

**RAMBLERS SCOTLAND STRATEGIC COMMITTEE**  
**Minute of meeting held on Tuesday 28 November 2023, 5:45pm- 8:45pm**  
**Meeting held at the Melting Pot, Edinburgh**  
**and via Zoom**

**ATTENDANCE**

**RSSC**

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith	Convener
Beth Dickson	Vice Convener
David Webb (zoom)	Ordinary Member
Karl-Erik Wilson	Ordinary Member
Jarka Polednova (zoom)	Ordinary Member
Mike Gray	Treasurer
Jacqui Thomson	Co-opted Ordinary Member
Jane Searles	Co-opted Ordinary Member
Mike Dales	Ordinary Member
Sue Thomas	Ordinary Member

**Staff**

Jeannie Cranfield	Volunteer Development Officer & minute taker
Brendan Paddy	Director, Ramblers Scotland
John Nicholls	Walk Leadership Project Officer, Scotland

**Apologies**

Dave Rennie	Ordinary Member
Andrew Bachell	Ordinary Member

**WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, introductions were made, and apologies noted.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTE FROM RSSC AUGUST 2023 MEETING**

The Committee noted App 01a: the draft minute of the meeting held on the 22 August 2023. This was approved as an accurate record.

**MATTERS ARISING/ ACTION POINTS FROM RSSC MAY 2023 MEETING**

Only outstanding is for Mal and Brendan to look at the finance reporting to RSSC. Jacqui now reported against the relevant action that Balerno had run two walks for asylum seekers but had no attendees. Noted on the action regarding training on new website/Walks manager that there were likely to be more training sessions offered during the year (there is only one offered at present).

**UPDATE FROM BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND EGM**

The Committee received an update from the Board of Trustees. Mal and Sue provided an update on the recent EGM.

The Board of trustees approved Ramblers GB Business Plan 23-24. They agreed there would be a two year Business Plan in future years.

The EGM overwhelming voted to approve the new strategy and high level budget. There was a healthy discussion about a wide range of issues before the vote. Mal noted the language on access used in the strategy had been beefed up. There was an

acknowledgement of the importance of the climate emergency which would be addressed through a separate action plan. There was nervousness in the room about a governance review and it was reflected during the discussion about an anti racism element of the strategy that members don't necessarily know what that means. There is a recognition that funding is not all secured as yet in order to deliver the new strategy, which could slow the roll out, especially in the first year.

## **FINANCE UPDATE**

The committee noted App 02a: the management information accounts for the period ending 30 September 2023. It was noted that the incorrect use of expenditure codes will be monitored closely in future to avoid confusion in the line by line reporting.

The committee discussed the Glenborrodale case and the agreed new route, there is uncertainty on who will pay for the route and the quality of the proposed path network. It may still require an expensive court case if agreement cannot be reached.

The committee discussed the Ramblers reserves and the impact Covid had on the finances.

The committee noted App 02b: RSSC general accounts report for the period to 30 September 2023. These have been externally examined and approved.

The committee noted App 02c: The Gathering accounts, these have still to be externally examined and approved.

## **BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE**

The committee noted App 03a: the Business Plan 2023/24.

Brendan reported there is a heavy emphasis on EDI and high volume of Business as Usual. Some reporting not just to RSSC but also to Ramblers GB business plan. Gold and Silver not a RAG rating but an indication of where there are these additional layers of reporting. The Ramblers Scotland Business Plan is now finalised but not set in stone. Will be updating on quarterly basis but may adjust quarterly outcomes where required. A few things depending on funding. Angela's work and We Walk will only go ahead if funded.

The Committee asked for Red, Amber, Green rating in the report to accommodate those with colour blindness.

**AP 01**

The Convener noted there's no KPI around membership. Requested that Brendan keep the membership report so we keep track. The Committee agreed, they valued the membership report.

**AP 02**

The committee noted App 03b: RSSC 2022/23 Business Plan Objectives Q4

Brendan reported it's been a busy year with the majority of activities delivered to a high standard. Particularly the Out There Award, John Nicholls' work on the navigation films, our very high profile on campaign issues, and the responsible access films reaching a very large audience that the sector doesn't normally touch.

Membership at a 10 year high, though it has fallen just short of target by 13 members but still an excellent result.

It was thought we'd be able to recruit more volunteers for Mapping Scotland's Paths earlier in the year. We were trying to increase the income for the work for the future which has taken up Luke's time. When we finally did the push, we got a spike in people using the map but not volunteering which was disappointing.

To note the Out There Award target reporting timeframe is Scottish Gov timeframe, not Ramblers. We will meet our target for Scottish Gov, but it's not reported within Ramblers timeframe. The committee discussed the Out There Award and the work around recruiting local authorities to deliver the award. The committee commended the work being done by Sam.

Where Areas are not functioning, we have offered Groups a variety of opportunities to stay connected but there is no single emerging model for how this can best be delivered and interest from many groups is limited. There is a risk here going forward, because although Areas are increasingly folding because many Groups do not see their value, they are still an integral part of our administrative and constitutional structures. This makes central staff-supported structures more important. We are fortunate in Scotland to have strong relationships with many groups. Our constitutional structures no longer fit for modern world,

and this will undoubtedly be a central consideration during the forthcoming governance review.

The committee discussed collaboration across the nation rather than geographic boundaries.

The committee noted App 03c: EDI tracking 2022/23 Q4

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

Just over a quarter of membership are in the lower half of SIMD distribution, but three quarters are in the higher 50% of SIMD index so we need to do more in the lower half. We have embedded increasing work with a range of excluded communities in our work plan, it's no longer a separate strand of activity and so we will no longer produce a separate EDI report. Mal suggested we should monitor the EDI reporting through the business planning and ensure RSSC feels this is keeping them sufficiently informed. Beth agreed with mainstreaming in principle but suggested highlighting EDI in the BP reporting. Committee agreed.

In response to question, it was clarified that we do not have the age of many members because historically they were not asked on joining and there's a balance between making renewing as simple as possible and asking additional information.

## **AREA AGM's**

The Committee noted paper App 05 the Area AGM briefing pack & FAQ's.

Noted Mal is not going to the Lothian Members Day, going to Grampian instead. Jacqui and Sue hoping to attend. Jeannie to ask Livingston to introduce the RSSC member/s on the day.

**AP 03**

**Forth Valley AGM** – Jacqui felt it was a most enjoyable day. First time she'd represented RSSC and felt she was able to add more of a spin from a group perspective. Mal and Brendan more of a business side and Jacqui felt it worked well. Feedback was very good. Mal felt quiet support for the strategy. Local concerns about maintaining a paper Area Joint Programme and safety on group walks were the main points of discussion.

Claire to circulate a feedback form to those attending Area AGM's to capture the main discussion points.

**AP 04**

## **WALK LEADERSHIP UPDATE**

The committee noted App 06, the Walk Leadership update.

John Nicholls, Ramblers Scotland's Walk Leadership Project Officer, gave an overview of the walk leadership project to date and a presentation on the [draft Safety on Walks approach and guidance](#).

### **Project to date:**

- Over 500 have attended walk leadership training.
- About 1500 in total, so we're really getting reach.
- About 200 have attended outdoors skills-based training. Net gain 130 walk leaders. Contributing to walk leaders.
- 17 new navigation skills videos to support the wider walking public. 20,000 views in first two weeks.
- Target to engage 60% groups and on track to do that.
- Jacqui asked if we track how many go onto lead walks from walk leader training. No don't track at moment but we will look at how we evaluate training overall.

### **Safety on Walks**

Groups will be asked to adopt and adapt generic risk assessments, risk assessments won't be required for each walk.

We recognise how we support volunteers through this journey is really important. Lots of mixed views out there and strong messages coming from volunteers feeling unsure. We want to stay close to volunteers in Scotland and have planned 6 x online events to keep the conversation live. Talking it through with volunteers informs us and also allows us to bring volunteers with us. A check in with committee members perhaps important, so they can distil it down. Launch deadline spring 2024.

The committee discussed John's update in detail and suggested softening the language used in the document, using simpler forms, provide first aid training etc. John will liaise with EYW on risk forms for varying grades of walks/ hikes.

The BOT will make a decision about whether the training needs to be mandatory, they need to consider what is a legal requirement.

## **WORKING GROUPS AND SUB COMMITTEES**

### **Search and co-option sub committee.**

App 8a Draft Co-option Process document was signed off and approved by committee.

App 8b Draft terms of Reference document, this is a preparatory committee that works in partnership with staff. People can also nominate themselves at Scottish Council. In the past if you stood for election and weren't elected there was a convention that you would not be co-opted. This process makes it clear we have the option to consider people who were unsuccessful, where they have skills or experience the committee needs, as it makes sense to consider co-opting people we know are interested in the job.

The committee signed off the ToR but suggested an annual review at the end of elections following the co-option process.

Still identifying how many vacancies we have. Potentially we have 3 vacancies and 2 candidates, and we know their skills. So we're well covered. The only area we're short on is IT skills and a focus on recruiting new members. We're not going out to actively recruit people to stand but consider the approach to co-option.

### **Access Sub Committee**

The committee noted App 07a & 07b. They agreed and signed off on the Access Sub Committee ToR. Mike D provided an update.

Brendan added that Andrew Bachell has made the case we need to reconsider our position on access and funding with the government. We need to be shifting our position and have asked Andrew and Mal to join a working group on this with staff. We will make sure the ASC have a means to input into this process as we review our position.

### **The Gathering**

The committee noted App 09a & 09b. Karl and Jacqui reported the Gathering happening in Bute. 120 already signed up, cap at 140. Glenburn Hotel already full. Local group in Bute leading on programme. All going ahead and Gathering committee starting to think about next year.

## **SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2024 UPDATE**

The intention is to build on the new strategy and talk about the work we're doing in Scotland and the great work our volunteers are doing. Planning to have an external keynote speaker, someone who has a working-class background to move the focus to SIMD. Iain Roberston been approached, comes from Govan. We'd be grateful for any other suggestions.

Afternoon looking for good examples of where groups are reaching out an engaging SIMD groups or marginalised groups.

The committee suggested someone who's overcome exclusion. Good to have it recorded and shared on our website. Future guest ideas should be discussed at future meetings. Perhaps options to join us after lunch for example so they don't have to sit through financial accounts etc.

Annual Report – we will circulate a draft well ahead of the Feb RSSC meeting, so you will be asked to approve before the RSSC meeting.

## **DATES OF NEXT RSSC MEETINGS**

The informal meeting in December is cancelled.

Pre / Post Scottish Council 2024 meetings are on Tues 12 March and Tues 26 March, 6-7pm via Zoom.

The next formal meeting of RSSC will take place on Tuesday 20 February, 5:45-8:45pm, Edinburgh.

## AOCB / ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Items for the next formal meeting should be emailed to Claire.

**Minute taken by: Jeannie Cranfield, Volunteer Development Officer, November 2023**

### ACTION POINTS

- AP01** Brendan to include a RAG rating in BP reporting
- AP02** Brendan to continue to provide the membership report
- AP03** Jeannie to introduce RSSC members to the Lothian & Borders members Day
- AP04** Claire will circulate the Area AGM feedback form to those representing RS & RSSC
- AP05** John will liaise with EYW on forms relevant from easier walks to hiking Munros.



Signed..... Date: 02/02/2024

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, Convener, Ramblers Scotland