

SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2023**RAMBLERS SCOTLAND SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2023
MINUTE OF
THE THIRTY SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING
Held on Saturday 04 March 2023
Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling****Welcome**

The Convener, Alison Mitchell, welcomed delegates to Scottish Council in Stirling. She reminded the conference that the inaugural meeting of Scottish Council took place in the Cowan Centre, Stirling on 23 February 1985.

Ramblers GB CEO, Ross Maloney

Ross Maloney gave a presentation in which he reviewed the highlights and challenges for the Ramblers over the previous year since he had started in his post in July 2022. He set out the opportunities for the Ramblers in future, especially to ensure the organisation works to help a more diverse range of people enjoy the benefits of walking.

AGM Formal business

Alison Mitchell welcomed guests Rebecca Dawson, Ronnie Forbes and Bekah Cork from the Ramblers GB Board of Trustees, and also our Vice Presidents Dennis Canavan and Alistair Cant. Apologies were received from Lucy Wallace, our President.

There were 51 voting delegates at conference.

The Convener passed on the sad news that Rita Riddell, former Hon Treasurer and one of the founders of Ramblers Scotland along with her late husband Bruce Riddell, had died during the past year.

RSSC election arrangements

The Convener explained that there would be an election for RSSC as there are six nominees for four places. There was no requirement for an election to the Motions Committee as there were three nominations for the three places.

Approval of draft minute of Scottish Council 2022 (Paper SC23 01)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved, proposed by Barry Pottle and seconded by Karine Davidson.

Update on SC22 motions (Paper SC23 02)

There were no questions on this paper.

Adoption of Annual Report (Paper SC23 03)

The annual report was adopted, proposed by Andrew Bachell.

Statement on Scottish Council and Gathering Accounts (SC23 04)

The Hon Treasurer, Mike Gray, gave an overview of the accounts for the RSSC and the Ramblers Gathering. The accounts were adopted, proposed by Dawn Tuckwood and seconded by Phil Duddy.

Summary of Ramblers Scotland finances 2021-22 (SC23 05)

The Hon Treasurer then outlined the report prepared by Ramblers GB giving an overview of the Ramblers Scotland finances. Elly MacDonald asked about the lack of any legal costs given the organisation is involved in a legal case at Glenborrodale. Director, Brendan Paddy, explained that over £35,000 had been raised through a Crowdfunder so the organisation had not yet needed to use Ramblers funds. In addition, the Board of Trustees had guaranteed additional funds if needed for the case. Mike Gray thanked the Ramblers GB finance staff for preparing such a clear report.

Appointment of independent examiners (SC23 06)

The Hon Treasurer noted that the independent examiner for RSSC is Charles Harris, who is willing to continue for another year. For the Gathering the examiner is Christine MacLeod, not David Fenlon as noted on the papers, who was a long term examiner of these accounts. These appointments were approved by Scottish Council.

Announcement of Honorary Officers

The Convener announced the Honorary Officers. There were no votes required.

Kate Ashbrook accepted a nomination to become Vice President of Ramblers Scotland and gave a short speech thanking Scottish Council for this honour. She also thanked Alison Mitchell for her long and dedicated contribution to the organisation.

Lucy Wallace was also elected as a Vice President.

Mike Gray will continue as Hon Treasurer.

Beth Dickson was elected as Vice Convener, she had been in the role on an interim basis.

The new President, Zahrah Mahmood was not able to attend the conference but had recorded a short video to delegates, thanking Scottish Council for the opportunity to be President.

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith was elected as Convener following the end of Alison's term. He explained that his professional background is in sports and physical activity, but he is passionate about walking and the role walking can play in improving social interactions, as well as mental and physical health. He especially paid tribute to the role played by volunteers across the organisation.

Nominee introductions paper (SC23 07a)

The six nominees for RSSC gave a short presentation to the conference. They were Karl-Erik Wilson, Jacqui Thomson (given by her proposer Josephine Bisacre on her behalf), Jane Searles, Jarka Polednova, Mike Dales and Andrew Bachell.

The Convener announced that voting would take place over the lunch break.

Announce Motions Committee Paper (SC23 07b)

There were three nominees to the Motions Committee: Barry Pottle, Liz Hunt and Alison Mitchell.

Note and adopt motions order paper (SC23 08)

The Convener of the Motions Committee, Barry Pottle, introduced the motions paper. There were no motions this year, including no late motions. He encouraged the delegates to put forward motions to Scottish Council the following year as it is an important way of giving a voice to the groups and areas of the Ramblers.

Dawn Tuckwood pointed out that motions should not just be put forward that will be passed, but which will raise important issues that delegates should think about for the future.

Lunch and voting

Election/voting Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee and Motions Committee

The Convener announced that the following delegates were elected to the RSSC.

Andrew Bachell, Mike Dales, Jarka Polednova and Karl-Erik Wilson.

Commiserations were passed on to Jane Searle and Jacqui Thomson and also thanks to them for standing.

There were 51 voting delegates in attendance, 49 ballot papers were received.

The RSSC also had the opportunity to co-opt members and the next meeting would be on the following Monday.

Presentation to Vice President Alistair Cant

The Convener presented an engraved Quaich to former Hon Treasurer Alistair Cant, who had been elected as Vice President at the previous online Scottish Council. Alistair thanked RSSC and delegates for the gift and pledged to continue his involvement with Ramblers Scotland including on his role as a member of the Access Sub Committee.

Ramblers GB Chair, Rebecca Dawson

Rebecca Dawson said that it was a pleasure to attend an in-person Scottish Council. She had personally benefitted from the work of Ramblers Scotland, in her walk that morning to the Wallace Monument – a route which had been shown on the Scottish Paths Map. She marked the 20th anniversary of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and paid tribute to the work of the Ramblers in achieving this legislation, while noting that work was ongoing to implement access rights and also educate people on their responsibilities.

She said she was passionate about the aim of the Ramblers across GB to help more people from different backgrounds to enjoy the outdoors. There was a lot to learn from each other across all three nations. She was delighted to see Zahra Mahmood elected as President, and looked forward to working with Malcolm Dingwall-Smith on the board as new Convener.

She thanked all volunteers for their continuing work to help more people get outdoors. She particularly thanked Alison Mitchell for the different roles and capacities she had been involved in

with the Ramblers, at Board of Trustees, RSSC, Area and Group level. Her immense knowledge of the organisation was highly valued.

Rebecca then presented Alison Mitchell with a gift of an engraved crystal vase as a token of thanks from Ramblers Scotland.

In closing the formal business, the Convener thanked the staff, especially Claire Exley who had organised the conference, and local volunteers. She wished the new RSSC well and reminded conference that she was still involved with the Gathering, Grampian Area and Aberdeen Ramblers. She also had an archive of Ramblers Scotland materials to organise and digitise.

Afternoon sessions

Brendan Paddy introduced the afternoon sessions by outlining the importance of the Scottish access legislation and Scottish Outdoor Access Code. He reminded delegates that we still had a role to ensure the implementation of the legislation and Code didn't get rolled back but continued to work well. He recommended delegates watch the video of Alastair McIntosh's Dick Balharry talk which covered the traditional freedom to roam which existed before the legislation and explained why it was important to get this freedom turned into a right.

It is now crucial to continue our work to get more people across Scotland to understand and enjoy their rights. The importance of paths was also stressed, both in terms of information of where paths are, as well as creating new routes and promoting paths we already have.

Session 1: Andrew Bachell – Access

Thinking of the 20th anniversary of the access legislation, Andrew said that Scotland's access rights were the envy of other countries in Europe. They were the result of a unique opportunity when the new Scottish parliament and campaigners and landowners recognised that there was an appetite for land reform. But the job isn't finished. Some poor signs remain. For example, investment in access management and infrastructure is much reduced since 2003, and there are some problems related to poor visitor behaviour. Disturbance to wildlife is often cited as a reason for constraining access, often erroneously.

There are calls for a review of the Code but this won't resolve these issues or get a more diverse range of people outdoors. The Ramblers are now doing more than any government body to get paths mapped and improved, and more people outdoors. Problems also include locked gates, non-compliant signage.

If the Code is reviewed we would need to get it passed by Parliament. What can we do to make sure MSPs and landowners are on board?

Delegates were then asked to discuss the following questions, thinking about the next 20 years:

Any inspirations I can take away?

What ideas did that prompt for your group?

Any opportunities for Ramblers Scotland?

Some of the ideas discussed included:

- Lots of people in Scotland don't know about their rights & responsibilities– need to increase awareness, starting with school curriculum.
- Group should take out MSPs on a walk
- Groups could offer to go into schools to do presentations on access.

- Need greater education on litter and responsible dog walking.
- Raise funds to produce Ramblers-branded signage, which would help to encourage responsible behaviour.
- How do land managers communicate shooting activities – can there be collaboration with the Scottish Paths Map to include temporary information for walkers? Likewise, information on location of stiles, etc, when faced with a fence or wall with no stile at the point you're at.
- Ramblers Scotland should work to influence future agricultural programmes to fund access.

Session 2: Heather Thomson and Iqra Mahmood - Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

The two speakers talked on the topic of breaking down barriers to the outdoors, which the Out There Award is helping to address. It helps young adults to know where to go, and gives people partners to go out with. The Award is free to join and includes gear and equipment. It fills a gap after high school where some students are able to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, but after that there is no access to equipment, which can be another barrier.

Many young people lack confidence in getting started to walk. Skills training is expensive and living in a city means being dependent on public transport.

The project is very inclusive – over 50% of participants are women, 54% are from minority ethnic backgrounds, 30% from LGBTQI+, 7% low income and 12% had a disability. As an ambassador both speakers are now helping to engage new walkers. Funding is important for Ramblers Scotland to run the course, which includes free equipment (boots, waterproofs, etc). This is currently funded by Scottish Government and People's Postcode Lottery, and if funding is found there are many plans to develop it.

The course is co-designed by the participants to make sure it evolves and improves as it continues. It's important that the participants feel part of the Ramblers but also they have met lots of other groups.

Delegates were then asked to discuss the following questions:

How can Ramblers Scotland help make the outdoors a place that everyone can access and enjoy?

Any inspirations I can take away?

What ideas did that prompt for your group?

Any opportunities for Ramblers Scotland?

Some of the ideas discussed included:

- One blind member pointed out that most Ramblers groups said he was welcome if he brought a guide, but this isn't always possible and isn't inclusive. However, to challenge perceptions, being visually impaired isn't an imposition on the group. Ramblers could produce training materials for members to support those who are visually impaired to join groups.
- How to bring young people to the Ramblers who have already done DofE but don't have anywhere to go after that. Meet up, etc, groups start up but don't always have good leadership skills or insurance, etc. There needs to be a way of linking together young people with Ramblers groups/governance structures.
- A social event might help to bring people to the Ramblers, including an easy starter walk.

- The EYW online platform is a useful way of introducing people to other members and making walks more accessible (eg, car sharing, seeing who else is on the group, etc).
- A centralised kit store for groups might help others to get involved, including recycled/reused gear. The Ramblers could help to organise a “kit bank” or kit exchange using the Ramblers website or group Facebook pages. The Outdoor Gear Exchange on Facebook was recommended.

Session 3: Gary Linstead and Gordon Millar – paths and routes

Gordon Millar gave a presentation about Mapping Scotland’s Paths based on his experience as a volunteer on this project. Volunteers walk and audit the paths which then change from purple to green on the map. The tracks and paths data can then be used by anyone to create their own routes. This is open source data managed by ESRI and the auditing can be done while walking or from home on a desk top. Attributes of the path are captured as well as information about land management operations on or around that path.

Gary Linstead is a ranger with Glasgow Council and Ramblers member, and he talked about the development of the Magnificent 11 route in Glasgow. This circular path passes through three nature reserves and a protected site, and connects with bus routes. To make this happen, Gary was clear that connections are needed – to connect people with greenspaces and linking up these greenspaces together. Volunteers involved in creating and maintaining the path include local groups such as Friends of Linn Park and Friends of Kings Park, and Gary paid tribute to the involvement of Catherine Watt and Glasgow Ramblers. Ramblers Scotland and Glasgow Ramblers gave considerable support as the path was built. It’s now important to maintain and promote the route. The next stage will include setting up a “Friends of the Magnificent 11” group to ensure sustainability through ongoing fundraising, promotion and maintenance.

What could you, or your group or your area do to either map paths or promote paths in your area? Some of the ideas discussed included:

- It is very difficult to find routes that Ramblers have used and created, so it would be useful to revisit the Ramblers Routes database to find downloadable routes.
- How do non-Ramblers groups who have created maps of routes they use connect to Ramblers groups? Can they take up affiliated membership?
- One group has used the Scottish Paths Map to plan their group walks, could there be a way of Ramblers groups feeding in information to the map? Eg, give feedback on paths not on the map already, or issues on any actual path. The most important data needed is: does the path exist and are there any problems with using it? Is there a danger of too much information being asked for, whereas much less would be adequate.
- Paths are fundamental to the whole basis of access, but no audit of the core paths has been done. Could Ramblers Scotland talk to NatureScot and local authorities about core paths and their status?
- The Scottish Paths Map will in time be downloadable and open source and this needs to happen soon.

Reflections

Brendan Paddy ended the conference by reflecting on the last time Scottish Council had taken place in person, in North Berwick in March 2020. He felt it was important to come together again and meet each other face to face after the long period of the Covid pandemic and online meetings. At this conference it was right that we had celebrated the 20th anniversary, though it was recognised we still had much work to do.

Brendan gave his thanks to Ross, Rebecca and Bekah for travelling up to Scotland. He thanked Alison for all her work over many years in the Ramblers. He gave his thanks to the staff team, particular Claire for organising the event. He thanked all the volunteers who had given presentations, and to everyone for attending and taking part in the discussions. He hoped everyone would go back to their groups and let them know what had happened and what pledges had been made.

Scottish Council closed at 17.15.

Minute compiled by Helen Todd, Campaigns and Policy Manager

This Minute of Scottish Council 2023 was approved at Scottish Council 2024

APPENDIX

Attendance at Scottish Council 2023

Attendee		Affiliation
Margaret	Allan	East Lothian Ramblers and Hillwalkers
Christine	Anderson	Clydesdale to Solway
Elizabeth	Anderson	Member guest
John	Andrews	Member guest
Kate	Ashbrook	Member guest
Andrew	Bachell	RSSC
Sandra	Barras	Badenoch & Strathspey
Bob	Beattie	Linlithgow
Josephine	Bisacre	Balerno & District Ramblers
Gary	Blissett	Wigtownshire Ramblers
Lesley	Blissett	Member guest
Valerie	Bolsworth	Member guest
Graham	Bridge	Blairgowrie Ramblers
Dennis	Canavan	Vice President
Alistair	Cant	Vice President
Linda	Christie	Member guest
David	Clark	Helensburgh and West Dunbartonshire
Margaret	Cook	Stirling, Falkirk & District
Bekah	Cork	Board of Trustees
Frances	Corr	Member guest
Mike	Dales	Member guest
Karine	Davison	Bearsden & Milngavie Ramblers & Hillwalkers
Rebecca	Dawson	Chair, Board of Trustees
Robert	Delamere	Member guest
Beth	Dickson	RSSC
Malcolm	Dingwall-Smith	Member guest
Allan	Drew	Member guest
Phil	Duddy	Biggar Ramblers
Christine	Ferguson	Forfar and District
Ronnie	Forbes	Board of Trustees
James	Forret	Forth Valley, Fife and Tayside
Azeem	Gopalani	Lothian and Borders
Mike	Gray	RSSC
Phillip	Greco	Cunninghame Ramblers
Louise	Harker	Highland and Islands
Harry	Hattan	Isle of Bute Ramblers
Jane	Houston	St Andrews & North East Fife
Dorothy	Hutcheon	Member guest
Lynn	Hyams	Member guest
Darren	Jeffery	Edinburgh Young Walkers
Anne	Kelly	Member guest
Stuart	King	Clydesdale to Solway
Dorothy	King	Dumfries and District
Elizabeth	Lawie	North Strathclyde
James	Lawson	Strathkelvin Ramblers
Doris	Linstead	Member guest
Gary	Linstead	Member guest
Rob	Melville	Member guest
Anne	MacDonald	Grampian
Elly	Macdonald	Aberdeen Young Walkers
Jean	MacGillivray	Dundee and District

Rob	Mackenzie	Member guest
Jane	MacNaughton	Livingston
Iqra	Mahmood	Presenter
Janet	McAuley	Member guest
David	McCrossan	Glasgow Young Walkers
Irene	McNally	Member guest
Gordon	Millar	Presenter
Hilary	Miller	Member guest
Alison	Mitchell	Convener, RSSC
John	Phillips	Edinburgh
Jarka	Polednova	Forth Valley, Fife and Tayside
Barry	Pottle	Convener, Motions Committee
Dave	Rennie	RSSC
Keith	Reynolds	Member guest
Terry	Robinson	Member guest
Linda	Robbie	Brechin
Arlene	Ross	Dalgety Bay & District
Jane	Searles	Member guest
Stuart	Sefton	Monklands Ramblers
Roger	Smith	Highland and Islands
Gordon	Stewart	North Strathclyde
Susan	Tester	Kinross & Ochil
Sue	Thomas	RSSC
Heather	Thomson	Presenter
Anni	Tinsley	Inverness
Peter	Trant	Perth & District
Dawn	Tuckwood	Inverurie
Inga	Vesper	Member guest
David	Webb	RSSC
Bridget	Wilcox	Member guest
Karl	Wilson	Lothian and Borders
Sheona	Wilson	Member guest
Paula	Wise	Glasgow
Katie	Baker	Volunteer, Returning Officer
Lynne	Bell	Volunteer, Registration Desk
Betty	Brodie	Volunteer, Registration Desk
Fraser	Harris	Volunteer, Teller
William	Kane	Volunteer, Teller
Heath	Brown	Staff
Danny	Carden	Staff
Jeannie	Cranfield	Staff
Claire	Exley	Staff
Sam	Knight	Staff
Ross	Maloney	Staff
John	Nicholls	Staff
Brendan	Paddy	Staff
Helen	Todd	Staff