

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

NEWS – February 2019



****Members Day/AGM** **Area Web** **Coastal Path**
Workshops **Leaders****

Members Day & AGM

This was well attended and held on Sat 26th January at the Broughton & District Club.

Some 14 walkers joined the morning walk. while some 16 members attended the Workshop on using the OS Map App and Website.

The AGM was attended by over 30 members and the existing set of Area Officers were re-elected.

There are no large issues, the finances are in good shape and no motions were presented for submission at General Council.

A brief talk was given by Teri, a member of the Board of Trustees, around the on going developments in the Ramblers.

After the AGM, Mick Starkey gave a presentation and talk about Ramblers Holidays and the role of their qualified mountain/walk leaders, anecdotes of interesting events and described the equipment they use. Mick demonstrated how to apply a survival bag to a walker with a broken leg.

Workshops

In recent years a number of workshops have been run covering Map Reading, Map Reading & Navigation and Mobile Apps for mapping and navigation.

These have been well attended. More and more members now have mobile phones and a number of groups have been blessed with new leaders.

We would be pleased to hear from members on whether they would value further workshops this summer, possibly including elements of guidance on walk leading or re-runs of previous workshops.

Send any thoughts through the Area web site - form accessible via home page - or to one of the contacts there.

Area Web

In recent months the Area website has had a significant number of additions and alterations.

In particular:-

- 500+ walk tracks are now accessible as an interactive map and zooms into a specific map of any walk. These can be used privately or as a possible outline of a walk to lead.
- There is also an interactive map of all the places the Ramblers have started walks from, useful in checking for viable parking locations. Leaders might find this helpful in deciding where to start a walk.
- You can plot your own map on the site, or load a GPX of a walk you have done to show it in map form.

There will be further re-organisation of the site in particular to draw together the functions that are helpful to leaders.

Leaders

Groups are always looking for additional leaders to spread the load and increase the range of walks.

If you would like to take on that challenge/skill, do please get in touch with any officer of a group or Area or contact us through the Area website www.lacashire-ramblers.org.uk

We will be happy to explain what is involved which is mainly common sense and a bit of confidence. We can help find routes to walk, join you on Reccies and provide support on your initial walks.

You can pick a walk that you are familiar with to start with, use one from our site or from books or websites.

One of the shorter walks is always a good start before considering tackling a more serious walk.

Coastal Access

Regular readers of these notes may remember that I have written previously about delays in providing the new Coastal Path, but I find myself writing again about further delays to this project. Officially it is meant to be completed by 2020, which is next year, but I speak with very few people who believe that the project is going to be completed on time.

In 2009 the Marine and Coastal Access Act was passed by Parliament which was the enabling legislation for improving coastal access. The initial section to be opened was at Weymouth Bay in 2012. Then planning started on a further five sections. However it was not until 2014 that Natural England was given the go ahead to plan the rest of the Coastal Path.

The English Coastal Path has been split into 66 sections, with planning of the route being done by staff in Natural England (NE). Last year (2018) NE only completed one section which was from South Bents via the Tyne Estuary to Amble on the North East Coast. This brought to 10 the number of sections of the Coastal Path that are open. The route has been approved by the Secretary of State on a further six sections, where work should be taking place to get the section opened, with the work normally being done or managed by the county council concerned.

In the North West the only section that is officially open is from Allonby to Whitehaven this being 36km long, although Natural England have admitted that this was an easy section to do, because a public footpath already existed over a large part of this section. In reality it is possible to walk from Silloth to St Bees on the coast.

The next section to be planned was from Whitehaven to Silecroft, which was going to be 55km long, with the Secretary of State giving approval to the planned route in Sep 2015, which at the time was expected to open early 2017, with the works that are required being arranged by Cumbria CC. In reality good access already existed on the coast from St Bees to Whitehaven, so works were only needed from St Bees to Silecroft. The completion date then slipped to early Summer 2017, which then slipped to early Summer 2018, before slipping to Late Summer 2018 and then to Early 2019. Then it further slipped to open Mid 2019. The latest information is that it has now slipped again to Late 2019, which is yet more slippage. This means that an initial estimated 18 month implementation period has now become 4 years, assuming no further slippage. This slippage is not a good omen, for this is the first section of the Coastal Way in the NW to create new access. The official reason for the delay is problems with the contract with Cumbria CC and issues near BNFL Sellafield.

Planning of the section from Allonby to Gretna has been done by NE staff which is intended to be nearly 100km long, but a few objections to the proposed route were made. A public inquiry was held in Dec 17 to consider nine objections, but we are still awaiting the inspectors report. From when the inspectors report is issued it will be a minimum of 18 months to implement it on the ground.

When planning started for the route on Walney Island it was anticipated it was going to be 35km long. Nature reserves exist at both the northern and southern ends of the island. When the Draft Route was published for consultation it had been shortened to 33km, to which no objections were made. I am aware of some mutterings about the shortened route, but it is probably something you cannot make a sensible formal objection about. The route on Walney Island was confirmed by the Secretary of State in March 2017, with the first date that was scheduled for completion was for some time in 2018, without quoting a month. This then slipped to early 2019, before slipping further to mid 2019.

We are awaiting reports on the proposed route for the sections from Silecroft via Silverdale to Cleveleys but this has been the subject of a few delays with mid 2019 the latest date being indicated for publication.

Any items for inclusion in the next Area News need to be with David Kelly by the 1st May.