

**RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION – MANCHESTER AREA
STOCKPORT GROUP
Minutes of Annual General Meeting held online via Zoom
Monday 25 January 2021**

Committee Members Present:

Dave Sidgwick	Elected Member (Group Chairman)
Angie Bryant	Elected Member (Group Treasurer)
Gwen Sidgwick	Elected Member (Group Secretary)
Sarah Hubbard	Elected Member
Mike Pell	Elected Member
Kay Pell	Elected Member
Derek Downes	Elected Member
Jane Downes	Elected Member
Christine Bell	Elected Member
Duncan Challen	Elected Member
Wilma Milton	Elected Member

Other Members Present: Tony Blockley, Jim Horan, Margaret Horan, Mike Offord, Margaret Riley, Roger Hubbard, Phil Featherstone

1. Chairman's address

Hello everyone, and thank you all for zooming in. What a year! Last year has been a terrible year for everyone and it's unfortunately not much better this year yet, but it's nice to see you all again. I think everyone will be glad to get back to meeting up again – we have all missed it. We did try to keep a few walks going for a while, but that had to stop because of the restrictions.

My thanks go to all of you who put the work in to organise the different events that were scheduled for last year. We were going to use last year's Spring/Summer programme this year, but if this will happen we don't know.

Clearance work and repairs to footpaths has stalled by the events of the year. However, Edgar and Phil have still worked hard on other footpath and definitive issues. As most of you will already know, Edgar has retired this year after nearly 20 years' service on the EC and also on our committee for a few years. His work has been invaluable and I would like to give a special vote of thanks to Edgar and wish him all the best.

We had some sad news in the spring that Stephen Holmes had passed away suddenly at home. We sent a card to Jan from the Group and she is very much in the thoughts of those who walked with her and Stephen.

Last but not least of course, thanks go to all the walk leaders and particularly those who came forward to lead walks during the restrictions. I know from all the messages of thanks that we received, how much everyone appreciated a bit of normality and being able to get out for a walk with a few fellow members.

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2. Apologies for absence

Edgar Ernstbrunner, Alan Jerrold

3. Minutes of last AGM

Gwen apologised for the mistake in the minutes that she had omitted to add Duncan Challen as an elected member and left Alan Jerrold's name on the list of committee, whereas Alan had actually resigned. This was now rectified and the corrected minutes were approved.

Proposed: Roger Hubbard

Seconded: Duncan Challen

4. Matters arising

(i) Holiday insurance

By coincidence, after our discussion at the last AGM, the problem of holiday insurance did come up because of the postponement of the holidays planned in Somerset and the HF holiday in Malham. Mike confirmed that the deposits had been carried forward for the holiday in Somerset apart from one person who had dropped out. Jane said that the HF holiday in Malham was also sorted out, although HF were asking for another £8.

5. Reports

(i) Treasurer (Angie Bryant)

Once again we have a healthy end of year bank balance holding 75.5% reserves in our group fund. We are allowed to hold no more than 50%. The surplus is due to the committee's decision not to produce an autumn/winter 2020 program because of the Covid-19 restrictions. We also decided not to request our usual extra funding for year commencing October 2020 from RA and accepted the basic payment. By not producing a Spring/Summer program 2021 this surplus will be reduced.

Jane had queried the "deficit" of £149.40 regarding the Malham deposit and the "loss" on the hotpot which were mentioned in the Treasurer's Report last year, but this was all resolved at the meeting, and Angie confirmed that everything had balanced up correctly.

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(ii) Walks Co-ordinator (Dave Sidgwick)

The programme we produced for Spring/Summer 2020 was never used and obviously there has not been one since, although we did manage some ad hoc walks when the restrictions were eased a little bit over the summer. We are going to be putting a programme together for next Autumn Winter, but Spring Summer this year will be on an ad-hoc basis, probably by just advertising the walks by email and noticeboard in the same way as we did last August – October. David Blake is more than likely moving down south this year, so we will probably not be able to have a programme of such high quality next time, unless someone who is good with IT can take it over. This is something else we have to look at when we restart the programme.

(iii) Footpath Officer's Report (Phil Featherstone)

Stockport (Phil Featherstone, Edgar Ernstbrunner)

Restructuring of Rights of Way has now been completed. Nicholas Robertson has been appointed Senior Rights of Way Officer. Early signs are very positive, NR bringing quite an energetic approach to the diverse issues being raised in the Borough:

Stockport LAF

An online meeting was held on 6 July (quorate this time), and a further meeting is scheduled for November. As membership had dropped to the statutory minimum of 10, recruitment would be initiated. This did subsequently result in two new members being recruited.

Statutory Online Registers

This issue (noncompliance with statutory requirements) had not yet been fully resolved, but work was ongoing. In particular it was acknowledged that the DMMO Register required restructuring.

Stockport Bridleway Strategy

One of the equestrian members submitted the draft Stockport Bridleways Strategy which had been developed by the Stockport Bridleways Association following a request from the Forum. It was stated that the aim of the strategy was to supplement the Council's walking and cycling strategies that aimed to enhance the development of multi-user routes for walkers and cyclists that would additionally present an opportunity to incorporate greater access to off road routes for horse riders, by considering upgrade of current footpaths to bridleway status, as well as extending the current network by the addition of strategic new links.

Covid-19 and PROWs

There had been a few cases of landowners "closing" PROWs on health and safety grounds. There was no legal basis for this – at most, landowners can encourage users to use alternative routes. SMBC would work with landowners to resolve specific problems.

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Rights of Way Budget 2020/2021

Capital and revenue budgets had been set in February 2020 and was in the region of £90,000 revenue funding for responsive maintenance and £100,000 capital funding for fixed schemes. This was supplemented by additional funding secured from development schemes and grant funding secured from external bodies and agencies. The Forum requested that details of those specific schemes included within the capital programme, as well as a copy of the 2020/21 Transportation Capital Programme be circulated to members of the Forum.

Specific ROW Issues:

i) Cheadle & Gatley 49.

A local resident contacted us, expressing alleged local desire to close this route on the grounds of crime/ASB, quoting some scarcely credible reports of gunmen and robbery using motorcycles to escape. On inspection, the footpath proved scarcely passable on foot (badly overgrown, rubbish-strewn). We contacted the Council, who were aware of the various types of obstruction. Clearance on previous occasions had been followed by more fly tipping. The Council would not be sympathetic to stopping-up, as this was quite a useful link.

There is a further complication: The Definitive line has been obstructed by residents, the actual line being an unadopted ginnel. There is no evidence of a diversion. Thus we have an anomaly here.

ii) Cheadle & Gatley 44

This is a long-standing anomaly, the route crossing the grounds of Kingsway School. Extinguishment had been mooted, but Phil Featherstone & EE proposed a diversion instead, three years ago, without receiving a substantive response. A current consultation on the A34 Corridor Improvement Plan afforded us an opportunity to resubmit our proposal, as the diversion we proposed then fits this proposed scheme very well. (So does our position on Cheadle & Gatley 46.) No progress or further communication as yet.

Group Projects

As yet we have not received any firm proposals sufficient for funds from the proposed £5k allocated to each group towards footpath network improvements. Additionally, we have had no feedback from SMBC regarding our offer towards the cost of appropriate projects that might have been identified by the council. No doubt things will change once we return to some form of normality

ROW and Local Access Forums

As Edgar Ernstbrunner may have what might be a long-term illness Phil Featherstone will attend SMBC Forum meetings on his behalf.

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(iv) Social Committee

Jane and Derek said everything is on hold for the moment. We are hoping the HF holiday can go ahead and as soon as we are able, we will obviously be able to think and plan some more weekends away and social events.

With regard to the week's holiday in Somerset 22-29 May, Mike said that this also hangs in the balance until we know what's happening with any easing of restrictions. The hotel have carried forward all the deposits and the balances may soon be due if the hotel is allowed to open.

Margaret Horan asked whether the holidays are fully booked, because everyone is desperate for a holiday. Jane said there is space for two single ladies at Malham, but Mike said it would not be possible to add anyone to the Somerset holiday, because we are already up to the limit on numbers and also he wouldn't want to accept any new bookings anyway because of the possible restrictions on numbers allowed to do group walks.

(v) Secretary

Dave, Phil and Gwen attended the Manchester AGM via Zoom in December, which was very interesting as we could see what all the other groups were doing about leading any walks during the easing of restrictions, but now of course all these have been cancelled anyway. I have received a lot of help from Manchester and from Ramblers HQ during the pandemic on any current government legislation and guidelines, as it did get very confusing at one point!

Gwen received an email from Cancer Research UK re Manchester Shine Night Walk 2021. This was promoting an event in Manchester on Saturday 16 October 2021 with Caslefield Bowl as the start and finish venue. It is a 10k night-time walk through the city, with an exciting route passing all the major landmarks. As RA is already a charity, we can only support this privately. As it is a very worthy cause and is something that some of our members might enjoy taking part in, Gwen will be sending it to some of Stockport members from her own email address.

6. Notice of Motions

None.

7. Election of Officers

The new Committee were voted in as follows:

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Name	Role	Proposed	Seconded
Dave Sidgwick	Chairman	Jim Horan	Duncan Challen
Angie Bryant	Treasurer	Sarah Hubbard	Jane Downes
Gwen Sidgwick	Secretary	Margaret Riley	Mike Offord
Derek Downes	Weekends away	Jim Horan	Mike Pell
Jane Downes	Weekends away	Gwen Sidgwick	Angie Bryant
Sarah Hubbard	Social	Margaret Riley	Kay Pell
Christine Bell	Social	Angie Bryant	Wilma Milton
Wilma Milton	Social	Sarah Hubbard	Jane Downes
Mike Pell	Weekends away and holidays	Gwen Sidgwick	Kay Pell
Kay Pell	Weekends away and holidays & IT	Duncan Challen	Derek Downes
Duncan Challen	Social	Gwen Sidgwick	Mike Pell

8. Appointment of Auditor

Alan Jerrold has kindly consented to check the accounts again this year.

9. Any Other Business

Derek and Jane had announced that they were stepping down from the committee at the next AGM. Dave proposed a huge vote of thanks to them both for all the great holidays and events which they have organised over the past years. Hopefully we will be able to continue with a couple of weekends away later on this year before they retire.

Gwen and Dave also will be retiring in two years' time, ie: in November 2022.

We are therefore looking for volunteers to fill these places.

10. Next Meeting

Next AGM – Monday 22 November 2021.

The meeting closed at 9 pm.