Balance	4813
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We have received the following:	Total	0
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We have paid the following:	Total	0
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The current balance (22 Nov)	4813
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5. Bank Account

The current Bank bal (22 Nov)	32644
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Other Business	None
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Looks like we might not get a bill for the printing of the SCW Booklets as it hadn't been issued before the person left SCC and no one else could process it. (Would cost more to process than it would get back in).
We needed to spend some of these funds before Central Office asked for some of it back.
Question over insurance cover for the Area's equipment (laptop, projector & screen etc) when being taken out and used by local Groups. Presumably covered by Secretary's home insurance when on his premises.

04) Webmaster – JR has been invited to webinar organised by CO on 25th about the new website – still unsure what it would involve.

05) Publicity / Newsletter / other Social Media – still needed a Publicity Officer - raise at Area AGM in January

AC.2021.11.22.05: Group Reports

- a) Barnsley and Penistone – No Committee as such – so no report
- b) Doncaster had AGM previous week - re-elected same committee
- c) Sheff 40's – Risk assessments raised at their AGM
- d) Sheffield – Had Andrew McCloy Chair of PPJPB as speaker. Three people had left EC but had been replaced.
- e) C&NED had their AGM previous week
- f) DVR had had their AGM and reelected Officers again.

AC.2021.11.22.06: AOB :

1) End of Year Area Annual Report – Sec still waiting a number of Group reports to put in it but once ready he intended to either distribute via post (CO had supplied address labels) and/or email a PDF version to those members we had an email address for. Report would include the Area AGM Notice and Agenda.

2) Area AGM – 2pm on January 29th 2022 at the Crookes Social Club, Sheffield
Nominations for Officers and GC Delegates required. GC would be at the NEC on April 9th (only).
Would be re-nominating David Blunkett as Area President again.
Simon Ogden had been confirmed as a Speaker. Trustee would be Mark Chung - FPO for Burnley Group – First Year (of 2) on BoT. Morning Walk was being arranged by Sheffield Group.
Sheffield would also supply tea, coffee and biscuits, if Club would supply the water boiler & cups.
Club would be supplying sound equipment etc.

3) Sheffield Heritage Fair, Millennium Gallery, January 29th & 30th 2022
Was also later and now clashed with our slightly delayed Area AGM. Decided to go for both days.
Would need support especially on the Saturday when Area AGM taking place. Local members would be circulated. Intended that stall would have display boards, CC & SCW books and leaflets plus laptop & projector.
Problem that SCC leaflets locked up in Town Hall & Moorfoot offices, so may be short of material.
But would be contacting Central Office for any publicity material - esp in new branding they may have produced.
Set up Friday afternoon. Saturday 10-4 and Sunday 11-4 (then take down.)

4) Next Year's SYNED's Meetings:- Feb 21st ; May 16th ; August 15th & November 21st - AGREED
Were we going to continue to use Zoom at Meetings or go back to in-person only meetings?
Not getting full representation at Meetings even with the Zoom link.
Continue to be technical issues (especially with sound) setting the Zoom connection up, usually causing delay to start of Meetings. People on Zoom didn't always feel part of the meeting. Needed to keep the whole issue under review. Possibly too early to say one or the other so had to keep both for time being.

5) DVR still taking bookings and limiting numbers. Other Groups leaving it upto their leaders to decide whether to take bookings or limit numbers. Most not. Sheff 40's continuing with bookings as leaders had requested it.

6) Next Year's SYNED Area AGM – Saturday January ?? 2023 at 2pm – still to be decided/confirmed.
To be hosted by Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire. TBC Speaker and Venue also to be arranged

**Appendix 'A' -
Reply from Tanya Curry (CEO) to Area President David Blunkett**

Dear David

Thanks again for your message and your continued support for the Ramblers in your role as honorary president of the South Yorkshire North Derbyshire Ramblers.

The Ramblers exists to reduce and remove the barriers to access the outdoors to enable everyone to experience the joys of walking. The last thing we want to do is introduce unnecessary asks of our volunteers or walkers.

Walking is an inherently safe activity, and we want it to be as fun and easy as possible for walkers and walk leaders. As you are aware - the Ramblers has some of the most experienced walk leaders across Great Britain who already take great care in ensuring reasonable steps (including the recce) are in place to ensure that all walkers are welcomed and safe on each walk.

As part of our annual review of risk and insurance it became apparent that we needed to tighten up our approach to comply with insurance requirements and reflect good practice – this included asking volunteers to keep a written copy of the risk assessment. Having written evidence helps us ensure that the activity is delivered safely and allows our insurers to handle a potential claim efficiently and accurately with a clear audit trail.

We have deliberately kept things as simple and as flexible as possible to mitigate some of the concerns you raise. For walks where the risk is very low, we would expect the process to only take a few minutes, for others the form gives them a platform to complete a more detailed assessment. We would also expect where a leader is undertaking the same route with a different group, for them to re-use and update the original risk assessment.

We are aware that maintaining a written record has led to some walk leaders questioning their role. On the flip side we have seen new walk leaders come forward who have been reassured that such steps are in place. We have also received very positive feedback from volunteers on other developments such as new e-learning for walk leaders and regular peer-led conversations and masterclasses to help share good practice.

We openly acknowledge that more could have been done to engage our volunteers through this process and are committed to improving how we work together with both them and our insurers to ensure our approach to risk management is kept as simple as possible. We also continue to update our guidance to support the changes – please see attached a copy of the most recent FAQ document, together with a note from our insurers.

I hope the above helps provides further context and addresses some of the concerns you have.
Thank you again for your continued support.

Kind Regards Tanya Curry Interim CEO November 17th 2021

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SYNED Area website: www.synedramblers.org.uk **National website:** www.ramblers.org.uk

Please Note: This SYNED Meeting was Recorded

“The Ramblers’ Association is a registered charity (England and Wales no: 1093577, Scotland no: SC039799)
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