

Ramblers' Association – North West Essex Group

Minutes of the 30th Annual General Meeting held at Bocking Village Club on Saturday 4th November 2017.

1. Welcome

There were 29 members present at the AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from the following members: Janet Bugler, Clive Collins, Julie Waters and Fran Starnes.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 29th AGM were read and approved.

4. Matters Arising

All matters arising are dealt with under the following agenda items

5. Annual Report

This past year we have again managed to run a full programme of walks with the aim of putting on at least one walk each weekend, with some additional mid-week and evening walks in the summer. We have walked in Essex, Suffolk, Hertfordshire and London. In June a group of us enjoyed a week walking on the Purbeck Hills and South West coast, staying at Scoles Manor overlooking Corfe Castle in Dorset. In October we returned to Dorset this time staying in Christchurch, by the side of the River Stour and on the edge of the New Forest where we joined a local rambling group for a couple of walks. A small group of us even found time to walk the length of Hadrian's Wall in September.

With regard to social events we held our post Christmas lunch in January at Gosfield Lake Golf Club, the event being well attended, and in February our group again assisted with the catering at the Area AGM in Stock. The group celebrated its 30th anniversary in August when we enjoyed a generous cream tea provided by Spencer's Farm Shop in Wickham St Paul, preceded by a short walk in the surrounding countryside. Thanks to all those who helped organise the tea, and to our walk leaders in general for allowing us to maintain a full programme of walks. Thanks also to our footpath secretary, Katherine Evans, who monitors the Public Rights of Way network in our area. There is a lot of work carried out behind the scenes commenting on footpath diversions and closures, and on planning applications where they affect existing footpaths.

We continue to monitor and report any issues with the local footpath network to the relevant highway authority, and to comment on any proposed diversions or extinguishments. Despite the severe pressure on local authority budgets with regard to the maintenance of Public Rights of Way we have achieved some notable successes in the past year. New footpaths have been added to the Definitive Map in both Gosfield and Bures, and a badly churned up footpath in Wickham Bishops has been completely resurfaced. In September a working party from our group spent a day maintaining the John Ray Walk from Witham to Braintree, clearing overgrown vegetation and checking or renewing the waymark signs.

Earlier in the year some of our members attended a consultation event in Witham relating to the proposed blanket closure of public rights of way crossings in our area by Network Rail, and completed the online petition organised by the Ramblers. At the time of writing the proposed closure of a substantial number of crossings is still in dispute and the matter has been referred by the Secretary of State for Transport to a public inquiry which was due to have commenced at Chelmsford Civic Centre in mid October. This has now been postponed until January by the appointed inspector, and members

are encouraged to attend some of the sessions when the inquiry resumes in three months time.

Finally it remains for me to thank all those who have led or participated in walks over the past year and I look forward to your support in the coming year.

6. *Treasurer's Report*

Maureen Davis had now familiarised herself with the spreadsheet format required by Ramblers HQ with the help of Paul Evans, area treasurer. As at 30th September 2017 the main account held £326.55 in the bank and £3.00 cash in hand. The self funded account held £214.67 in the bank and £38.49 cash in hand as the Treasurer's spreadsheet below. There had been a one off expenditure on waymark signs for the John Ray Walk from the main account. Paul Evans explained that he had submitted a budget on behalf of the 19 Essex groups for the coming year of £9,000 but this had been summarily reduced to £3,000 by Ramblers HQ. The matter had gone to appeal.

7. *Membership Secretary's Report*

Membership numbers as at 31st October stood at 109 members, 4 fewer than last year. It is hoped that this downward trend has now come to an end. We have had some new members joining the group but they do not seem to come out on group walks.

8. *Footpath and Countryside Secretary's Report*

See attached Katherine and Paul Evan's report below.

9. *Publicity Officer's Report*

Our walks are regularly submitted to the Braintree & Witham Times (BWT) and the East Anglian Daily Times (EADT) for their online events section, and they are published sporadically in the hard copy of these papers depending upon the space. We have sent our printed programme to the libraries in Braintree, Witham, Halstead and Earls Colne, and are still maintaining a poster at Rayne Station where we have also left some membership leaflets. Our walks are now on the Ramblers Walk Finder thanks to the help of Brenda, and we receive occasional visits from members from other groups on our walks.

Traffic to the group website has remained fairly constant over the past year with 2,930 page views and 1,474 unique visitors. Members attention is also drawn to the Essex Area website which contains useful information about current events including the planned rail crossing closures, though the public inquiry for this has now been postponed. Our group has some photographs displayed in the galleries section of the Area website and a short article about our 30th anniversary tea was included in Essex Area Update. Our facebook page has now been running for two and a half years and is used for posting event details, together with photos and comments about recent walks. Members are encouraged to submit any feedback via our facebook page.

10. *Election of Officers*

POST	Nomination	Proposed	Seconded
Chairperson	Geoff Farrow	Gwen Worrall	Ann Bennett
Secretary	Position vacant – no nominations		
Treasurer	Maureen Davis	Geoff Farrow	Tony Fraser
Membership Secretary	Janet Bugler	Geoff Farrow	Gwen Worrall

Publicity Officer	Geoff Farrow	Ann Bennett	Gwen Worrall
Ramblers Walk Finder	Brenda Brightwell	Geoff Farrow	Tony Brightwell
Ramblers Secretary (Joint)	Ann Bennett & Gwen Worrall	Tony Fraser	Geoff Farrow
Area Committee Representative	Geoff Farrow		
Committee elected en bloc	Clive Collins, Ronnie Davis and Fran Starnes nominated and		

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Paul Evans agreed to continue with this task for the coming year. Authorised signatories for bank account to be Maureen Davis, Ann Bennett and Geoff Farrow. Proposed by Geoff Farrow and seconded by Gwen Worrall.

12. Any Other Business

Ann Smith queried why the purchase of waymark signs for the John Ray Walk was made from group funds and not from Essex Area or Essex Council funds. Paul Evans explained that there was sufficient money in the group accounts to purchase the signs, and that groups were under pressure to run down reserves from Ramblers HQ. Groups holding high levels of reserves might be denied funding in the following financial year.

Geoff thanked the Bocking Social Club for providing the refreshments and the meeting closed at 2:30 pm

Geoff Farrow – Chairman

Living in Feering, railway crossing closures and the upcoming proposals for the A12 & A120 are high on my radar both from a Ramblers point of view and as a Feering Parish Councillor. Planning is also an issue with Feering being a "strategic growth location", the adjacent Colchester/ Braintree borders garden community proposals and 3 applications for housing developments in adjacent Kelvedon.

1. Network Rail's Transport and Works Act (Essex and Others Level Crossing Reduction) Order

Network Rail's proposals to close 50+ non-vehicular level crossings throughout Ramblers Essex Area & east Hertfordshire has kept many of the District Footpath Secretaries VERY busy this year. There were two rounds of public consultation in July and in September last year (2016). 17 documents - many very large - were published by Network Rail in March this year (2017) when the Order was finally submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport. Another raft of documents appeared in July including NR26 Network Rail's "Statement of Case". The Network Rail document count is now up to NR32. Keeping track of this moving feast has been very time consuming. Gordon Bird, who is still Brentwood District Footpath Secretary, and who was elected as Essex Area Vice-Chairman in February, has been heavily involved in walking & assessing proposed alternative routes and collating information from the footpath secretaries. The public inquiry web site is. <http://essex-level-crossings.persona-pi.com/>

The latest unexpected development is the adjournment of the Public Inquiry until January after only 3 days on 18-20 October. **A separate 2 page update is circulating** with the latest information. Ramblers have launched **a crowd funding appeal** to help raise money towards the legal costs that are being incurred in fighting these proposals in Essex area, Cambridgeshire & Suffolk. The use of the Transport & Works Act to close a raft of crossings with no new infrastructure is unprecedented

We were generally puzzled as to why crossings on single track branch lines, like the Braintree- Witham line, with good sight lines and no record on accidents / incidents were on the closure proposals list. But it became clear at the Public Inquiry that safety was not the main, or even always, a factor in deciding which crossings to include in the closure Order. Four mainline PRow crossings in Braintree District all near the A12 are also on NR's closure list. The proposals for E21 Hill House 1 and E22 Great Domsey in Feering are in order. The Ramblers have objected to the proposals for E20 Snivellers (Kelvedon) - truncation of the NW-SE route - and E19 Potters (Rivenhall) - narrow pavement on Oak Road underbridge.

2. A12 widening, A120 route& road crossings

Information on the alignment of a widened A12 between Boreham and Marks Tey, after the public consultation in February, was expected for the end of September. However, no announcement will be made until January next year (2018). Meanwhile an October update document from Highways England shows that the start date for the widening project has been moved back to 2020-21 into RIS2. The aim of the Ramblers, horseriders & cycling groups and ECC PRow is still to get a reasonable provision of non-motorised user (NMU) crossings and so to restore some north-south connectivity.

The A120 route options are due to be discussed at a full Essex County Council meeting this November.

3. Highways Act PRow Orders / issues

Finchingfield 28, Robjohns Farm: Mr Duffin is appealing the decision that the Definitive Map legal line is the legal line. Meanwhile the legal line is STILL the legal line and should be open and walkable and signed. The extinguishment Order was rejected. Please walk the path but preferably not on your own... CM7 4LJ, grid ref (6)88, (3)13.

Lord Rayleighs Farms: The 22 pages of diversion plans first proposed in February 2016 on land belonging to Lord Rayleighs Farms based in Terling have been working their way through the system. Most have been agreed, some have been objected to - the diversion of Terling 11 along the river Ter which gets boggy and the diversions at Flacks Green, partly because of the issue of Oakfield Lane. **Please would people who have walked Oakfield Lane contact me** - again if necessary as I lost files in a computer crash earlier this year.

Sible Hedingham 49 & 87 (was 48) - Clifton House / Harrow Cross bodyworks Footpath changes across this land, now a car breakers / scrap yard, are due as a Made Order.

Diversions have been confirmed at Gosfield 22, Great Bardfield 12 & 25, Coggeshall 37. A section of PRow has been added at Tinkers Green Finchingfield 23.

4. Planning, Major Development sites & BDC Local Plan

The Braintree District Council publication draft Local Plan has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. Three garden villages are proposed - Colchester/Braintree borders, Andrewsfield/ Saling airfield west of Rayne, and Colchester/ Tendring borders near the university. A further developer proposal has been put forward for a garden suburb on the eastern edges of Silver End. This is in addition to all the housing proposed around Braintree, Halstead, Witham, Feering / Kelvedon & Hatfield Peverel. Development will happen but please try and keep an eye on what's happening in your area so that we can try and make sure that PRowS are not forgotten, and there may even be scope for improvements in the network.

There is still an issue with ordinary planning applications where PRowS are often not shown / acknowledged in the application. Please be vigilant in your areas. Thanks to those of you who assist by walking paths and providing me with feedback and pictures.

5. Lost Ways & the 2026 cut-off date

I'm still hoping to progress UNRECORDED WAYS not shown on the first definitive map after 1949. I have some copies of the book "Restoring the Record" which is most helpful.

6. ECC matters

Before leading a walk, please check the essex highways interactive maps for PRow changes - this IS the most up-to-date information on the legal definitive routes - tick the assets tabs to show PRowS (pink), tick the programme tab to show which paths are on the once/year cutting programme

<http://www.essexhighways.org/Transport-and-Roads/Interactive-Maps-and-Live-Travel-Information/Highways-Information-Map/Highways-Information-Map-Portal.aspx>

Working groups are still needed for anything from waymarking and trimming round stiles to serious chopping back of saplings etc. that have grown up in bridleways & byways.

Please continue **to report faults** now using the many and varied icons on the essex highways website

<http://www.essexhighways.org/transport-and-roads/tell-us/problem-check.aspx>

Please make a copy of your report BEFORE you press the submit button and note the reference number. IF you want feedback, you need to include an email address in one of the boxes.

Katherine & Paul Evans

Braintree District Joint Footpath Secretaries & Walking Environment Officers

katherine@peke.com

NORTH WEST ESSEX RAMBLERS YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPT 2017

<u>MAIN ACCOUNT</u>			<u>SELF FUNDED</u>		
	<u>2016/17</u>	<u>2015/16</u>		<u>2016/17</u>	<u>2015/16</u>
<u>INCOME</u>					
Cash at Bank 30/09/16	663.90	663.90	Cash at Bank30/0	347.67	347.39
R.A.Funding	203.00	216.00	Socials		
Ex Ramblers Holidays	90.00	20.00	Petty Cash	38.49	15.77
Interest		0.30	Bank Interest		0.17
Prog Sale	3.00	2.00			
Petty Cash Account		5.97			
TOTAL	<u>959.90</u>	<u>908.17</u>		<u>386.16</u>	<u>363.33</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>					
Postage	220.00		Socials	73.00	
AGM Expenses	107.50	146.50	Transfer Petty Ca:	60.00	
Room Hire	45.00	45.00	Cash in hand	38.49	15.77
Printing	45.00	45.00	Cash at Bank	214.67	347.56
Transfer to Petty Cash Account					
John Ray Way Marks	205.80				
OS Map & Stationery	7.05				
Petty Cash expenses		6.50			
Cash in Hand	3.00	1.47		386.16	363.33
Cash at Bank 9/30/2017	326.55	663.70	P.Cash Account		
TOTAL	<u>959.90</u>	<u>908.17</u>	Cash in Hand	38.49	15.77

N.W.Essex Ramblers Treasurer.....Date.....

Independat Examiners Statement:

Having carried out procedures in accordance with Area & Group independant examination guidelines I consider the North West Essex group accounts to have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the group's finances for the year to 30 September2015

Independant examiner P. Evans.....Date.....