

Colchester Group of the Ramblers

Minutes of the 52 Annual General Meeting Nottage Maritime Museum Sunday 19th November 2017 12/00 – 13.30am

1 Welcome from the Chairman

Louise Beck, Secretary welcomed attending members to the AGM on behalf of the Chairman who was unable to attend.

2. Apologies for Absence

Roger Jones, Sue Bowles, Linda Curtis, Linda Rhodes, Kathy Pugh.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Item 5. Chairman's Report – Commendation Award.

Change needed to statement "award of a commendation that was to be given to Derek Keeble in recognition of his outstanding contribution" to be amended to "award of a commendation that was to be given to Derek Keeble in recognition of the outstanding contribution of Jessie and Derek to Colchester Ramblers"

Otherwise, all agreed as correct (proposed by Mags Hobby and seconded by Louise Beck).

4. Matters arising from the minutes not on the Agenda.

It was asked whether the 2017 Christmas lunch would be sponsored by £1.00 as in 2016. It was confirmed that there would not be further sponsorship.

5. Chairman's Report

Louise apologised for not having access to the full report prepared by Roger. The following points were made:

- The December to March 2018 Walks programme is complete.
- Footpath problems: Mags confirmed that it is Essex County Councils responsibility to ensure the public right of access to footpaths. In the light of council budget cuts, many Ramblers local groups have working groups to help the council keep paths open and in good repair. Colchester Group needs a Work Party Co-ordinator, to liaise between ECC and Colchester Group members willing to participate in working parties.
It was agreed to record the need for a Works Party Co-ordinator in the minutes, to recommend to the Chair to advertise the post on the internet page and discuss further in the committee.
- Derek Gillard has stood down as Treasurer and Linda Rhodes has volunteered to take over.

6. Secretaries Report

Louise did not have anything to report at this stage in the meeting.

7. Treasurer's Report

The report tabled by Linda Rhodes was circulated and accepted.

8. Countryside and Footpaths Secretary's Report

Mags stated that 2 subjects have dominated the Footpath and Countryside work this year: Network Rail and the Coastal Path. But in a sense, both have been delayed until next year.

Network Rail (NW)

Mags has been out and walked the 4 proposed crossing closures in Colchester (E41 Pagets, E51 Thornfiled Wood, E52 Golden Square and E57 Wivenhoe Park) several times, taken many photos, prepared Proofs of Evidence and met the Ramblers' barrister. The Wivenhoe Park closure has subsequently been withdrawn. The Public Inquiry opened and was then postponed until 9 January 2018 as NW had not sent the necessary letters to all the landowners concerned about all the packets of land involved.

Coast

The Essex Coast Path consultation continued. The Mersea Island report was produced but is partly dependent on the Salcott to Jaywick section which was due in summer 2017 but now has a revised release date of the end of March 2018 with several sections still under delicate negotiations. Mags cannot imagine the sections being opened much before the 2020 deadline.

Planning

Mags has commented upon a number of Planning Applications which affect PROW, usually just to request that routes be kept open and safe for users during the construction phase.

Path Orders

Confirmed diversions include:

- Great Horkesley near London Road – out of a garden.
- Great Horkesley behind Rose & Crown (unsure of its name now) – to field edge and to amalgamate the other two crossfields.
- West Mersea seawall – to the walked inner seawall.
- Langenhoe/Fingringhoe – to walked routes and to prepare the coast route.
- Stanway – minor amendment and a creation for the paths south of Tollgate.
- Stanway – diversion near Olivers.

There were two Legal Orders covering mainly Colchester Town to remove various sections of route from the map as they are either public roads or have been converted to cycle tracks. The new routes in Langham are now available.

Mags recommended checking your walk in the interactive Highway map on Essex County Council's website if you are in any doubt.

Working Parties

As mentioned elsewhere in the AGM, this has not been active and we need to revitalise the group.

Abberton

Mags continues to attend meetings. The leaflets on Abberton footpaths around the reservoir are available. There is still money in the Rights of Way group to spend before about 2028.

Mags encouraged all members to keep reporting footpath faults on the ECC website and keep clipping overgrowth back on public footpaths as necessary.

9. Membership Report

Pamela reported that there are 364 members (compared to 363 members in November 2016).

The issue was raised of whether people attending walks, unknown to the other members, have in fact joined or not. Taking a register of walk attenders has been tried before and proved too difficult for walk leaders to administer. All members were asked to welcome potential new members and encourage them to join and gain full benefit from membership.

10. Social and Publicity Report

Last year, Roger Jones kept his previous role of Publicity and took on the Chairmanship of the Group. In 2017, the Group had been involved in two promotion events: the Tendring Show and Colchester Library.

Roger asks for someone to take on the Publicity role.

11. IT Report

Nothing to report.

12. Area Report

Louise reported that she and Lotte had attended a recent Area Event. Much of the agenda concerned the Coastal Path and the Closure of Network Rail Crossings.

It was noted that the Tendring Group had voted to donate some of their funds to cover the cost of the Ramblers barrister for Network Rail Crossings. A vote was taken at the meeting, as to whether Colchester should do so too.

Carol Harding proposed that the Colchester Group make a donation; 9 were for the proposal and 4 were against. It was agreed that the matter should go to the committee for discussion and how to take forward.

Regina asked whether the social funds could be used for the donation and it was thought not. However, it was thought that an 'Pack' could be developed to help new leaders ie copies of local maps, memory maps for devices etc. This matter will be left to the committee to take forward.

13. Walk Co-ordinators Reports

Louise presented the report submitted by Linda Curtis, one of the two Wednesday walk co-ordinators.

The numbers attending Wednesday walks remain around 20-35 per walk.

There has been some success in recruiting new walk leaders. She thanked all walk leaders for their support.

The short Wednesday walk attendance has increased this last year, reflecting our age profile.

Linda asked for more new walk leaders to come forward; reminding members of the library of walks available on the website.

Regina reported on Sunday walks, saying it was becoming more difficult to recruit walk leaders for Sundays. Walks can be trickier to arrange as pubs can require definite numbers before the day. It is likely that more picnic walks may be on the programme in future. It has been suggested that two people share the planning and leading of walks.

John Watts is prepared to run more Walk Leader courses.
Janet Penfold was commended for organising and leading the 20-mile walk, especially on her special birthday.

14. Nomination/Appointment for Chairman

Louise stated Roger Jones was willing to stand. All the meeting agreed with his continued appointment.

15. Election of other Officers and Committee

- Vice Chairman – no one came forward at the meeting.
- Treasurer – Linda Rhodes (supported by Lotte Sherman, seconded by Linda Golby).
- Secretary – Louise Beck (proposed by Mags Hobby and seconded by Pamela Bradley).
- Membership – Pamela Bradley (proposed by Ruth Melling and seconded by Julia Newhouse).
- Countryside and Footpath Secretary – Mags Hobby (appointed by Area)
- Publicity – no one came forward at the meeting.
- Walks Co-ordinators – Regina Mason (Sundays), Linda Curtis and Kathy Pugh (Wednesdays), Margaret Smith (Fridays)
- Area representatives – Lotte Sherman and Louise Beck
- Other Committee members – Carol Harding, Sue Bowles.

The meeting was in support of all the above.

16. Election of Auditor

Louise will look into it.

17. Any Other Business

It was noted that St Marys Church, Wivenhoe conducts a memorial service for any bereaved in the last year on the Sunday after Remembrance Sunday – when the need for the local car park is increased. As we usually hold the AGM on the same day, it was asked that the committee give this consideration when planning the AGM in future.

Following completion of the nomination slips and a count of the votes, it was announced that Kathy Pugh was awarded the Jesse Keeble Memorial Shield.

Committee members were thanked for their work in arranging the hall, providing refreshments and standing in at short notice to conduct the meeting.