

# Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up

## 4 March to 13 April 2010



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Web site Volunteer Section since 4th March. Some of the items had deadlines which have now passed. These are included for interest only.

In some items as originally posted, web site hyperlinks gave access to more information. Where possible, we have included the full linked text. Where this is not possible we have provided the full link location.

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### General

#### Tom's Blog April '10

Thoughts and reflections from the Chief Executive (News - posted 1st April 2010)

Follow me on Twitter: [twitter.com/RamblersTom](https://twitter.com/RamblersTom)

*Dear volunteer,*

Vote to break down the barriers to walking

We're just a short way away from the General Election - which makes this the best time to contact and lobby your candidates on policies to break down the barriers to walking. Have a look at my video blog, below, where I explain the Ramblers manifesto, and how you can use it to help the Ramblers extract promises from our politicians on walking policies. The manifesto, and other information about how to get involved, is available by clicking [here](#), and if you want some tips on questions to ask your candidates, click [here](#). So far, 258 candidates have signed up to our manifesto, and 352 volunteers have been involved in contacting them. Thanks in advance for helping. The support you give now may help the Ramblers for the next five years!

#### General Council 2010

We're now days away from General Council and the AGM of the Ramblers. As for many charities, it has been a difficult and painful year. We had to take really drastic decisions in 2009, to bring our spending down to match our income levels. This involved making redundancies in England, Wales and Scotland, reducing funding levels for Areas and Groups, moving away from paper-based mailings and switching wholesale to electronic communications, and cutting back on the number of publications we produce - like *Hike* magazine aimed at younger members. None of these decisions have been in the least bit popular!

We've certainly made mistakes - it would be amazing if we hadn't, and arrogant to try to suggest otherwise. It might have been a bit less painful - but not necessarily easier - if we had cut back on spending earlier than we did (perhaps we ought to have spotted the signs earlier). We could have done a better job at communicating and consulting with volunteers, earlier. Gordon Brown used an apt saying this past weekend: *"Show me a soldier who has not made mistakes and I will show you a soldier who has not won a battle."*

I'm sorry for the mistakes we have made, and I'm committed to us learning from these mistakes. The Ramblers Honorary Treasurer, Jonathan Kipling, has made a series of recommendations for tightening up on processes and procedures, which we are implementing. We're also trying to improve the flow of information in both directions between volunteers and central office. The recent special regional and national meetings - involving more than 200 volunteers meeting with Rodney Whittaker, our Chair, and myself, in eleven meetings and 22 hours of meeting time - have been very helpful.

But if we had not taken decisive and very swift action when we did, the consequences would have been far worse.

Five months into the current financial year, and we are on track to break even for the year. This is a major turnaround from last year.

We are not out of the woods yet, though. There is talk of a 'double-dip' recession. Public spending is going to be massively squeezed, and that will affect us too. For the Ramblers as with many other organisations, it will continue to be a tough few years.

Key to the Ramblers' future will be to increase our membership, and other sources of income. We're currently consulting on these being two of our priorities for the coming year. They would need to involve everyone, throughout the charity - whether at central office, Area or Group level. The forthcoming General Council will be an opportunity to take stock, and no doubt to let off some steam. But I hope that we come out of General Council clearly focused on broadening the appeal of the Ramblers.

### Kissing Gate Success

My unsung hero of the month award goes to the wonderful South Cotswolds Group for installing a series of kissing gates to replace warn-out stiles - paid for from the sales proceeds of their local walks books. Another example of Ramblers helping to improve footpaths. They've got a great website too - take a look: [www.southcotswoldramblers.org.uk](http://www.southcotswoldramblers.org.uk)

### The Vetting and Barring Scheme - Don't Worry!

The Government's controversial 'Vetting and Barring Scheme' starts to come into force in July, with it being a legal requirement from November. You may have heard of this on the news - and the controversy around whether parents taking other children to, say, a football match would be required to be 'registered'.

People always get worried about these things - but my message to volunteers is 'don't worry'. Why? Because it will affect just a tiny number of volunteers (and those it does affect, we will help through the process). Ask yourself the following question:

'Am I intending to start leading a regular (e.g. on a weekly basis) or intensive (e.g. for two or more consecutive days) walk (or other Ramblers activity) which will be specially targeted at families or vulnerable adults? If the answer to this question is 'no', then the Vetting and Barring Scheme will not affect you. Even if you are currently leading such walks, it still won't affect you for now (you will have up to five years to register). At the moment, the Vetting and Barring Scheme will only affect those who are going to start these activities.'

The scheme will have no impact at all on those leading general Ramblers walks which are open to the public, in which families or vulnerable adults might participate.

More details will follow soon for Areas (we do need to make sure that we abide by the law). But, please, don't worry about it. The impact on Ramblers volunteers will not be great, because the vast majority of our walks will not be included in the scheme.

### Julia to be our President

I'm delighted that Julia Bradbury is going to be the Ramblers new President. She appeals to those who have walked all their lives, as well as those who are thinking about starting walking. Last Friday, at the Outdoors Show, I presented her with the 'Walking Personality of the Year Award' as voted by readers of Walk Magazine. It was great to see the reaction of the crowd. She was mobbed for photographs and autographs afterwards by Ramblers volunteers and awe-struck teenagers alike!

### Parliamentary Exhibition and Reception

Well done to everyone involved in putting on the Ramblers Parliamentary Exhibition last week, as part of our 75th anniversary celebrations. Lots of MPs and Lords came along. The exhibition included some fantastic posters and literature from our 75 years - including this one here. We're

not sure of the exact date, but judging by the membership price I think it probably dates from the 1930s. If anyone knows better, let me know.

That's enough from me for this month. Enjoy the Spring (when it finally arrives).

To visit previous editions of my blog, go to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Read-Toms-Blog>.

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### **Update from General Council 2010**

General Council took place at Royal Holloway College, Egham on 10th - 11th April 2010. Thanks to Surrey Area for hosting the event. (News, posted 12th April 2010)

Julia Bradbury elected as President TV presenter and keen walker, Julia Bradbury, was elected as the Ramblers' new President for 2010/11. Board of Trustees Robert Peel, Tom Ellson and Keith Wadd were elected to the Board of Trustees. David Thomson also joins the Board as the new Scottish Council Executive Committee nominee.

Thanks and tributes were paid to those who came off the Board this year: Tom Fisher, Andrew Bibby, Jo Bird, Alison Mitchell and Len Bannister.

*Please note that the Board of Trustees page on the volunteer website will be updated soon.*

Motions General Council passed the following eight motions. Those motions that were not discussed are remitted to the Board of Trustees for consideration.

1. That the Articles of Association section 11.5 be amended to read as follows: In exercising their powers, the Board of Trustees must comply with the terms of a Council Members' Motion, which is passed at a meeting of the General Council or by a postal ballot of Council Members in accordance with the Standing Orders, **EXCEPT TO THE EXTENT THAT** such compliance, in the reasonable opinion of the Board of Trustees after full and diligent consideration, would not be in the best interests of the Association, or would be likely to result in a breach of statute or other law, contract, trust or duty of care by the Association or any members of the Board of Trustees, or in damage to the reputation of the Association, or in a legal claim against the Association. At the next Annual General Meeting of the General Council the Board of Trustees shall explain what action has been taken on such a Council Members' Motion. *When the Board of Trustees makes a decision to take no action on a Motion it shall report its reasons to the next General Council. When implementation of a motion is held over or incomplete, the Board shall continue to report progress to succeeding General Councils until either implementation is complete or the Board decides to take no further action, in which case its reasons shall be given.* [The proposed amendment is the additional wording shown in bold italics]

### 2. Rights of Way and Access Work

This General Council believes that in its Rights of Way work and Access work in England and Wales, the Ramblers Association must be willing to take legal action in appropriate cases where other methods of achieving a successful outcome have failed, and this General Council believes that inability or unwillingness to undertake legal action in appropriate cases renders the Ramblers Association ineffectual and unable to protect and improve the Rights of Way network. This General Council therefore calls upon the Board of Trustees to increase the resources available for legal action, whilst recognising the importance of expenditure on other Ramblers activities too, and in keeping with the need for prudent and balanced budgeting. It further calls upon the Board of Trustees to investigate the establishment of a designated 'legal action fund' for England and Wales, similar to the 'legal defence fund' set up by Scottish Council, to be used solely to fund legal work in England and Wales, to which individual donations and legacies can be dedicated.

### 3. Access to woodland and waterways

This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to start campaigning immediately for public access on foot, to the maximum extent achievable, through woodland and beside rivers, canals and other inland waters in England and Wales, subject to the exclusion of domestic areas.

#### 4. Devolution

This General Council resolves that it is in the best interests of walkers in England, Scotland and Wales for the Ramblers to operate across the whole of Great Britain as one organisation. However, it recognises that members in England, Scotland and Wales have the right, if they wish to move to separate sister organisations, to be able to do so.

It therefore requests the Board of Trustees to set up a working party, which includes representatives of all three countries, to review the options and develop detailed proposals, in consultation with Areas and Scottish and Welsh Councils and their Executive Committees, for discussion and endorsement at General Council 2011, with the aim of concluding the process by General Council 2012.

#### 5. Governance

This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to seek an independent and low cost review of the Ramblers' Association's interpretation of the Charity Commission's requirements with special reference to the powers of the General Council, the Board of Trustees, and to the Board's accountability to the General Council, and to report the findings of the review to the General Council 2011.

#### 6. Membership

This General Council recognises the critical need to increase our membership and income in order to extend our core activity of increasing access to the countryside and protecting the rights-of-way and paths network throughout Britain.

To this end it requests the Trustees urgently to investigate methods of significantly increasing the appeal of the Ramblers, thereby opening up the membership of the charity to a new, much broader, range of people and thus increasing our membership base, with a view to taking immediate actions where required. This approach supplements and does not replace existing methods of recruitment. It further requests that, if these actions require alterations to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Trustees produce specific recommendations for consideration at General Council in 2011.

It is specifically requested that Trustees involve Ramblers Areas in this process and that considerations include but are not limited to:

- New members from a much more diverse range of backgrounds and ages
- New classes of membership
- Special interest walking groups
- Affiliated groups
- Improving the service to existing members

#### 7. Rights of Way

This General Council believes that to enable the Ramblers to achieve an easy to use Rights of Way network throughout Britain, it will be necessary to carry out an across-the-board review of Rights of Way policy and other relevant factors that affect successful outcomes in Rights of Way work. It therefore calls upon the Board of Trustees to carry out such a review during the next year. This review will be expected to include, inter alia, the effectiveness of section 130A, alley-gating and other problems affecting urban paths, unmaintained country roads, and lost ways and will include a survey of all local authority rights of way budgets over recent years including the present year and the percentage of each local authority's easy to use paths. In the light of the outcome of such a review the Board should allocate to rights of way and access work appropriate expert staff and financial resources, to facilitate the achievement of a rights of way net-

work where ALL rights of way are easy to use, and access to open access land is enlarged, and access to the coast is achieved, in order to ensure that the protection of rights of way and the improvement of access not only are, but are seen to be, core objectives of the Ramblers.

## 8. Statutory Consultation

This General Council calls upon local authorities as Highway Authorities to recognise all statutory consultative bodies, including the Ramblers, when devising or updating their priority scoring matrix for dealing with rights of way obstruction reports where currently these “scoring” arrangements refer simply to such reports made, for example, by “members of the public”.

Further, Council calls upon the authorities to involve these statutory bodies in deciding how the priority systems work and are implemented – particularly to ensure that no paths are neglected and all reported rights of way issues are addressed in the fullness of time.

### Address and presentation

A presentation was made to Paddy Tipping, Member of Parliament and Vice President of the Ramblers, who is standing down from the House of Commons in the General Election. Paddy has worked tirelessly to promote issues of concern to the Ramblers throughout his years in Parliament - most notably during the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill. He thanked Council, and gave an entertaining and inspiring address.

### 2009/10 update

An update was given on the progress of the current year's business plan by Tom Franklin, Chief Executive, and Paul Butler, Director of Finance and Operations. Financially, we are on track to make a small surplus this year following a large loss last year. Of 22 targets in the business plan for the year, we are on track with 17, experiencing some slippage with four, and behind with one. Details have been sent out to Areas, together with consultation on next year's priorities.

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## Ramblers Worldwide Holidays - offers list

Holiday offers for volunteers. (Offer - posted 12 April 2010)

The latest offers from Ramblers Worldwide Holidays for Ramblers volunteers are available at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/offers-mar-10>.

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## Julia Bradbury set to be next Ramblers President

The popular TV walks presenter, has accepted the nomination to be our new President. (News - 19th March 2010)

Julia's nomination is being announced today. The vote will take place at General Council on April 10th, when it is expected she will be chosen as Ramblers President for 2010/11.

One of Britain's most exciting and experienced presenters, Julia Bradbury has been at the forefront of revamping walking for wider – and younger – audiences, as the host of many prime time and outdoor television programmes. She has huge popularity with walkers - whether they've been walking for a lifetime, or are just getting going.

Julia has recently been voted No 1 Walking Celebrity of the Year by *Walk Magazine* readers, sealing her position as one of the most trusted and popular walking experts in the country.

Julia's packed portfolio of TV presenting credits include Countryfile; Wainwright's Walks; Around the World in 80 Days; Climb Britain and Watchdog. Her fresh approach, combined with her expertise and life-long enthusiasm for walking, have earned her a name for putting the zing back into walking.

The Ramblers are marking their 75th Anniversary this year with a host of new programmes and initiatives, aimed at bringing walking to a wider audience.

Ramblers Chief Executive Tom Franklin comments: *“In the Ramblers 75th year, our mission is to revamp walking and restore it to its proper place at the heart of everyday life, leisure and*

*transport – no matter who you are! We want to break down the barriers to walking, whether it's blocked paths or lack of motivation. There is no better expert at this than Julia Bradbury."*

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### **75th Anniversary Posters**

New posters available for Areas and Groups (New resource - posted 17 March 2010)

We have produced 75th Anniversary Posters (A2 size) - two different versions - and they are now available to order from central office.

Please email your orders to: [publicity@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:publicity@ramblers.org.uk)

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### **Festival of Winter Walks 25 Dec 10 - 2 Jan 11**

How to take part in Ramblers biggest walking event (Event - posted 11 March 2010)

A special thank you to all volunteers who were involved in our Festival of Winter Walks last year, which we held in partnership with Nature Valley. It was yet again a huge success, with more than 880 walks across the country and over 15,500 participants.

This year's event will kick off on Christmas Day and finish on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2011. For those new to organising a festival walk, the aim of the festival is to provide a nationwide selection of walks between Christmas and New Year which appeal to non-members as much as members. The festival is part of the Ramblers' commitment to promote walking and we would particularly encourage Areas and Groups to see this as a real recruitment opportunity. Themed walks are the single best way to promote our walks to the public; they are interesting, people-friendly, and the media like to cover them.

How to take part and submit your walksThe advance notice of walks is vital to enable the Media Team to ensure good media coverage. If possible, please submit your walks by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010, or we'll miss the deadline for the December issue of many monthly magazines.

The Group Walks Finder will act as the central database for all Festival walks so it is essential that your Group enters your walks on the system. The majority of Groups now use the Group Walks Finder and, unlike in previous years, paper submission forms are not being provided. For support in using the Group Walks Finder, including start-up help, email

[volunteer@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@ramblers.org.uk)

All walks listed on the Walks Finder between 25 Dec 2010 and 2 Jan 2011 will automatically be classified as Festival walks; there is no special code to include.

Publicity materials. Discounted membership forms will be available and they will offer 20% off the usual cost of membership. Please remember to order them from us and ensure your walks leaders have a supply – it's a great incentive for newcomers to join the Ramblers after attending a festival walk. You can also order Festival poster blanks (A4) and A5 flyers – all materials can be ordered from Mariusz Wilczynski - [mariusz.wilczynski@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:mariusz.wilczynski@ramblers.org.uk) or 020 7339 8536

#### **Publicity**

All festival walks will be listed on the Group Walks Finder and on our website

[www.ramblers.org.uk/winterwalks](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/winterwalks)

Ramblers' Press Office will be sending press releases to all national and regional papers and magazines. You may also want to send your own local press release with details of festival walks in your area (for help on how to do this, or to be sent a sample press release, please contact our Press Office on 020 7339 8531/8532).

If your Area/Group has its own website, we would really appreciate it if the festival could be promoted on your home page with a direct link to [www.ramblers.org.uk/winterwalks](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/winterwalks). The festival logo is available on request.

If you have any queries with regards to the event please contact Mariusz Wilczynski at central office – [mariusz.wilczynski@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:mariusz.wilczynski@ramblers.org.uk) or 020 7339 8536.

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## Campaigns

### Walking Environment Update - April 10

News from the Walking Environment team. (News & action request - posted 12 April 2010)

#### Manifesto

As the General Election campaign gets into full swing we are stepping up our efforts to get Parliamentary candidates signed up to the Ramblers manifesto. So far, 1 in 5 confirmed candidates have signed up to support walking - including commitments on coastal access and rights of way. As the number of candidates grows we need to work even harder to get our message out, and maintain or better the 1 in 5 ratio.

You can read the manifesto, view the list of candidates endorsing it and find out how you can help at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/Election10>

#### Stakeholder Working Group report is passed to Government

Stepping Forward, the Stakeholder Working Group's report to Natural England on unrecorded rights of way, has been endorsed by the Natural England Board and passed to Government. The Ramblers, along with other user representatives, has stressed that the package of measures must be adopted in its entirety and not cherry picked. We trust that an early response will be forthcoming from the new Government.

The report can be found here:

<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/NECR035>

#### Reporting successes - help us show the difference the Ramblers is making

Daily across the country the Ramblers is making a real difference to people's lives through our work to protect and improve the walking environment. We get obstructions removed from paths, we undertake practical path work - clearing overgrowth and building gates and bridges, we campaign to get restrictions removed on access land, and we examine and respond to hundreds of consultations to change the path network. And, of course, we do much more.

To build on this work, and to make sure that people know about the things we do, we need to collect information on our successes. If you've achieved a path success since October 2009 we'd like to know about it:

To report a path success:

Online form at: [www.ramblers.org.uk/rights\\_of\\_way/successes.htm](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm)

Email: [walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk)

Phone: 020 7339 8584 (Anastasia)

#### South Petherton case strengthens s.130A

The High Court decision in this case (more here:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/Latest+news/Somersetdroveway>) has clarified the law around use of s.130A of the Highways Act to get obstructions removed. Walking Environment staff would like to hear from any Areas which have cases that could be taken forward (contact details as above).

#### Walking Environment priorities

A separate news item on this important consultation can be found here:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/we-priorities>

Thank you to all those who have already responded. Please let us have your views on the top ten Walking Environment priorities for the Ramblers by Friday 30 April.

#### Shiplake

The Walking Environment team has worked with legal professionals and local volunteers to keep this path on the map after a challenge to the inspector's decision in the High Court. More information can be found here:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/Latest+news/High+Court+Judge+rules+to+save+Oxfordshire+footpath>

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## £1 membership trial on Get Walking Day

Take part in a drive to recruit new members and increase participation (Event – posted 8 April 2010)

More reasons to host a walk for Get Walking Day 2010!

Ramblers groups have already organised over 100 Get Walking Day walks for 2010. If your Group is thinking about taking part, we're delighted to announce a fantastic offer to help you use the event to recruit new members.

Special £1 offer for new members

To show our gratitude to Groups who host Get Walking Day walks, to support their efforts to welcome new walkers to the Ramblers, and to mark our 75th anniversary, we're making available thirty £1 memberships to non-members on each walk.

To claim one of these memberships, participants simply have to join the Ramblers by direct debit and their first year's membership is just £1. Special joining forms will be sent to walk leaders 7-14 days ahead of the event - please promote the offer and distribute the forms on the day to those non-members who come along.

To ensure your group receives £1 membership forms please keep the walk at 5 miles or under and put the walk onto walks finder coding it as GWD10.

It's not too late for your group to register a Get Walking Day walk! Based on feedback, Get Walking Day 2010 will avoid the bank holiday weekend and take place on Sunday May 23, with the option of holding walks on Saturday May 22. The common theme of Get Walking Day walks is that they are all less than 5 miles long. To be part of this event, and to receive 30 £1 membership forms to attract new members, simply follow the steps below, which were published in August.

Get Walking Day Next Steps

1. Start planning your walk with a nominated Leader and ideally a backmarker. The walk must be less than 5 miles and offer as many people as possible the opportunity to take part.
2. If you would like to take part in Get Walking Day please email [75anniversary@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:75anniversary@ramblers.org.uk) with your name and your Group's name and brief details about your Get Walking Day walk. Please title your email 'Get Walking Day'. A media pack is available here which includes a press release that you can personalise and send to local newspapers.
3. Once the walk is agreed publicise it in your programme and/or on your website. Ensure that your it is put on the Group Walks Finder and is tagged as a Get Walking Day walk by adding the code GWD10 in the "Themed Walk" field (if you don't know how to do this, please contact our Walks Finder support volunteers at [volunteer@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@ramblers.org.uk)).

Walks Finder will act as the central database logging Baton Walks so it is essential that your Group enters your walk on the system. The majority of Groups now use the Group Walks Finder, and so unlike the Festival of Winter Walks 09-10, paper submission forms are not being provided. For support, including start-up help, email [volunteer@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@ramblers.org.uk).

4. The walks leader will then receive your 30 £1 membership forms 7-14 days before the event.

Thanks for considering hosting a Get Walking Day walk – we hope to hear from you soon!

Get Walking Day £1 offer - FAQs

Won't this cost the Ramblers a lot of money?

Such heavy discounting is something of a radical step for the Ramblers, but this offer is part of our efforts to test new ways to help the organisation grow. Last year, over 1500 non-members took part in a Get Walking Day walk, but only 62 (less than 4%) actually joined the Ramblers.

The use of a heavy discount will enable us to recruit a higher proportion of those who, by virtue of their attendance at the event, are attracted by the idea of walking with the Ramblers. The re-

quirement to join by direct debit should boost retention levels when rates return to normal after year one. By tightly restricting the offer to 30 forms per walk, we are able to control the scale of the take up of this offer.

Of course, we will monitor the success of this pilot in the coming months, in terms of both recruitment and retention beyond the first year of membership. If it's not financially viable beyond year one, we won't repeat it.

Because this offer is designed to attract new members, the discount will not be available to existing members or former members. This means that there is no risk of us losing fees from those who are already members.

Does this mean I have a lot of extra work to do?

No! There are a couple of important steps you can take to help make the promotion a success, but nothing at all onerous. All we ask you to do is to mention the £1 offer whenever you promote your walk, particular in communications targeted at non-members. We'll send you thirty forms ahead of your walk, which you simply give out to non-members who attend.

You can help us by encouraging walkers to hand in their completed forms before they leave so that applications don't get lost or forgotten about. Then just pop the collected forms back to us in the post. Finally, if you anticipate additional walkers because of the promotion, you might want to organise for some members to act as additional back or middle markers.

How long is the offer valid for?

To qualify, forms must be received at the Ramblers by Friday 11th June 2010.

Which memberships is this offer valid for?

The offer is valid for standard rate annual memberships only. Both single and joint memberships are £1. The offer is not valid on concessionary rate memberships or life memberships.

Is the membership offer the same as those who pay the full rate?

£1 memberships do not receive Walk Britain as part of their first year's membership. All other benefits, including discretionary discounts, Walk magazine, map library, access to 28,000 led walks per year, are available.

What do I do with leftover forms?

We are providing groups with 30 forms per walk, which should be more than enough to cater for all non-members who show up (last year, there was an average of 10 non-members per Get Walking Day walk). As this offer is intended only for those who attend a GWD walk, we are asking groups to destroy any unused forms.

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## **Getting People Walking 2**

The second of a series of updates from Ramblers Walking Programmes and Promotion team on our work to make walking accessible to all. Read about the parliamentary candidates that are queueing up to support walking, the success of a project taking people from one of London's most deprived communities into green space and the countryside, a milestone for the Group Walks Finder and how the government lost its nerve on free maps (News - posted 8 April 2010).

Parliamentary candidates pledge to break down walking barriers

1 in 5 parliamentary candidates have already signed up to the Ramblers Walking Manifesto, pledging to support among other measures putting walkers at the top of the transport hierarchy and investing in walking schemes that reach everyone. Candidates from across the political spectrum have expressed their support for walking as the best way of enjoying the outdoors and a healthy, accessible and sustainable way of getting around that can help tackle problems such as obesity and climate change. This broad based support illustrates how much walking has climbed the political agenda and if followed after the election by action could herald a new era of walking in Britain.

You can read the manifesto, view the list of candidates endorsing it and find out how you can help at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/Election10>.

(Photo: Ian Britton, [www.freefoto.com](http://www.freefoto.com))

Innovative Westminster project introduces new walkers to green space

Richmond Park, Hampstead Heath, Cambridge and the New Forest were among the places visited in It's my country, an innovative Ramblers pilot project funded by Westminster City Council. With the support of volunteers from the Metropolitan Walkers "hike" Group, we provided a series of easy walks and heritage visits in the countryside and green space in and around London for residents of Harrow Road, one of the borough's most deprived wards, culminating in an overnight trip to the New Forest at the end of March where they met up with Hampshire 20s and 30s Group. The project also worked to give walkers the confidence to explore green space and the countryside on their own. All participants have been offered a free year's membership of the Ramblers.

56 different people came on the walks, 80% of them from a black or ethnic minority background and 70% who would not normally walk for pleasure -- challenging the sometimes-heard view that people from BME backgrounds and deprived inner city areas simply don't want to access the countryside. A core group of participants plan to continue walking together under the Ramblers banner. A short film about the project is currently in production and will be posted online. Read more about the project.

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### **OS free map scheme won't fully unleash the benefits of walking**

Ramblers have cautiously welcomed a scheme announced on 1 April that makes some Ordnance Survey mapping data free to the public, but are disappointed that standard walkers maps have been left out of the package. Following a consultation earlier this year, the "OS OpenData" scheme will make mapping such as the 1:10 000 scale Street View digital street atlas freely available for public use and re-use. But the package doesn't include the familiar 1:25 000 Explorer and 1:50 000 Landranger maps used by most walkers.

Explorer and Landranger were considered for release in the consultation and the Ramblers urged the government to make them available free for reuse online as this would provide the easiest and most effective way to enable keen volunteers to share their walking knowledge with others. But the government apparently lost its nerve when OS raised questions about its ability to maintain quality and the continued availability of nationwide paper maps. This is disappointing, though much of what has been released will still be useful. Read more on our Transport

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### **Volunteer Features**

Ongoing Success for Chesterfield Ramblers

John Newick, Countryside Officer, from the Chesterfield Ramblers explains some of the successes they have had in creating greater access to our countryside (Volunteer Feature - Posted 12 April 2010.)

The Chesterfield Ramblers have been working under the guidance of the Derbyshire Countryside Rangers. The work undertaken shows how important practical path work is to keeping the Footpath Network open especially in the current economic climate of local authority spending cuts. Countryside Officer, John Newick, from the Chesterfield Ramblers explains some of the successes they have recently achieved.

'The Group has undertaken important tasks such as path clearing, instillation of signs and of gates. However, our biggest project so far is the construction of a 5m long bridge across a small brook in the Moss Valley, in North East Derbyshire.'

The story doesn't end there as the Group is already committed to undertaking training on hand power tools, for which they will be certificated, meaning that they will be able to undertake work without the Derbyshire Rangers being present. John points out that this allows the council to commission work without having to spend money on it. More importantly it allows greater access to our Countryside.

If you have had a footpath success like Chesterfield Ramblers gets in touch and let us [know](#) or alternatively you can fill out the Footpath Success [form](#).

### **Email and website development in Gloucestershire Area**

John Gerrard, Chair of Gloucestershire Ramblers, explains how the Area is using new technology to improve contact with both current and potential members, as well as reduce costs (Feature - posted 22nd March 2010)

#### **Emails**

To reduce overhead costs and speed up communications we have actively encouraged the wider use of email communication both at Group and Area level. So far our successes have been mixed and of our eight groups the best achieved a 73% shift from snail mail to email. The worst managed 10% and the average was 35%. As a consequence we saved £250 in postage and printing costs alone for our last Annual Report and Accounts. However, an essential element in this policy change is the need for us to ensure that those members not connected to the web are properly catered for and not treated as second class citizens.

#### **Website**

I was concerned that Gloucestershire had no website and given Tom Franklin's observation that 60% of new members were being recruited via the Ramblers website I concluded that we needed one quickly.

In early 2009, 37 Areas had sites so I trawled through the lot. This proved an interesting experience and demonstrated little or no consistency whatsoever in style and content between sites and a huge mishmash of designs, some of which were fine and a fair number both poor and out of date.

Having sifted through the websites and decided upon key headings it was fairly easy to write the script, but critical to developing our new site was the need to have professional advice in converting the script into a working site. In this regard we were fortunate to have the free services of Gloucester Walking Group member Nichola Goodliffe, who works as a graphic arts designer. Had we needed a local professional firm to carry out this work it would have cost £300-£500. By a stroke of good fortune Nichola spotted that the Ramblers had a website template available and this was used to good effect throughout.

We view our new site at [www.gloucestershirearearamblers.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershirearearamblers.org.uk) as a work in progress and critical to its success will be the future input of our members.

*John Gerrard*

*Area Chairman - Gloucestershire*