



Kent Area

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 1 February 2020 at St Edith Hall, High Street, Kemsing, Kent, TN15 6NA

Present

Robert Campbell (Chairman), Margaret Lubbock (Vice Chairman), Neville Machin (Vice Chairman), Robert Peel (Secretary) and about 80 members

Welcome and Introduction

Robert Campbell welcomed everyone to the AGM. He asked if anyone objected to being included in photographs for the website and Ramblers' publications. No one did.

Welcome from the Hosting Group

Colin Sefton, West Kent Group Chair, welcomed members to Kemsing.

Minutes of AGM held on 2 February 2019

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 2 February 2019 at St Andrew's Church Hall, Paddock Wood, were agreed to be a true record. No one wished to raise any matters arising from the minutes.

Annual Report

Robert Campbell said that he had spent his first year learning about all that goes on in Kent Area. He was particularly impressed by how long-serving many of our volunteers are, some for forty or even fifty years.

Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report

The meeting approved the accounts.

A member asked why funding from Central Office was lower than in the previous year. Robert Peel advised that funding was based on budgeted need and we had needed less than in the previous year; we had bid for what we needed and we had been given what we bid for.

Motion to Amend the Kent Area Constitution

The meeting considered a motion to delete the current paragraph 3 of the Area Constitution and substitute the following:

"The territory in which the Area shall function is the County of Kent, the Medway Council Area and London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley or such other territory as may from time to time be determined by the Board of Trustees either in consultation with the Area

and its neighbours or subject to the condition that Kent Area shall only function in such other territory with the agreement of the neighbouring Area within which it falls.”

The motion was passed unopposed, to take effect following approval by the Board of Trustees and subject to any amendments required by the Board of Trustees.

Election of Honorary Officers

Robert Campbell was elected Chairman

Margaret Lubbock and Neville Machin were elected Vice Chairmen

Robert Peel was elected Secretary

Hilary Adams was elected Treasurer

There were no nominations to serve as Area Council Representatives for Affiliated Clubs

Ken Neville was elected as an Area Council Representative for Individual Members

Appointment of Delegates to General Council

The meeting agreed to send Robert Campbell and Penny Dommett from West Kent Group as its delegates to the 2020 General Council.

Appointment of Auditor

Faye Clarke was unanimously appointed.

Topical Presentations

The Work of the Kent Countryside Management Partnerships

Mark Gallant spoke in general of the work of the Kent Countryside Management Partnerships (<https://kentcountrysidepartnerships.org>) and in more detail the work of the North West Kent Countryside Partnership (<https://nwkcpc.org>). He focused particularly on the challenge of protecting and improving the biodiversity of the rivers Cray and Darent which are two of just 200 chalk rivers globally.

Lost Ways

Neville Machin gave a brief update on the work he was coordinating to identify rights of way that have been omitted from the definitive map and that will otherwise be lost on 1 January 2026. The project is reaching a crucial stage where we have to decide whether and if so how to merge Kent's project with a project being run by the Ramblers' nationally to achieve the same result. Discussions are in progress with a decision to be made shortly. Neville proposed a vote of thanks to all the volunteers who were working so hard on the project.

Coastal Access

Ian Wild gave an update on coastal access in Kent. He reported that following a quiet period around the general election, Natural England had now published their proposed routes for the Isle of Sheppey and the stretch from Iwade to Grain, thus completing their proposals for Kent's coastline. Ian explained that he would be responding to the resulting consultations on behalf of the Ramblers; other members could respond in a personal capacity but should make it clear they were not responding on behalf of the Ramblers.

Ian reported that there had as yet been no decision from the public inquiry into proposals for a massive solar farm at Cleve Hill near Faversham. He had been impressed at the huge level of opposition to the plan and there were new safety concerns as some

batteries of the type intended to be used at Cleve Hill to store electricity had exploded in California.

Named Walks Project

Robert Peel gave an update on the project to promote and enhance the many named walks that are contained wholly or partly within Kent Area. He had hoped that by now this would have resulted in a new publication – a new guide to the Tunbridge Wells Circular walk and other walks in Tunbridge Wells borough. He had worked hard on this but publication has been delayed because some of the paths that he wanted to include in the guide were not in a fit state to promote. In fact some of them were completely impassable. Waymarking of some routes was also pretty dire. So volunteers and KCC staff have been working to put things right. Not all problems were yet fixed but he hoped they would be by Easter. Robert offered particular thanks to Colin Sefton for his sterling work putting up waymarks.

This work has highlighted weaknesses in Kent Ramblers' ability to undertake practical footpath work. There is no formal path maintenance team covering Tunbridge Wells and there is no capability for installing waymarking posts in West Kent – there is a good team run by White Cliffs Group covering East Kent. As always, it comes down to a shortage of volunteers. There are many gaps and Robert invited members to step forward to fill them.

We currently have funds to cover foreseeable work, our walking guides having raised a surplus of over £6000 for this work since October 2016 when we published the Coast Path Guide.

Annual Meeting of Footpath Volunteers

This year's meeting will be held in Lenham on Friday 24 April. Booking will be essential, at least for those wanting lunch. With the departure of Averil Brice, Robert Peel is organising the meeting. Details of the day's programme will be published as soon as possible – Robert will be pleased to hear of topics that volunteers would like covered.

Puzzle Solution

Robert announced the solution to the puzzle in the Annual Review – 1.8% of Ordnance Survey map owners belong to the Ramblers.

Open Forum

Points raised in discussion included:

- **Use of byways by off-road vehicles.** Concerns about climate change and damage to wildlife as well as damage to surface. There is to be a judicial review of failure of Lake District National Park Authority to restrict vehicular access there. The Ramblers will support any move to increase restrictions generally.
- **Encroachment onto highway verges.** Lack of action by Highway Authority when landowners attempt to extend their boundaries to include verges. There is no specific Ramblers' campaign but the Open Spaces Society is getting energised about the issue and there is material on their web site.
- **Health walks.** The Ramblers has an arrangement with Sport England at present.
- **Recent resignation of Chief Executive** – concern at rapid turnover of Chief Executives in recent years.
- **Board of Trustees.** Visiting trustee Malcolm McDonnell urged members to consider standing for election to the Board.



Next Annual General Meeting

The next AGM will be hosted by Maidstone Group – on 6 February 2021 in Headcorn.

