

Minutes of Local Groups Representatives Meeting Coalport - Sunday 18 November 2012

Attendees:

Nigel Schofield (Chair) – Beds, Bucks and Northants
Richard Denby – Bristol and West
Edith Moran – Cleveland
Terry and Hazel Bound – Cornwall and Devon
Tony Deall – Cumbria
Mike Childs – Dorset
Deirdre Flegg – Dorset
Helen Cavanagh – East Lancs
Jean and Bill Bowers – Essex and Herts
Mike Buckley – Heart of England
Christine Stockton – Heart of England
Ken Falconer – Heart of Scotland
Nick Dockree - Kent
Douglas Robinson – London

Janet Pitt-Lewis – Marches
Chris Dawes - Marches
Sahrah Wilding – Mid Wales
Diane Smith – Northumbria
Steve Osborne – South Manchester
Maureen Downes – Thames Valley
Nicky Wood (Minutes) – Westmorland and North Lancs
Roger Swift – Wiltshire
John Sparshatt – NEC and West Yorkshire
Phil Heneghan – NEC and Wiltshire
Gail Elrick – NEC and London
Paul Lawrence – NEC and London
Steph Carter – NEC and North Yorkshire
Simon Leck – NEC and North Yorkshire
John Batham – NEC and East Yorkshire
(NEC = National Executive Committee)

1 Apologies:

John Phillips – South Pennine
Chris Brown – Staffordshire
Teresa Walker – North Yorks
Chris Flood – Norfolk & Suffolk
Andy Ward – West Yorks
Chris Seddon – Merseystride

Tim Glenn – Anytime Anywhere
Madeleine Watson - NEC
Ian Beveridge - NEC
Claire Duncan - NEC

Nigel Schofield welcomed everyone and advised the meeting that he would be taking the Chair and thanked Messrs Leck, Dawes and Buckley for leading the walks on Friday and Saturday and John Batham for organising the Local Groups Weekend here at Coalport.

2 Minutes of Meeting – November 2011 at Haworth

These were approved as a true record of the proceedings of the meeting held on 13th November 2011.
Proposed by Douglas Robinson (London)
Seconded by Mike Childs (Dorset)

3 Matters Arising From 2011 Minutes

- a The 2012 40th Anniversary Membership Card was issued
- b The London meeting of the Young Walkers did go ahead
- c Access to data has now been restricted
- d Proposal for a Cotswold Group has not been taken forward as too much opposition from neighbouring groups. John Sparshatt still feels there is scope for a North Cotswold Group. Mike Buckley confirmed he was neutral about it.

4 Update on Health and Finances of LDWA

4.1 Paul Lawrence confirmed our overall picture is positive although some longer term cost pressures will have to be addressed. Membership is up again (2.7%) but by less than in previous years. Current membership is 7,600 with 7,800 anticipated by the year-end. The increases for previous two years were 7.1% and 10%. We are performing better than similar walking organisations.

4.2 Membership fees have not increased for several years due to increasing membership, which has helped meet costs. If membership continues to slow we may need to manage costs via an increase. We have a £12,000 loss for current year as costs have been higher (significantly, £16,000 costs of 40th Anniversary including £14,000 for the special Strider edition). Our reserves are high anyway so we can handle this impact. Reserves are now down to £120,000 from £132,000. Turnover this year is up a little and sales of the handbook is holding up. Ian Beveridge left financial accounts available for members to look at and copies of the Financial Statement were made available.

4.3 Our Membership Officer needs additional support and we are considering out-sourcing this, which will have cost implications. We anticipate a loss of £7,000 next year, which will impact reserves again.

4.4 Our website has received over 1 million page views this year with Long Distance Paths continuing to represent 50% of the site usage. Non-members view 3,000 pages daily, which is good PR. Our Long distance Paths hold a wealth of information and that does have a commercial value but we have not yet decided how or if to exploit this.

4.5 Mike Childs asked what percentage increase in fees is likely. (John Sparshatt confirmed that if membership fees were increased it would probably be around £5.00 per person with a reduction of £1 for anyone paying by Direct Debit or taking an electronic copy of Strider. We don't wish to have to keep increasing by small amounts each year)

4.6 Hazel Bound confirmed she would prefer fees to increase slowly. Mike Buckley asked if taking charity status would help us achieve more income via Gift Aid. Ken Falconer explained this has been looked into years ago and it was decided the constraints made by the Charity Commission would be too onerous and also we struggle to qualify as we can't be inclusive of disabled people.

5 Should Local Groups have a Facebook page from their Websites?

5.1 Simon Leck does not see value in facebook pages for local groups in terms of marketing but confirmed they can be set up locally so please do so if you wish. South Wales has a good example.

6 Should Online Only Challenge Events be Allowed? – Guidance needed from NEC.

6.1 Ken Falconer said we could be considered to be discriminatory if we exclude postal entries because many of our older members use the postal entry system. Steph Carter confirmed we should not exclude people as this impacts on the social aspect of our Sustainability Policy. Chris Dawes was at first hostile but now likes the on line system.

It was agreed we would continue to support both types of entry in the interests of social inclusiveness.

7 Communications between National Committee and Local Groups

7.1 Janet Pitt-Lewis described how difficult the Marches group had found it to obtain guidance and information that would help them at a time when they had several new committee members on the local group who were finding their feet. This included problems updating her new committee on all our sources of information. John Batham contended that local Groups often showed a lack of continuity and did not manage seamless transition when their Officers resigned from post. Some confusion has been caused by the ability of webmasters to change Officers names online on their website but which does not then get automatically registered in the Strider Headers (ie the preamble before the listing of social walks in Strider). This anomaly is being addressed.

7.2 John Sparshatt confirmed that there is a need for a resource of documents and policies to help local groups and whilst some exist they are not stored in one central location and some need updating. This is a piece of work, which will be done. Examples include guidelines for accident reporting, how to manage online data, event and social walk co-ordination guidance. Mike Childs felt that a straightforward approach would be helpful, something such as a FAQ's section.

7.3 There was discussion about whether the local group reps weekend is the best way of communicating to local secretaries. We will never achieve complete attendance but the networking opportunity is very valuable but should be backed up by online guidance – plus the ongoing helpful support of the Local Groups Officer (John Batham).

It was agreed that John Sparshatt and Steph Carter will help John Batham with compiling and updating a number of different guidelines to help local groups and Simon Leck will ensure they are all located in one accessible place on the website. It will also be easier to update new committee members with the new internet changes, which are imminent.

As a post-meeting offering, the guidelines mentioned above are to include the following sections:

Handover of duties between Local Group Secretaries

Advice to Walk Leaders

What to do when an incident occurs at an LDWA event (completion of the Accident/Occurrence Register)

Advice about Webmaster Duties and how that fits with Local Group Secretaries

Advice about Walk Secretaries Duties and how to enter details of a walk

8 Bulk Emailing

8.1 A training session on this was provided on Saturday evening with limited internet access. Amendments to the internet system will take place over the next two weeks. Each member will be able to update their personal details and preferences once they have joined. So a new member joining the LDWA will be assigned to their nearest Geographical group (unless they state a specific alternative when joining). Once they have received their initial welcome they will be able to log on, use their password and change their personal details and tick boxes for preferences. They can choose a primary group and also secondary groups to be associated with. There will also be choices on how members wish to receive communications. The default will be to opt in and members will need to 'unsubscribe' to bulk emailing options.

8.2 Once this system starts to operate local secretaries will have access to this data and be able to use the system to send bulk emails to all members in their geographical area or all members who have chosen their group as their priority or associate groups. It will be possible to create online subgroups of members who are currently active or involved in one particular activity. This will replace the current system whereby emails are automatically sent to group secretaries when a member joins/moves to a group.

8.3 Steve Osborne asked if all emails would be sent blind copy and it was confirmed they would. Richard Denby asked if we should encourage members to dig out their passwords to get access to their data, then go online and check that their emails and personal data are up to date. **It was agreed yes.**

8.4 Douglas Robinson felt a note about this change should go out to all Local Secretaries. **It was agreed John Batham will do this.**

8.5 Deirdre Flegg asked if emails which bounce back into the system from bulk emails could be emailed out to local secretaries before any deletion. This is so that members can be chased to amend their email addresses.

Do have a go and then ask questions once you have tried the system. Simon is going to provide some guidance notes to help.

9 **Are CRB Checks needed for Marshals on Checkpoints?**

9.1 Diane Smith explained she had an experience with a Durham school where they were asked to get all volunteers CRB checked. Northumbria group challenged this request and in the last day or so has received a letter to confirm they do not need to take such action.

Paul explained that our policy for safeguarding vulnerable people does not require CRB checks. The new Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 aims to reduce even further the need for CRB checks. It defines that people supervised on regulated activities do not need CRB checks. This covers LDWA. **It was agreed our policy would be updated to reflect these changing rules. Essentially we never need these checks and members should refer to National Committee if challenged as confirmation can be provided.**

10 **Public Liability Insurance**

10.1 Nigel Schofield asked for policy guidance about whether we should obtain non-members details when they attend walks (in case of an incident). And are they insured? Ken Falconer confirmed the insurance would cover 'guest' walkers attending a group for two or three walks. By then they should consider joining LDWA. Mike Bentham confirmed it is best practice to keep details of unknown walkers – to make life easier in the event of an unexpected health incident or accident. Helen Cavanagh asked where the insurance policy is stored. It is located in the Library section of the website.

10.2 Walk organisers should remember that dogs are **not covered** by our insurance. This does leave the walk leader personally liable should they allow dogs on the walks and an incident occurs. The best advice is not to allow dogs. However, it is left to the walk leader's discretion should he/she wish to allow dogs on leads at all times.

11 **How should we handle a slow/difficult walker refusing to retire from an event.**

11.1 It was recognised that this can be very challenging. Chris Flood from Norfolk and Suffolk (not present) raised the question after a tricky situation. It was confirmed that walk organisers do have the right to refuse entry or retire an entrant and if that entrant wants to complain there is a grievance procedure available.

12 **How do local groups handle charging subs for local membership or for posting out newsletters?**

12.1 Richard Denby raised the question and confirmed he had received feedback from a few secretaries. Policy seemed to vary. Ken Falconer clarified that local groups should not be charging a membership fee because this would breach our National Constitution which outlines that the national subs entitle membership to local groups. It is ok to charge a fee for specific services such as posting out a newsletter. Some groups have used this small fee as a handy way of establishing who actively wants involvement in their group rather than just being a member 'in theory' via the website.

12.2 Richard also asked for clarification as to who is entitled to vote at a local group AGM. The answer is all members who have chosen your group as their primary group - the new internet changes will help facilitate this. So secretaries could use the bulk email system to send out their AGM invites.

12.3 Steph Carter asked whether this raised an inconsistency regarding the Irregulars. Does this mean that they should only charge a fee from members who choose them as their second or third choices from the internet. There is more work to do here!

13 **Progress with planning for future 100s**

13.1 Gail Elrick provided an update. The future 100s are:

2013 Devon and Cornwall
2014 South Wales
2015 East Lancs Red Rose
2016 Dorset

Gail explained Dorset was chosen over Kent, who also applied for 2016, because there has not been a 100 in this area. 2017 will move north.

13.2 Hazel Bound confirmed that the Devon and Cornwall 100 will be full but should not need to go to ballot. She thanks local groups for their support so far. Sahrah Wilding confirmed that South Wales 100 is progressing with another meeting in two weeks. There is good progress with checkpoints and the route. John Sparshatt is overseeing the 2015 Red Rose 100. Helen Cavanagh says good progress is made, with 70% of this route written and checkpoints coming along. Ian Beveridge is the link person for the 2016 Dorset 100.

13.3 We are setting up a database on the website so that policies and procedures relating to past and present 100s can be accessed by 100 organisers. The Games 100 paperwork is currently being prepared to go on the web. If anyone has anything they think helpful to contribute do let Gail have it. This information will be password protected. Nick Dockree asked if Kent could be pencilled in for 2018 but Gail felt this was a step too far as other Groups might also want to apply.

13.4 Steve Osborne asked if further consideration had been given to encouraging people to be a marshal before they got to their 10th badge. It was confirmed that this had been voted out at the last meeting. Steve also asked for confirmation that there would be a 30th badge. John Sparshatt confirmed there would be and a 40th for certifiable members!

14 Is the National LDWA Constitution being updated?

14.1 Maureen Downes asked this question. John Sparshatt confirmed that the intention is to take it to the 2014 AGM. Ken Falconer explained that we are looking at minor adjustments to make sure it confirms to our current practice and motions will go to the 2014 AGM to clarify and confirm a new Constitution.

15 Accident Book Procedures

15.1 Maureen Downes asked for guidelines to explain when and how these need to be completed. John Sparshatt confirmed there will be something on the website. The incident report form will be amended and guidelines issued with it. The aim is to have this available for online completion soon after an incident to ensure that a record is kept on file in case of future complaint or litigation.

15.2 Nicky Wood suggested that important near misses should be recorded too. Not every trip and slip obviously, but anything significant which highlights a need to address a safety issue before the next event. This is considered best practice in the workplace.

It was agreed event organisers should make a point of reminding marshals of the need to complete incident report forms.

16 Data Protection – email Addresses and Security

16.1 Maureen Downes asked if there were guidelines. Simon Leck confirmed there is nothing written but the message is simple: do not share member email addresses with any other member without the permission of the original member. Only those involved in managing the group should have access to this data. The same applies to any personal data relating to members.

17 How do Groups Use their Spare Cash?

17.1 Maureen Downes was looking for some inspiration. We shared ideas which included:

- Mini buses for linear walks
- Various charity donations including Air Ambulance and Mountain Rescue
- Contributions to members Christmas celebrations or AGM meals
- Sponsoring kissing gates and styles in local area
- Thank you presents to marshals
- A projector to help make meetings more professional.

Steve Osborne from South Manchester felt we should not overlook making donations to the Ramblers Association – they have declining numbers and need support for all the wonderful lobbying and footpath work they conduct (which benefits us).

18 Local Groups Template

18.1 Richard Denby asked if we could have a password-protected page for group members on the local templates. Simon Leck confirmed this could be done but NOT to be used for a list of member contact details because that would breach data protection.

19 Results and DVD from the Games 100

19.1 Edith Moran asked when these would be available. Paul confirmed that the DVD is now ready and the final work is taking place on the results. Both will be posted together. Copies will go to all who entered and also several copies to each local group that helped out.

20 Local Group Business Cards

20.1 Norman Corrin (not present) raised the question – would these be of interest to local groups. Examples of existing local group cards were circulated and some interest was expressed. This should be organised locally. Janet Pitt-Lewis asked whether a National Card could be made available. There is one in existence designed by Catherine Gregory but it is now out of date. **John Sparshatt confirmed we will put a new template on the website for groups to use if they wish. Groups can then create their own variation if they wish. Simon Leck will create this. Jean Bowers will send her example through to Simon.**

21 Navigation Courses

21.1 This has been a topic on the forum – do members want such courses and who would run them. Janet Pitt-Lewis started this thread on the forum. Mike Childs suggested GPS training might be appropriate. John Sparshatt confirmed National Committee would not be in a position to organise these as it is something that needs to be local to groups, but LDWA might be able to influence prices if there is sufficient interest. Mike Buckley suggested that the Basic Expedition Leader Award (BELA) is at an appropriate level for our needs. **It was agreed that this might be another good way to use some group funds and that any local group making progress on this should share their findings via John Batham.**

22 Possible Isle of Wight Group

22.1 An approach to form such a group has been received by John Batham. There are about 12 individual and family members on the Island at the moment. No objections were raised and it was agreed they should be encouraged to go ahead and try to constitute a group.

23 Younger Walkers Group

23.1 Nicky Wood expressed some reservations. Partly with the concept of a separate younger walkers group, but in particular the fact that it is being billed in Strider with a Kendal base which could be detrimental to the Westmorland Group operating in that patch. Morecambe Bay (not present) also share these concerns.

23.2 Janet Pitt-Lewis felt that the issue of special interest groups should be clarified in the revised constitution. It was confirmed that most of the walks of the Younger Walkers have taken place in the London area and the 3 or 4 events so far have mainly been weekends away with a walk. Paul Lawrence is keen to see the group move ahead to be constituted. The website is not yet established. Hazel Bound asked for clarification as to when you become an older walker – is there an age limit? This was not clear as the group had no intention of being too restrictive.

23.3 Diane Smith explained that Northumbria had some success recruiting members to their group by having joint walks with the local younger Ramblers group. A few members have moved over to LDWA as they aspire to longer walks or become a little older.

23.4 Nicky felt a solution for Westmorland group would be if the advert in Strider didn't focus on Kendal in case it impacted on this small group's need to recruit some young blood. It was agreed that a non-geographic email contact could be set up. **Action John Batham**

24 Other Issues on the LDWA Website

24.1 Steve Osborne asked if it was possible to have the confirmation email to let us know new members had joined. Unfortunately it can't be done with the new internet system.

24.2 Mike Childs asked how to put a link into an item when you add it to the forum. John Batham said that there are some special programme codes with explanatory text at the bottom of the forum page. **Mike Childs will contact John Sparshatt for help.**

25 Any Other Business

25.1 John Batham asked for suggestions for a venue for 2013. Ken Falconer suggested Edinburgh and that was seconded by Douglas Robinson. Stow-on-the-Wold, Blaxhall and Stratford-upon-Avon were other suggestions.

With no other business Nigel Schofield declared the meeting closed at 12 noon and thanked all those present for attending the meeting on behalf of their groups and wished everyone a safe journey home.