



RAMBLERS

South Cheshire

SCR Committee Meeting, 20 March 2023

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees:

Trevor Park, Chris Ashton, Phil Guest, Hazel Wallis, Jim Eckersley, Nigel Hallam, Alan Edwards, Kevin Bush

Apologies:

None

Matters Arising from Previous Meetings:

All items arising from the December 2022 Committee meeting and the November 2022 AGM are covered elsewhere in the meeting.

Walk Programme:

Phil Guest presented the latest update of the walks programme, which showed about 12 walks soon to be added to the official walk programme on the website. Monthly adverts showing specific walks for the forthcoming month will commence in the local LINK magazine, beginning with the May issue. Trevor will be placing the advert.

Kevin presented some analyses of SCR's walk programmes over the past few years. The number of walks offered is increasing, almost back to pre-Covid levels. The average number of walkers is stable at about 11 walkers per walk. Over the last year there have been some 26 walk leaders involved in the programme. It was agreed that continued emphasis will be placed on increasing the number and type of walks offered, focussing on involving more of our members in walks, and attracting new members. See further the activities on social media and communications later.

Reports from Officers / Activities:

Trevor (Chair) felt that the Group was recovering well from the events of the last few years and we were heading in the right direction. The focus on more walks / more involvement / new members was the most appropriate for us.

Chris (Treasurer) reported on the finances of the group, and the current surplus we hold. It was agreed that we would use some of this surplus to support our Social Evening (see later) that is celebrating our 30th Anniversary as a Ramblers Group.

It was also felt that the car-sharing element being used was too high and that we should reset the car share element to 6p per mile, for all those sharing a ride to the walks. It was further stated that all drivers should accept this level of support from those they give rides to.

Hazel (Membership Secretary) reported that we were 195 members strong, a similar level to where the Group has been consistently in recent years. Leavers and Joiners are roughly balanced over the last few months (8 of each).

Each new member receives a personal email from Hazel on joining. She proposed that when any new member walks with us the walk leader should have a conversation with the new member to get some reactions and feedback.

Hazel will be preparing a note to all Walk Leaders with details of items they should carry on their walks – kit bag, first aid kit, chewable aspirin, bite removers, secateurs.... Trevor will provide further information for Hazel to help in the preparation of this note.

Jim (Website editor) reported that websites and walk management are likely to be changing soon, as the recent Ramblers Association initiatives in these areas unfold. He will revert with more information as things become clearer. Trevor (who is going to the upcoming Council meeting with John Peck) will be taking a specific look at the new Walks Manager process. He will act as our contact with RA on this topic.

There have been some problems with the “Submit a Walk” function on the SCR website which Jim is looking into.

Social (we have no specific person in this area). There is a trip away this May to Keswick, which is fully subscribed. Phil is investigating a 2024 HF vacation for the group, preferably to be based at Alnwick.

There will be 2 walks (of different lengths) to be held at Kinder Scout on 21st June, Midsummer night, which Phil is arranging. Further details to come.

We will have a Celebration Evening for our 30th Anniversary, which Alan is arranging. This will be held on 15th July, at Shavington Village Hall. Further details of the event will be available soon.

There is a need to bring in someone (possibly more than one) to lead our activities in Social activities (see later, re Facebook discussion).

Nigel (Paths). Nigel has engaged with Cheshire East Council on the issue of paths, good, bad and lost. He was impressed with the level of work and support on this issue within the Council, albeit with reduced numbers of people (2 or 3 new people being recruited). He re-emphasised that any problems encountered with any footpaths (whether these be in Cheshire East or not) should be reported, through him, to Cheshire East, who will forward any issues outside their area to the relevant council.

It was proposed that the walk leaders on all walks should carry secateurs with them, so that any smaller issues with overgrown plants could be dealt with, on the spot.

Communications and Social Media:

Kevin presented a summary of the latest advice from RA on email and social media. He also reported back on the approaches our sister groups in Cheshire East Ramblers are taking, especially in the area of email.

The Committee endorsed the following positions:

1. SCR adopt **MailChimp** as the main vehicle for email communications with the Group. One-on-one communications eg Hazel emailing new members, or Phil emailing walk leaders, would continue, at least for the time being, through the existing email channels. Kevin will setup and begin the process of using the new MailChimp system, and once working, we can evaluate whether it is suitable for replacing or augmenting some of the other email channels we use.
2. The Committee were pleased with the demo **Newsletter** that had been prepared for this meeting and asked Kevin to complete this and distribute to all members (which means using the existing Yahoo email account, as MailChimp will not be ready quickly enough). They would like to see similar Newsletters issued, probably quarterly.
3. Kevin offered to setup a working **Facebook** page (probably reviving the old one which was used for a while during lockdown). However, he will not be able to manage this Facebook page on an ongoing basis and the Committee accepted the need to bring in someone to manage this.
4. There was some discussion about other social media sites, and specifically MeetUp. It was recognised that this medium is aimed at a different, younger demographic group than Facebook, and that it might help take SCR's message out more widely. However, the emphasis in 2023 will be to ensure our key media – email, Facebook, Newsletters, Social events are focussed on the key initiatives of more walks / more involvement / new members.

30th Anniversary Events

Our **Celebration Evening** will be held on 15th July (see earlier). It was also agreed that we would have a **Celebration Ramble**, and the option of walking the Sandstone Trail was discussed. Tentatively, this 34-mile Cheshire walk could be tackled over 4 consecutive weekends, a different walk leader for each section. This suggestion will be developed further.

Date of Next Meeting

Note the change here. The stated date for the next meeting was May 30th but this is an "evening pub walk" date. As Monday 29th May is a bank holiday it is proposed our next Committee meeting be held on **Wednesday May 31st**.