

Minutes of Warwickshire Area Council Meeting
held on Saturday 7th June 2025
at Meriden Village Hall, chaired by Dr Peter Rookes

Present: Executive Committee : Dr Peter Rookes (Chair) , Michael Bird (Footpaths & Countryside Secretary) , Nick Hillier (Membership Secretary & Solihull), Ann Hebden (Treasurer & Solihull)

Group Representatives : Sheila Lyons and Suraiya Kidia (City of Birmingham aka COBRA), Duncan Barker and David Threlkeld (Castle Bromwich), Jeff Round and Gordan Smith (Southam), David and Ratree Shaw (Rugby), Richard Bright (Stratford), Les Harrison (Independent Member) Val Gibbons and Sue Hands (Solihull), Barbara Twort (Sutton Coldfield), Sam Passmore (WM 40+), Derek Smith (WMWG), Colin Rock (webmaster),

Groups not represented : South Birmingham, and Mid-Warwicks,

1. **Welcome** : Dr Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **Apologies:** Janet Lockett (Secretary & Coventry), Andy Page (Publicity Secretary & West Midlands Walking Group (WMWG). Bill Burton (Mid Warwicks.), Alice Sin (Mid-Warwicks) and Janet Gee (Independent Member)
3. **Minutes of the last meeting**
The minutes were accepted as correct, with no objections.

4. **Matters arising from the minutes**

First Aid – PR reminded the meeting that we would encourage groups to organise first aid but on a group basis but if not possible Area will Organise an event. SP and GS have contact details which they will pass on to Janet. DS mentioned Andy Page as having contacts. Some discussion as to timing of an Area event. Agreed we should check availability first of the First Aid trainers. Saturdays might be possible.

5. **Area Treasurer's Report**

Third quarter Group funding has now been received and distributed. The Budget process has now started again. Groups with sufficient funds to cover all planned expenditure will not be able to claim additional funding in accordance with the calculation in the FIN007 guidance document, which has been distributed to Groups. Budget packs expected anytime. Area allocations – currently an issue with non-aligned members. AH suggested we proceeded as previously, that is based on group needs rather than how many members they are shown as having (see Membership Secretary's Report below).

Area AGM at Solihull could be expensive (see below).

Arising from our discussions PR thought that all representatives should receive the cluster pack. He would arrange to send it to groups and officers.

6. **Area Footpath & Countryside Secretary's Report** – This minute should be read in conjunction with MB's report circulated before the meeting.

MB had circulated his report prior to the meeting and had helpfully highlighted the cases on which he was planning to speak to the meeting. These were as follows.

1061 3rd application we have received. Warwickshire County Council need to decide what they want to do?

1066 Subsequent to granting of initial application 22/01896/FUL, a Diversion Order for public footpath SD176 was Made 08/02/2023 & Confirmed 12/04/2023. This diversion was entirely contained within the site red

line boundary. However this variation seeks an alternative diversion of SD176 within the site, and a partial diversion of SD176 outside of the site in other ownership. Area have no objection to the application on footpath grounds, but have commented on the use of a TCPA 1990 section 257 Order outside of a site boundary!

1068 – Area response confined to protecting the existing footpath network and surrounding countryside, although the Site's close proximity to the Shottery Conservation Area and Ann Hathaway's Cottage heritage asset must give rise to considerable concern!

1073 and 1074 MB took both these two together and in both cases the proposed diversion would be in the interests of path users! Stratford group were consulted on this.

1076 a massive build on greenbelt. MB has objected on green belt grounds, citing inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Developers are arguing that the site (135 hectares of Defra Best and Most Versatile agricultural grades of arable farmland) should now be judged as falling into the Government's new Grey Belt category. Our objection also includes Cumulative Effect in reducing the precious small area of open countryside between Sutton Coldfield and the M6 Toll, already vastly reduced by the adjacent Langley Development.

927 MB advised that this has been the subject of a number of submissions, due to errors that must be corrected before being transferred into sealed legal orders.

WCC ROW Team have stated that the Order needs to be remade as a Bridleway if cycling is to be permitted on the route! Consequently ORDER WITHDRAWN—REMADE 17/10/2024. AND REMADE YET AGAIN WITH CORRECTIONS 16/04/2025! (Rugby BC, "This Order is Nemesis!")

973 – Area considered objecting on footpath grounds, but the current woefully neglected condition of public footpaths through the site oblige us to admit that the proposals made for the diversion/retention of these three public footpaths would be in the best interests of path users, particularly in aiding connectivity with the footpath network beyond the site. Area have therefore confined our objections to Green Belt and other countryside preservation issue - of which indeed there are many! APPROVAL WITH 110 CONDITIONS 07/05/2025...

CONDITION 1: The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 12 months from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

1029 Area Objection on Bridleway, Footpath, and Agricultural BMV land grounds... and, most importantly, the Cumulative Impact that yet another solar farm in the Feldon Vale will have on the Rural Landscape and Countryside. This application was refused on 22/05/2025, being contrary to Policy CC2(a), CC2(b) and Policy NE4 of the Warwick District Local Plan. The harm to the character and appearance of the landscape, and including the cumulative impact with other solar developments within the local area, outweighs the benefits of the development.

1054 Planning Officer requests further information on how Area would like the current proposals to be adjusted to accommodate our outstanding DMMO Claim. If the route is found to be either a Byway Open to All Traffic, or a Restricted Byway, Ramblers would not oppose the application of a permanent traffic regulation order (of the kind contemplated in ss 1 and 2 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984) to prohibit the use of vehicles, motorised or horse-drawn, so effectively making the route useable for only walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

7. Area Membership Secretary's report

NH reported that membership now stood at 3059, another increase, so there is clearly an upward trend. He had circulated a report showing the growth by group. This highlighted a potential problem of those members who have opted not to join a particular group. E.g . On the face of it Coventry membership was down by 6 since production of the membership report for the 2025 AGM. There are 39 unaligned members with Coventry

addresses.

NH was in correspondence with Ramblers Central Office (C.O.) to determine why these members have lumped into a non-aligned group and not allocated to a specific group.

8. Area Publicity Secretary's report

AP had sent his apologies and in his absence had sent a written report as follows.

Facebook we have 1025 followers, Bluesky stuck on 76.

There is progress on the CPRE rooftop solar campaign I talked about last time. The government are now saying they will include this in their new homes standard to be published soon.

The government have now also started installing solar panels on schools and hospitals and are allowing them to keep the money they save in bills. So, steps in the right direction.

The rules on connecting new solar farms to the National Grid have now also been changed from first come first served to being based on priority projects. The rules are far too complicated for us but for example, the Radford Semele solar farm will have lost its place in the queue and would only rejoin the bottom of the new queue if it ever won an appeal. This would damage the prospects of the project in the eyes of investors.

Finally, I hope we can welcome the fact there is a new National Trust property in our area, the Charterhouse in Coventry. I went yesterday and was told they had over 8000 visitors in its first three weeks. They were overwhelmed at the bank holiday. As well as being another good attraction for visitors to our area a trip would be a great new social activity for our groups. So I hope plenty of you visit and support it. (But not on a bank holiday!)

9. General Council Feedback

Janet Gee from Kenilworth had been elected as a trustee.

PR spoke about resolutions passed at General Council. These can be accessed via the link below.

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/general-council>

PR mentioned that Claire Watkins, Community Development Officer - Midlands – East of England Team needs to know if we get group funding from other sources. Multiple applications from different parts of the Ramblers can damage the Ramblers reputation by indicating to funders that we do not have a joined up and strategic approach to funding.

There was an extensive discussion about the current approach on walk leader training. There was a view that this could put off the more casual walk leader from leading which could put some groups in difficulty. A less mandatory approach is favoured and NH is in discussions with Ramblers Central Office (C.O.). He asked that group reps feed their concerns to him. PR indicated that there is also a link in the Cluster Pack (to be circulated) where group reps can give feedback.

PR advised that the Favourite path event is being repeated this year. Nominations are now closed and voting will take place in July.

10 AGM plans for 2026

After discussion it was decided to accept the proposals put forward by Solihull Group with everyone voting for but AH as Treasurer abstaining.

11 Using and updating Walks Manager

South Birmingham were not in attendance. Postponed until next time.

12 Navigation Training/ First Aid training updates

In respect of navigation training, a presentation being prepared by SP from the 40+ group. First aid had already been covered under matters arising from the previous meeting.

13. Group successes to report to Cluster (Midlands and East of England)

Time prevented this from being covered.

14. AOB a) celebrating 90 years of Ramblers – walk/picnic

Agreed that we would arrange something. Early October – 4th October. All groups in the Area to come together for a series of walks and a picnic. Possibly Meriden or Warwick where there is somewhere under cover in the event of bad weather. To be discussed by the EC.

Dates for meetings in the next 12 months

Area Quarterly Meeting: 6/9/25	Meriden Village Hall
Area Quarterly Meeting: 29/11/25	Meriden Village Hall
Area AGM : 28 th Feb 2026	to be organised by Solihull group, Fentham Hall, Hampton-in-Arden
Area Quarterly Meeting: 7/3/26	Meriden Village Hall