

MINUTES OF
BRISTOL RAMBLERS GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING
7th NOVEMBER 2023, BRADBURY HALL, HENLEAZE

0 ATTENDEES

Heather Toyne (Chair), Peter Budden, Tony Parsons, Keith Budd, Carew Reynell, Sarah Marshall, Bob Gibson, Roger Britton.

1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

HT welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular guest Roger Britton. Apologies had been received from Sue Fox and Ceiswyn Blake. It was noted that Geoff Daniels, having resigned as Treasurer, was no longer on the Committee and has been replaced by the new Treasurer, BG.

2 APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes (Draft 3) of the last meeting, held on 31st May 2023, were accepted as an accurate record of that meeting.

3 ACTIONS FROM THE LAST MEETING

HT went through the Actions from the last meeting, noting that most had been completed.

It was confirmed that Walk Fest 2024 is to take place and that Eileen Bartlett will remain as the main point of contact.

BG had discussed with leaders whether there was any interest in arranging future coach day trips. No positive interest was forthcoming; in particular it was considered that long-weekend walking holidays had largely superseded any need for such coach trips.

The Action to add content to Facebook to promote the new 'Introductory A walks' would be completed when appropriate. The Action to discuss further changes to the website including the use of photographs is covered in the agenda of this meeting. Similarly, the Action for CR to advise on document retention policy, is also covered under the agenda of this meeting.¹ The Action to mention to Marlies Morsink that the Tracklog library will not be maintained in future remains outstanding.

4 PROW AND DLYW

RB summarised the position on his DLYW and PROW activities; see Attachment 1. HT and RB noted that a contingency plan for DLYW activities needs to be set up in the light of RB relinquishing that role.

RB requested permission to submit DMMOs for a selection of routes, these also being flagged up by the Council DLYW team. BG queried the criteria used to identify such routes. RB replied that these included that the routes were often in excess of 100 years old, were in current use and formed useful links between other paths. Some other paths had been excluded from consideration as they had, for example, been built over. HT asked what happens after submission of a DMMO. RB responded that it might be 1 or 2 years before a reply is received and it is likely that the Committee can handle any reply.

¹ See also the email of CR to the Committee sent on 8th November subsequent to this meeting.

RB noted that a coordinator is needed to get access to the official map. A volunteer is needed to mark-up the map on behalf of the Committee. BG volunteered to do this and this was accepted by the Committee.

DECISION It was agreed that BG would nominally be identified as the BR DLYW coordinator for the purposes of receiving updates and editing the DLYW map as appropriate.

There was one path where an approach is unclear, this being Sheep Wood in Westbury-on-Trym, where the path ends in an approximate 10 feet drop to Passage Road, and a fence has been erected by a neighbouring landowner to prevent access. There has been apparently no 'stopping order' applied to the path, at least since 1964. An alternative route exists. It was considered that re-opening the path would be expensive, both in terms of the necessary steps down to Passage Road and also, possibly, legal fees should objections be received from the owners of the expensive affected properties.

The other 4 noted by RB were agreed by the Committee; see the list in Attachment 1.

DECISION The Committee agreed that DMMOs should be submitted for the paths identified by RB (and that for Sheep Wood, it should include the alternative path rather than the original route).

There was some discussion regarding the obstruction to a high-level public footpath in front of the Portcullis pub in Clifton. There is a parallel footpath at street level. It was agreed by the Committee not to pursue an objection.

DECISION The Committee agreed not to pursue an objection to the obstruction of the Portcullis footpath.

A further 13 routes, **plus 5 identified by the Council PROW team and 10 in the Chitterning/Hallens Marsh area (see Attachment 1) have been identified and** were agreed as not needing urgent attention; **prioritisation is required.**

HT thanked both RB and BG. The budget for any work was also discussed. This should be submitted to the Area Treasurer (CR) by the Committee, if necessary. CR noted that there is a list of possible routes which have not yet been explored by the DLYW subgroup (CR, KB, TP), so this remains to be resourced if deemed necessary. It was considered that this should ideally be done in the next 6 months and would require canvassing the opinions of local residents.

ACTION The DLYW subgroup (KB, CR and TP) to prioritise the remaining paths and report back in six months.

ACTION KB to undertake work on Sheep Wood, including questionnaires.

ACTION CR to take forward the request through his Area Treasurer role for a bid for national funds of £500.

5 WALK NUMBERS AND ISSUES

HT summarised the latest numbers for attendance on Group walks as provided by the Co-ordinators. For Saturdays, the numbers varied from 6 to 21 with an average of 13. The Wednesday walks had between 3 and 19 walkers with an average of 12. The numbers for Sunday B walks were between 6 and 26 with an average of 16 whereas those for A walks ranged from 9 to 15 with an average of 11. There had been no issues for A walks. It was noted that cars are being left in Priory Road during B walks because of the restrictions of the Bristol ULEZ zone. However, no-one had been left behind due to a lack of transport so no changes to current arrangements are required.

6 AGM

There was some discussion on the recent AGM. The catering was considered to be appropriate and the talk excellent. The number of people attending was down on 2022 and this was thought to be possibly due to Thursdays not being a good day due to people's other regular commitments and also owing to the wet weather. For the 2024 AGM, a date of Wednesday 16th October was agreed and CR agreed to book the Redland Green Bowls Club venue for that evening.

ACTION CR to book the Redland Green Bowls Club for 16th October 2024.

HT noted that the annual accounts needed to be prepared by BG by the end of September 2024 to allow the independent examiner, John Wrigley, time to complete his checks. The annual report would then be available two weeks in advance of the AGM, that is, by 2nd October 2024.

The committee was asked to think about possible talks for the 2024 AGM.

ACTION All to consider possible talks for the 2024 AGM.

7 WEBSITE

There exists a test version of the website using Joomla 4. This is the latest version of Joomla, a free, open-source content management system for websites. The current website uses Joomla 3. Work is in progress which should result in the website still looking as it does presently when we switch to Joomla 4.

There was some discussion about the URLs that a Google search lists for Bristol Ramblers. The new homepage is the desired result. A possible solution could be an automatic re-routing from the obsolete URLs to the new homepage.

ACTION SM/TP to explore whether it was possible to try to link the **obsolete URLs** to the homepage.

The use of photographs was discussed. It was agreed that four appropriate photographs could be used with a seasonal bias, with these rotated on a quarterly basis. Any suitable photographs should be sent to SM.

DECISION The site should include photographs, with an appropriate seasonal content, rotated on a quarterly basis.

ACTION SM to circulate a seasonal photo for the committee to review and agree each new season.

CR noted that the national Ramblers website is constructed somewhat differently from the Bristol one, with a series of pointers on the home page to more detailed information. This seems to work well. However, the Committee considered that more radical changes to the Bristol site should be postponed for the present.

For the Group's Facebook content, the Committee decided that the **introductory photograph at the top of the Facebook page should be the same as that on the home page of the website**. Currently, PC, HT and CB have admin privileges on Facebook.

ACTION CB to add the same **photograph** to Facebook as on the **home page** of the Group website.

ACTION On the retention policy, CR to circulate a list of what is included for comment.

8 WALK FEST UPDATE

KB and CR indicated that they are attempting to recruit leaders to provide the Group's walk contribution to Walk Fest 2024 but were often being met with the response that Walk Fest 2024 was still a long time into the future. The situation at the time will be shared with Walk Fest coordinators in January.

ACTION CR to check on the use of Walk Manager to automate the process of submitting walks for Walk Fest.

BG noted that the two 'Introductory A Walks' planned for May 2024 could be offered to Walk Fest.

9 LEAFLETS

There was some discussion on when and where to distribute leaflets promoting Bristol Ramblers. TP noted that he had previously provided these to the Central Library with requests for some to be forwarded to other Bristol libraries. TP also suggested that Taunton Leisure, as one of the Group sponsors, might accept some copies, perhaps also other outdoor pursuit retailers, and said that he could take this forward in January. The Committee agreed to follow TP's advice.

10 SIGNAGE

It was noted that there is a plan for TP, KB and CR to take this forward, in particular covering 3 walking routes: 'Triangle', 'South Circular' and 'Alan Burton' in hand with the Samaritans Way in the summer.

11 TREASURER'S REPORT

The newly-appointed Treasurer (BG) provided the regular Treasurer's Report on Group finances and also outlined his proposals on how he would carry out the Treasurer role and associated reporting activities into the future; see Attachment 2. BG had drafted a short summary of the aims and responsibilities of the Treasurer, including the expected content of the Treasurer's annual report, which should include a 'look ahead' to the end-of-year position.

BG noted that the Group's 'Restricted' budget was considerably higher than that of other groups nationally, where it was typically about 15% of the total. The 'Main' fund should be the principal source for expenditure with 'Self-funding' being the last resort. For 2023, the basic allocation from Ramblers HQ had been requested whereas previously a full budget had been submitted for approval. This meant that, due to the Walk Fest contribution of £1000 being taken from the 'Restricted' funds, these had decreased in 2023. BG considered that the 'Restricted' funds were indeed the appropriate source of financial support for Walk Fest. The Committee agreed the following.

DECISION The 2024 Walk Fest contribution should come from the 'Restricted' funds.

DECISION The default claim to Ramblers HQ, as submitted annually in June, should be the basic allocation, subject to review by the Committee each year.

DECISION The Walk Fest contribution and the source of funding should be confirmed annually by the Committee in the context of agreeing the budget for the forthcoming year each June.

12 AREA COUNCIL/NATIONAL UPDATE

There was nothing to note.

The next Area Council meeting will take place on Thursday 16th November. CR indicated that he will be unable to attend on this occasion. HT indicated that she may be able to attend but asked that anyone who would like to attend instead should email her urgently².

² Subsequent to this meeting, HT attended the November 16th Area Council meeting.

It was noted that the draft report on the new National Safety Project (see the presentation by Jeff Reynolds at the recent AGM) will be available soon for comment. This will be an item for discussion at the next meeting of this Committee.

13 FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting will be held on 10th January 2024 at Bradbury Hall. Walk co-ordinators and Eileen Bartlett had been invited, although Paula Cannings is unable to attend. The proposed agenda included the following:

- WalkFest planning/progress
- Feedback from National Safety Project, and how to support new leaders including buddying
- The retention policy

ACTION HT to write to walk coordinators to ask if there were any particular queries or concerns that they would like to discuss in respect of Walk Fest.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair invited everyone to consider if there are more suitable venues for future Committee meetings. HT then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their contributions.

Peter Budden

2nd January 2024 (Draft 3, for endorsement by Committee)

LIST OF ACTIONS

- ACTION** BG and CB to add content to Facebook to promote individual ‘introductory’ A walks (*carried over from previous meeting*).
- ACTION** KB to mention to Marlies Morsink the Committee decision to not maintain the Tracklog library (*carried over from previous meeting*).
- ACTION** The DLYW subgroup (KB, CR and TP) to prioritise the remaining paths and report back in six months.
- ACTION** KB to undertake work on Sheep Wood, including questionnaires.
- ACTION** CR to take forward the request through his Area Treasurer role for a bid for national funds of £500.
- ACTION** CR to book the Redland Green Bowls Club for 16th October 2024.
- ACTION** All to consider possible talks for the 2024 AGM.
- ACTION** SM/TP to explore whether it was possible to try to link the **obsolete URLs** to the homepage.
- ACTION** SM to circulate a seasonal photo for the committee to review and agree each new season.
- ACTION** CB to add the same **photograph** to Facebook as on the **home page** of the Group website.
- ACTION** On the retention policy, CR to circulate a list of what is included for comment.
- ACTION** CR to check on the use of Walk Manager to automate the process of submitting walks for Walk Fest.

ACTION HT to write to walk coordinators to ask if there were any particular queries or concerns that they would like to discuss in respect of Walk Fest.

LIST OF DECISIONS

- DECISION** It was agreed that BG would nominally be identified as the BR DLYW coordinator for the purposes of receiving updates and editing the DLYW map as appropriate.
- DECISION** The Committee agreed that DMMOs should be submitted for the paths identified by RB (and that for Sheep Wood, it should include the alternative path rather than the original route).
- DECISION** The Committee agreed not to pursue an objection to the obstruction of the Portcullis footpath.
- DECISION** The site should include photographs, with an appropriate seasonal content, rotated on a quarterly basis.
- DECISION** The 2024 Walk Fest contribution should come from the 'Restricted' funds.
- DECISION** The default claim to Ramblers HQ, as submitted annually in June, should be the basic allocation, subject to review by the Committee each year.
- DECISION** The Walk Fest contribution and the source of funding should be confirmed annually by the Committee in the context of agreeing the budget for the forthcoming year each June.

ATTACHMENT 1 REPORT ON PROW AND DLYW (R BRITTON)

PROW work

I have nothing to report beyond saying that I will continue to do what I have done over the last year. I chair the quarterly Liaison Group meetings and refer to you any issues of importance that arise from those meetings. The council Planners notify me of any development likely to impact on PROWs. If I find anything controversial, I consult with you, and am grateful for your speedy responses. Theo's new partner starts next week.

DLYW Campaign- update

The law

We are told that the government will introduce legislation next week to extend the deadline to 31 December 2030. Whether a new government would repeal the deadline altogether is by no means a given - it was Labour legislation in the first place. A new danger is that the cutoff may now also apply to 20 year use claims.

The Bristol journey so far

Our subcommittee has now assessed all the potential routes thrown up by the DLYW map in the Bristol City area. If you go on the DLYW website (<https://gis-dlyw-ramblers.astuntechnology.com/map/>), the routes marked black are those we have discarded, those marked brown/orange are those we have identified as suitable for

DMMO applications and those marked pink are under discussion. I attach a screenshot of the Brentry Wood area, showing the different colours.

A spreadsheet has emerged to record the details of our work, copy attached for the enthusiastic.

We have 15 routes we assess as suitable for DMMO applications. 9 of them should be simpler because they run over Council land. Additionally, I have recommended Romney Avenue (also over Council land) and Princes Lane; The Portcullis blockage has found me. So there is a total of 16. We have already lodged 2 applications. You have given me permission to apply for DMMOs for Princes Lane and (I think) The Portcullis. **I seek your permission to lodge applications for**

- Sheep Wood (but a decision is required from you on this, whether to claim a controversial section). [Robin Jarvis has prepared the draft Statement on this]
- Brentry Wood. [Assuming the landowner agrees the route on this, I will prepare the statement]
- Moorhouse Lane. [I will ask Robin to prepare the statement on this]
- Darley Close. [Robin is already preparing the draft statement on this]
- Romney Drive [this is the case I have referred to the Committee recently. I will do the statement]

Provided Robin Jarvis remains as a helper, I will take responsibility for the paperwork on these 5, plus The Portcullis and Princes Lane. Princes Lane will take a while. The remaining 8 await an owner/driver. **They will all be lost by 2031 if not on the Definitive Map.**

We have identified a further 13 routes that are likely potential DMMO candidates, the Council PROW team suggested 5 (that run over council land), and we have 10 in the Chitterning/Hallens Marsh area that all look possible. Some of these paths are actually different DLYW numbers for the one route, so, although there are 28 paths, there are about 20 in practice. About half run over BCC land, and should be uncontroversial. **They will all be lost by 2031 if not on the Definitive Map.**

Future

Although I want to shed this DLYW work by Christmas, I imagine it will drift on for a while.

I have attached my spreadsheets, in pdf format, and which will be a very useful guide for anyone who will run on with this. I will help guide anyone who steps forward. I may even pick up the odd one to run through.

I don't think that there will be much, indeed anything, for the Committee to do on the ones that I lodge. The exception will be to respond to wounded squeals from private landowners over whose land the paths run, but they will be quickly dealt with ("We are a charity and are doing this for future generations. However, we are simply the applicant and it is the Council or the Planning inspector who makes the decision."). The

Committee should not be drawn into any debate on the correctness of the application, The only qualification is that, if a route runs over open land, it could be possible to negotiate a new route, to which the landowner could consent, as at Brentry Wood.

Without a DLYW coordinator, there is no one who can edit the DLYW map; this is a nuisance. Equally, there is no one who can receive the general specialised alerts from Head office on new policy or legislation, on training, nor the details of new volunteers. *It might be worth while having a committee member who is nominally the coordinator to fill those gaps but do nothing else.* I am not in a rush to cease to be the Coordinator on record but I will be away a lot.

Having found Robin, it would be a pity to lose him but we cannot invent things for him to do; for him to continue, someone from Bristol Ramblers will have to be the leader of the project. He is not a member of Ramblers and, it would be uncomfortable/unwise to have a non-member interviewing members of the public.

Budget

It is hard to think of a budget, but the only expense I can think of is postage (serving notice on the landowners at about £1.30 each), title searches (about £7 each property), stationery. An average budget of £70-£100 for each DMMO should be sufficient. So, £350-£500 for the ones that I have outlined above. DLYW budgets have to be submitted by the Area Treasurers by 30 November.

Role

The main responsibilities/duties are

- to prepare or supervise the paperwork to file and serve the applications for those remaining routes that the subcommittee has already agreed on,
- To make final decisions on the routes that are currently marked 'under discussion'
- To investigate, and possibly submit DMMO applications, for those routes that are abruptly blocked off and found not to be on the Definitive Map

ATTACHMENT 2 TREASURER'S REPORT (BG)

FYI during the treasurer's report I will inform the committee of the following figures:
Current reserves: main fund £1178, restricted funds £2280, self-funded £643.
Expenditure: £179 year-to-date, ~£1400 expected at full year (no detailed budget, but anticipate £1000 Walkfest, £300 admin, £100 walk prog/publicity).
Income expected for full year: £763 from Ramblers head office, £200 donation from Taunton Leisure, ~£100 estimated donation from Ramblers Holidays.

I will then give a very brief overview of the annual budgeting process and the 2 options that we need to consider, either 'basic' allocation or 'full detailed budget', and briefly explain the 3 types of reserves that we hold ('Main funds', 'Restricted', and 'Self-funded') and their impact on the budgeting process.

Having explained the above, I will then request the committee to decide whether to allow part of any payment to Bristol Walkfest from now on to come from the "Bristol Backs" 'restricted' fund, which was classified as 'restricted' by Bristol Ramblers committee in 2016 such that it was only "to be used for the benefit of walkers in the Bristol Area". NB only one [small] payment has ever been made from this fund so far.

I will then put forward a three point draft financial policy for the committee to consider/amend/ratify, as to what the treasurer should be reporting on, and doing, in each area:

- 1) Expenditure: Report the expenditure year to date and expected year-end position at each meeting. Use the 'main fund' for agreed expenditure, topping up any payment for Walkfest support from the Bristol Backs restricted fund to meet the amount that the committee decides to disburse.
- 2) Reserves: Report the value of reserves at each meeting, and expected year-end position for the 'main fund' percentage. Aim to keep the 'main fund' at year end inside the 40%-100% guiderail set by head office, as close to the upper end as possible, requesting committee approval whenever transfers need to be made between funds (including to/from area or head office) to achieve this.
- 3) Budgeting: Report the progress of the annual budgeting process at each meeting. Request the 'basic' allocation budget from head office each year, until instructed otherwise by the committee.