



**Kent**

## **Minutes of 41<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting held on 1 February 2025 at Wye Village Hall, Bridge St, Wye, Ashford TN25 5EA**

### ***Present***

Colin Sefton (Chairman), Tony Bristow (Vice Chairman), Mark Lavenstein (Vice Chairman), Hilary Adams (Treasurer), Robert Peel (Secretary) and 60 other members.

### ***Welcomes and Introduction***

Colin Sefton welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked the team from White Cliffs Group for their work hosting the AGM

On behalf of White Cliffs Group, Deborah Quow also welcomed everyone to the AGM.

### ***Minutes of AGM held on 10 February 2024***

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 10 February 2024, were agreed to be a true record. No one wished to raise any matters arising from the minutes.

### ***Annual Report***

Presenting the annual report, Colin Sefton was pleased to report another successful year with strong Groups offering good programmes of walks, holidays and social events. In the area of footpath protection we had at last recruited an Area Footpath Secretary, Margarethe Batteson, and filled all the Local Footpath Officer posts in the western half of Kent. We had held two full-day meetings for footpath volunteers in Lenham where we had interacted positively with staff from the footpath teams in Kent, Medway & Bromley.

### ***Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report***

The meeting approved the accounts and report.

### ***Election of Honorary Officers***

Colin Sefton was elected Chairman

Tony Bristow was elected Vice Chairman

Robert Peel was elected Secretary

Hilary Adams was elected Treasurer

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

There were no nominations to serve as Area Council Representatives for Individual Members

## ***Appointment of Delegates to General Council***

The meeting agreed that Colin Sefton, Mark Lavenstein and Robert Peel should choose amongst themselves who should be the Area's delegates to the 2025 General Council which would be held at the National Exhibition Centre and authorised the Officers to appoint substitutes should any two or more of them become unable to attend.

## ***Appointment of Auditor***

Faye Clarke was unanimously appointed.

## ***Topical Presentations***

Catherine Bradley, from the Kent Downs National Landscape, gave a presentation on two projects, “Putting Down Routes” and the proposal for a “Geopark” encompassing geologically related areas in both Kent and northern France.

## ***Public Rights of Way Work***

Robert Peel reminded the meeting that at the 2024 AGM he had made an appeal for more volunteers to help with the Area's public rights of way work. Good progress had been made over the past with the recruitment of an Area Footpath Secretary (formerly called the Public Rights of Way Manager) and the filling of all Local Footpath Officer posts in the western half of Kent. The focus was now on filling all vacant Local Footpath Officer posts in the eastern half of Kent and he appealed specifically for someone to take on a group of parishes in the Elham area.

Robert also wanted to say thank you to Richard Wilkes who had retired from his Sector Coordinator and LFO roles in north Kent after decades of service.

## ***Solar Farms***

Tony Bristow drew attention to the proliferation of applications to build solar farms to exploit Kent's above average incidence of solar energy. While green energy is welcome, some of the proposals paid scant attention to their impact on rights of way and it was disappointing that there was not more focus on using buildings to support solar panels rather than farmland. Tony was building up expertise within Kent Area in responding to unsatisfactory applications.

## ***Other Issues***

Robert Peel gave brief updates on the Area's series of walking guides, which since 2016 had raised over £20,000 which was being used to promote the county's named walks and refurbish the parish footpath maps seen in many villages, and on the role of the Kent Countryside Access Forum in seeking the abolition of the proposal to extinguish unrecorded rights of way, a request which the government announced on Boxing Day that it would indeed grant.

## ***Next Annual General Meeting***

The next AGM will be hosted by Bromley Group in Keston Village Hall on 7 February 2026.

