

Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up

6th November - 17th December



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Website Volunteer Section since 6th November. Some of the items had deadlines which have now passed. These are included for interest only.

In some items as originally posted, website 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.

Contents:

Updates -

Guidance-

Volunteer Support -

Updates

Tom's Blog December 2010

Especially relevant to: all volunteers. Posted: 26th November 2010. For information: This page gives the monthly round up of news and views from the Chief Executive, published on his blog for volunteers.

Dear volunteer,

To keep you even more fully up-to-date with news, I'm now posting to my blog as things happen. You can read my latest posts at any time by going to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/chief+executives+blog.htm>, but I'll also continue to provide a monthly round-up too. It's been great to meet so many volunteers at our national and regional meetings over the past month. It has been really inspirational.

Postings in the past month:

(click on the headline to read the full post)

[How to slash Area and Group costs for postage and printing \(26/11/10\)](#)

Here's news of an excellent initiative by Woking Ramblers to slash their costs, and give their members more choice. The costs of printing and postage keep going up (a second class stamp costs 32p these days!), and we know that printing and postage costs for walk programmes are often the bulk of Area and Group expenses. Woking Ramblers have managed to persuade 80% of their members to get their walking programme from the internet – leading to massive cost savings. The more we save on printing and...

[New walking projects: volunteers getting involved 25/11/10\)](#)

Some good news! The Ramblers has secured funding for three new projects in different parts of England. Two of them build on the existing Get Walking Keep Walking project, introducing new activities in Durham and the South West to complement existing activity in Birmingham, London, Manchester & Sheffield. Get Walking Keep Walking Durham is a two year project that's part of County Durham Sport's Changing the Physical Activity Landscape (CPAL) initiative, funded by NHS County Durham. We will be...

[Volunteers meeting in Plymouth \(23/11/10\)](#)

Having stumbled off the sleeper train at Plymouth at 5.30am this morning, straight to Devon Ar-

ea volunteer John Skinner's house for an early breakfast (thanks John), and then on to the first day of the Vixen Tor public inquiry, the day ended with an excellent meeting with volunteers from the south west this evening back in Plymouth. As usual, the meeting was with Rodney (chair) and myself. Many excellent positive ideas were put forward. Here are some of the issues raised: - GIFT AID. We explained that...

[Volunteers meeting in Liverpool \(22/11/10\)](#)

Last Friday we held a special volunteers meeting in Liverpool with Rodney (Chair) and myself. 25 volunteers, from a range of Areas and Groups, attended. The format was similar as the other meetings, with an introduction to the business plan followed by free-ranging questions and discussion. Here are some (but not all) of the issues discussed: Affiliated Clubs - some strong opinions that more could be done to entice members of affiliated clubs to ALSO be members of the Ramblers (because of our safeguarding...

[Wirral Ramblers Celebrate \(18/11/10\)](#)

It was great to be at tonight's surprise celebration in the Wirral for two long-standing committee volunteers, Bill Nock and Mike Kendrick, who are stepping down after a combined 40 years on the Group committee. Mike has been Treasurer for the past twenty years and Bill has held various positions, including walk bookings officer. They've clearly made a huge contribution to the group, and are held in great affection - about 100 people came to the surprise do. One of the Wirral members is an artist,...

[Vixen Tor Inquiry next week \(18/11/10\)](#)

I'm looking forward to attending the Vixen Tor Inquiry in Princetown, Devon, next Tuesday, to give support to John Skinner of Devon Ramblers as he puts the case for public access to the iconic granite landmark which has been visited by walkers for at least well over a century. But that was all stopped in 2003 when the landownership changed, and walkers and climbers found their way barred. In our view access had already become public long before that, through use since time immemorial. ...

[New Ramblers Group for Trafford \(10/11\)](#)

A new Ramblers Group for Trafford, in Greater Manchester, has just been officially set up. This fills another geographical hole, where there hasn't been a Group, despite a large population base. Are there other parts of Britain which could support a Ramblers Group, where currently there isn't one? Something for Areas to think about. Tom Franklin Ramblers - at the heart of walking for 75 years Please visit www.ramblers75.org.uk to find out more The Ramblers? Association is a registered charity (England...

[Hike is back! \(5/11/10\)](#)

Hike - the magazine for Ramblers members in their 20s and 30s - is back, after an absence of just over a year. Instead of it dropping onto doormats, it'll now drop into inboxes - as Hike goes electronic. It's been sent to all Ramblers Hike groups and members under 40 - some 5,500 recipients in all, and we're planning to develop the Ramblers Hike brand over time. If you're not in that age bracket, you can have a peak at the first edition by following this link: ...

[Ramblers' five key tests on Forestry land sell-off \(4/11/10\)](#)

We've published today the five key, but simple, criteria which we're urging the Government to meet before any sale of Forestry Commission land is considered. They are that:

- 1) Public access is maintained and enhanced.
- 2) Public rights of way and access land are properly managed.
- 3) No sale or transfer is completed until the purchaser has committed to preserving and maintaining access.
- 4) Where access is currently...

[Ramblers Volunteers Meeting in London \(2/11\)](#)

I'm on my way home from the latest volunteers meeting with Rodney Whittaker (chair) and myself. This one was at central office with about 30 people. Here are some of the issues discussed. MEMBERSHIP 'How to grow the membership' dominated the discussions again, with lots of good ideas flowing. - Some volunteers thought that the Ramblers was too elitist and not

populist enough. We needed to attract different types of people, and make it so that the ordinary walker felt they needed to be part of...

[Volunteering for the Natural Environment \(2/11/10\)](#)

The Ramblers' Adrian Morris yesterday attended the Government's 'stakeholder workshop', to help develop ideas for the planned Natural Environment White Paper. He floated an idea (along with the representative from the volunteering charity BTCV) – to develop a 'one-stop-shop' scheme to help people volunteer in the natural environment – which came out second from top amongst all the ideas put forward, in a show of hands. The original government discussion paper on the Natural...

[More groups = more members?](#)

Alan Mattingly, Ramblers Vice President, visited our office today. Alan was General Secretary (the previous name for Chief Executive) over a period spanning the 1970s to the early 2000s. He was telling us how Ramblers Groups roughly quadrupled between 1975 and 1995; and that the membership of the Ramblers roughly quadrupled too, during the same period. There appears to have been, during that time, a strong link between the establishment of new Ramblers Groups, and the growth in membership. By...

Baxters hamper winners

Especially relevant to: all volunteers. Posted: 1st December 2010. For information: The page lists the winners for the Baxters hampers and offers all volunteers a discount voucher on Garners pickled onions and shallots.

In the Baxters' kitchen we've been busy pulling together the 10 brimming hamper prizes, full of our delicious products. These include crunchy, premium Garners pickled onions, juicy pickled beetroots, tantalising chutney and condiments, and heart-warming soups – hmmm! And we're delighted to announce the lucky winners. So congratulations to the following who will each receive a hamper worth £50:

John Cook
Deborah Ramage
Joan Johnson
Jane Baldwin
Heather Rickards
Sandra Chapman
Diane Smith
Sue Berry
Robert Davies
Roy Thorniley

We're also delighted to offer a Rambler's exclusive – a money off voucher for our tasty Garner's pickled onions, perfect for your Christmas leftovers. You can print it off [here](#).

Don't forget to visit www.bestboxingday.co.uk where there's a host of new Christmas leftover recipes from BBC Good Food.

Happy rambling!

Membership by Area - December 2010

Especially relevant to: Area Membership Secretaries, Chairs and Publicity Officers Posted 7 December 2010
News: provides a breakdown of Ramblers members by Area for the beginning of December, comparing the figures with the start of the financial year (beginning of October)

Area	October	December	Month change	Year change
Oxfordshire	2,270	2295	20	25
Lake District	1,811	1825	12	14
Lincolnshire	2,019	2030	9	11
Greater Gwent	882	893	3	11
Highland & Islands	306	316	6	10
Shropshire	1,292	1301	0	9
South West Scotland	428	436	1	8
Herefordshire	638	642	3	4
Mid Lancashire	1,540	1543	-6	3
Ceredigion	389	390	2	1
Clydesdale to Solway	525	524	5	-1
UK Dependancies	108	107	-2	-1
Bedfordshire	955	953	1	-2
Pembrokeshire	173	171	0	-2
Somerset	2,056	2054	-2	-2
Renfrewshire, Cowal & Bute	425	422	-8	-3
Gloucestershire	1,810	1804	10	-6
International	260	253	-2	-7
Suffolk	1,917	1910	-4	-7
Merseyside and West Cheshire	2,614	2604	-33	-10
Essex	5,616	5605	15	-11
North East Lancashire	974	963	-9	-11
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	1,591	1580	-10	-11
East Yorkshire & Derwent	1,885	1874	-14	-11
Norfolk	2,039	2026	-1	-13
Glamorgan	2,317	2303	-5	-14
Powys	329	315	-8	-14
Worcestershire	1,300	1286	-16	-14
Isle of Wight	593	578	-4	-15
North Strathclyde	1,327	1312	-5	-15
Grampian	467	452	-10	-15

Avon	2,238	2222	-1	-16
Leicestershire & Rutland	1,790	1774	-12	-16
South & East Cheshire	1,279	1263	-15	-16
Lothian & Borders	1,851	1834	-27	-17
Wiltshire & Swindon	1,400	1382	-13	-18
Cornwall	1,116	1097	-5	-19
Carmarthenshire	579	560	-12	-19
North Yorks & South Durham	1,182	1163	-14	-19
Hertfordshire & North Middlesex	3,475	3455	-22	-20
Forth Valley, Fife & Tayside	1,484	1463	-7	-21
Buckinghamshire,				
Milton Keynes and West Middlesex	3,725	3702	-2	-23
Nottinghamshire	2,490	2466	4	-24
Greater Manchester & High Peak	3,780	3756	-17	-24
North and Mid Cheshire	1,434	1410	-20	-24
Northumbria	2,537	2512	-15	-25
Derbyshire	1,549	1523	-14	-26
Northamptonshire	1,246	1219	-4	-27
Devon	2,807	2777	-13	-30
Dorset	1,968	1935	-31	-33
Warwickshire	3,435	3401	-38	-34
South Yorks & N.E. Derbyshire	2,708	2673	-18	-35
North Wales	1,713	1678	-21	-35
Inner London	4,487	4451	-17	-36
Staffordshire	2,872	2834	-20	-38
Berkshire	2,669	2631	-23	-38
Kent	4,694	4654	-33	-40
Hampshire	4,929	4886	1	-43
West Riding	3,981	3937	-35	-44
Sussex	3,776	3714	-34	-62
Surrey	7,448	7340	-58	-108

There were some more notable successes in November, particularly Oxfordshire who grew by 20 members and now lead the table with an overall growth of 25 members since the start of the financial year (October 1st). Ten areas are currently higher than they were on October 1st, of which eight enjoyed growth across both October and November.

Unfortunately, the downward trend continued overall, with a net loss in November of 588 members. We have lots of centrally co-ordinated activity planned over the coming months, including:

- 90,000 inserts in Cotswolds brochures and Country Walking magazine,
- a new “member get member” leaflet in Walk magazine
- a mailing to ‘long-lapsed’ ex members
- a financial incentive to affiliated clubs to recruit their members into the Ramblers

- a pilot telephone campaign to selected new members, to welcome them and encourage gift aid declarations, from January 2011
- a pilot telephone campaign to leavers to encourage them to rejoin or to find out why they left
- a web recruitment campaign in March 2011 to coincide with the launch of paperless direct debits (so that people can join by direct debit online, without the need to complete a form by hand and post it to us)
- ongoing direct debit offer for new joiners

To really drive membership, though, we need groups and areas to do more to spread the word about our fantastic walks and social programmes, our important campaigning work which benefits all walkers, and the valuable benefits and discounts that Ramblers members enjoy. If you have any stories to tell or successes to share about membership growth, please email mariusz.wilczynski@ramblers.org.uk

Path Successes Report 2009-10

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Footpath Secretaries, and others involved in path work; Area/Group Publicity Officers. Posted: 8 December 2010 News: Summary report of path successes recorded in 2009-10.

A summary of the England and Wales path successes reported to central office last year is now available. The statistics tell a story of amazing success across the countries - and are broken down into different types and by Ramblers Area.

[Report as a Word document](#)

[Report as a PDF](#)

This information is incredibly valuable in illustrating the campaigning effectiveness of the Ramblers, and our important role in ensuring that people have places to walk. If you would like any help gaining publicity for your successes please contact the Walking Environment team. Email: walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk

In the current financial year we hope to record even more successes - and use this work to strengthen our membership recruitment and fundraising initiatives, as well as generally raising the profile of the organisation.

Successes can be reported online here: http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes

Summary of the Board of Trustees Meeting 4th December 2010

Especially relevant to: Area Chairs and Secretaries, General Council delegates, Agenda Committee members Posted: 9th December 2010 News: a summary of the decisions taken at the Board of Trustees meeting in December

Announcements

The Board noted with sadness the death of Arthur Osborne, Vice-President and former Chairman of Derbyshire Area; and the death of Eric Wallis, Secretary of South West Coast Path Association for 24 years who worked closely with the Ramblers.

It also noted with pleasure that Stewart Ramsden, a Ramblers volunteer with Manchester Get Walking Keep Walking, and Margaret Bowdery, Footpath Secretary for East Berkshire Ramblers attended a reception at Windsor Castle to meet the Queen, to honour all their services to the countryside on behalf of the Ramblers.

Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported on the eight special national and regional volunteer meetings which had taken place with the Chair and himself over the past two months. Over 200 volunteers attended in total, and the main points have been:

- They have been much more positive than the meetings last year.
- 'How to increase membership' has been the theme of most of the meetings. There is agreement on how important this is, and many ideas were coming forward – but there is a long way to go before membership really starts to increase.
- Ideas which we are already developing from the meetings include:
 - Small 'fixed by the Ramblers' signs for Groups to put on stiles, etc, when they fix them;
 - Clearer information on volunteer electronic communication – for example, stating who emails have been sent to;
 - Incentives for Groups to encourage member recruitment;
 - Member welcome/renewal letters to be tailored to include examples of achievements in each country (this was particularly strongly felt at the Scotland meeting);
 - A need to 'sort out' the web – making sure there is more consistency across Area and Group websites, as well as the central website.

The Chief Executive updated the Board on campaigning work. On coastal access, the Government has committed to the first six stretches, but there is no timetable, or budget beyond this. On local authorities, he said that he would like Areas and Groups to be taking more action to lobby their councils against spending cuts in rights of way budgets. Some Groups were taking the approach that "it is inevitable, there is nothing that can be done". Others were saying, "it won't happen". Our message to volunteers is that savage spending cuts will happen if we do nothing, but they are not inevitable if we campaign effectively.

He also reported on new walking projects for which grants have been awarded to the Ramblers:

- Get Walking Keep Walking in County Durham
- A Walk in the Park, a scheme to organise health walks in London's Royal Parks
- Get Walking Keep Walking Prisons, a scheme to encourage prisoners to walk for greater well-being, at three prisons in the south west.

The Chief Executive gave an update on the financial situation. Although 2009/10 (the financial year just ended) led to a significant financial surplus (largely through one-off additional income), the next couple of years are likely to be financially difficult. We have some way to go before we can say that membership is growing again, and that our income is expanding. At the same time, there are a number of income and cost pressures over the next couple of years: the end of the Get Walking Keep Walking grant and other grants, and continued high inflation, for example. He urged caution and to resist pressures to increase expenditure, at least until the financial picture was clearer. His only exception to this was investment in the website, which is so critical for our future, and such a high priority of volunteers.

Finances

The Board received the latest monthly accounts to the end of the financial year (September), and also the first monthly accounts for the new financial year (October). They show a central surplus of c£800k for last year (mostly from higher than expected membership income, plus one-off income such as backdated gift aid, and legacies). For the first month of 2010/11, the finances were slightly better than the approved budget, but not as good as the more ambitious target budget.

The Board also approved a set of Standing Financial Instructions – a recommendation from the Kipling Report into the Ramblers finances. The Board also reviewed the key risks faced by the charity.

Key Performance Indicators

The Board reviewed the Key Performance Indicators for the final month of 2009/10. These are 16 key indicators – covering finance, membership, campaigns, and organisation – which give a snap-shot of how we're performing against the Business Plan targets. Of the 16, we achieved 15.

The Board also reviewed the first month's results for the new Key Performance Indicators for 2010/11.

Finally, the Board reviewed membership figures up to the beginning of December. They show that as of 1st December, we had 120,479 paid up members – this is 1,019 fewer than the start of the year. Our target is to finish the year with more members than we started – so we have quite a challenge to achieve this. Membership renewal – at 87% - is above target by 2%. However, membership recruitment is only just over half of the target of 3,000 for the first two months of the financial year. There are lots of activities taking place to boost recruitment, including:

- 90,000 inserts in Cotswolds brochures and Country Walking magazine,
- a new "member get member" leaflet in Walk magazine,
- a mailing to 'long-lapsed' ex members,
- encouragement to Areas and Groups to increase membership recruitment activities,
- a financial incentive to affiliated clubs to recruit their members into the Ramblers,
- a telephone campaign to 5% of new members, to welcome them and encourage gift aid declarations, from January 2011
- a web recruitment campaign in March 2011

Draft Annual Report

The Board considered the draft wording for the Annual Report. Managers were congratulated on producing this so soon after the end of the financial year (two months earlier than usual). We will also be producing a four page executive summary this year.

General Council

The Board agreed that 'Increasing Membership' will be the theme for General Council in 2011, with 'good ideas' workshops linked to this. The Board will also nominate Julia Bradbury to be

Ramblers President for the second year. The format will be similar to last year's, over Saturday and Sunday, with a general and financial introduction at the beginning, and the same length of time for debating motions. Hustings for the Board of Trustees elections would take place earlier, rather than at the end of Saturday. The Board decided not to put forward any motions to change the Memorandum and Articles of the charity – because the current reviews taking place are likely to lead to a re-writing of the M&As for GC 2011.

Piloting the option of not joining a group, for on-line joiners

The Board heard about a two-month pilot in which new online joiners of the Ramblers will be asked more explicitly whether or not they wish to join a local group. (New members have always had the option of not joining a group, but it has never been made clear.) This follows feedback from volunteers (including at the recent regional and national volunteer meetings) that some new members are automatically allocated to a group, when they just want to join the Ramblers as a whole. This can waste time and money in sending them local information which they don't want. The pilot will take place soon, and more information will be provided to Groups. It will only last for two months, and we will monitor very carefully whether the renewal rates for those who elect not to join a group are higher or lower.

Devolution working party

The Chair gave the Board an update from the latest Devolution Working Party meeting. The next Devolution Working Party meeting will be taking place on 7th December in Scotland. Prior to the meeting, the Chair and the Honorary Treasurer will be meeting with members of Scottish Council Executive Committee (SCEC). SCEC are keen on independence, but realise it is not possible for this to be achieved by April 2011. The ambition is for 2-3 years time, but at present it is keen to have a strengthened protocol. This will be further negotiated at Tuesday's meeting. Wales wants to remain in the existing organisation and an updated protocol with them is being written and discussed.

Reference from Sussex Area

The Board considered a reference from Sussex Area. It had requested that Sussex News be sent out with Walk Magazine, rather than separately; and this had been refused on the grounds that its content was not consistent with the editorial style of Walk Magazine. The Board considered this to be a management matter rather than a governance one, and as managers had made a decision it would not be appropriate to intervene. Managers felt that there had been unacceptable delays in giving a decision to Sussex Area, and that some of the correspondence had been ambiguous, and would apologise to the Area about this.

In the longer run, the Board noted that management would consider the production of brand new regional newsletters for the Walk mailing, possibly moving further to some kind of regional sections/content within the magazine.

Branding and logos from the 1st January

Especially relevant to: Group and Area Committee Members. Posted: 1st December 2010 . For information: Information on the the use of branding and logos after the 1st January 2011.

The End of December marks the end of our 75th year. This means that communications will need to revert back to the two tones Ramblers Logo and branding. The branded templates and logos can be found at the following Links:

- [Logo's http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Basics/Logos.htm \(including the Ramblers Cymru and Ramblers Scotland.\)](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Basics/Logos.htm)
- [Letter headings and other branded items http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Brand.htm.](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Brand.htm)

We realise that there will inevitably some stock left at the end of the year and we do not want to create large amounts of waste. However, please make sure that when new stock is ordered or printed it should be in the regular ramblers branding.

If you have any questions or thoughts about the switchover please get in touch with Ed Wilson, volsupport@ramblers.org.uk.

Walking Environment Update - December 2010

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Footpath Secretaries, Access Officers, Countryside Secretaries, and others working on Walking Environment issues. Posted: 10th December 2010. News and action request: Update from the Walking Environment team

Forestry Commission access lobbying (Public Bodies Bill)

The Ramblers is joining other access and recreation organisations to press for amendments to the Public Bodies Bill, currently in the House of Lords. The Bill's provisions, as currently drafted, could see the sell-off of large sections of the Forestry Commission estate in England – with potentially damaging effects on access. We are also concerned about the provisions relating to National Parks and Natural England.

For more information, and to take action, look here: <http://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.client.id=117&ea.campaign.id=8746>

'Dead End?' Campaign – Latest news on cuts

Information on devastating cuts to rights of way and access work continues to emerge from local authorities across England. All intelligence we gather is being posted to the 'Dead End?' section of the website, along with case studies and best practice from the roadshow events: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/deadend>

It is encouraging to see so much local media coverage being generated, and lots of lobbying activity directed at local decision makers. We have sent a letter direct to relevant cabinet mem-

bers from central office to back up this local work. If you have any additional information on cuts in your authority, or would like help with your local campaigning, please contact Rachel Alcock, rachel.alcock@ramblers.org.uk 020 7339 8586.

Induction training

Over the last two years we have run a number of induction days for volunteers undertaking rights of way work for the Ramblers. Our hope is that everyone who does such work for us will be able to attend one of these events within a year of their recruitment. During the present financial year we will be holding another three such events, including one in Wales. The locations for these events will be dictated by the demand for places but, should it prove necessary, overnight accommodation expenses will be met from central funds. Travel expenses will also be met.

Although the induction days which we have run so far have concentrated on rights of way work, access and countryside work will be covered as appropriate. Topics covered will include:

- Ramblers charitable aims and the structure of the organisation
- The basics of rights of way and access law
- What Walking Environment volunteers do
- Walking Environment campaigning

If you would like to attend one of these events, or if you are an Area or Group Officer and you would like to nominate someone to attend, please send details (name, Area or Group, when recruited, main area of interest i.e. rights of way, access or countryside issues) to Janet Davis, Senior Policy Officer at central office (janet.davis@ramblers.org.uk; 020 7339 8538) by **4 January 2011**. People whose names were sent to us in the course of the last year will automatically be invited to this next round of events.

Consultation on National Park governance

Defra has launched a consultation on the Government's promised review of governance arrangements for National Parks. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/nationalpark-governance/index.htm> Staff will be working on a response, as well as feeding into work carried out by the Campaign for National Parks, of which we are a member. If any Areas or Groups have comments to make, these should be sent to walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk by Friday 14 January 2011.

High Speed 2 Rail

Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, and West Middlesex Area is taking the lead on this issue - <http://www.hs2.org.uk/> - focussing on the effects that the project would have on the walking environment, particularly rights of way. If your Area is interested/affected, and you've not heard from Bucks Area, please get in touch with Amy Cook at central office - walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk 020 7339 8554.

Vixen Tor and Bayham Abbey

These rights of way public inquiries, in Devon and Kent/East Sussex continue. For the latest news check here: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/Latest+news>

Don't forget to report your path successes at:
http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm

Top Tips for Increasing Group Membership - More Ideas!

Read some more Group ideas for how to attract new members

Following a huge response to a previous volunteer feature, [Top Tips for Increasing Group Membership](#), Alex Manning, from the Ramblers' London Metropolitan Walkers Group, gives his top tips for bringing in the members, drawn up from a workshop he ran at General Council in 2009:

1. A good walks programme

- To attract a wide range of people a group should have a mixture of long, medium and short walks (i.e. 12+ =, 8-12 and 5 and below miles long). Not everyone wants to just do one type of walk a mixture will ensure the maximum amount of people are attracted to your club.
- The pace / grade of a walk needs to be advertised. Some people like to walk fast others slow. What is important is that people are aware what pace a walk will be.
- Themed walks are very popular with people e.g. Bluebell walks.
- A mixture of urban / city walks also goes down well.
- Walks with an advertised attraction e.g. visit to cave or stately home also attract people.
- Evening strolls are a good idea to attract people who work - these tend to start around 7pm and be around 3 miles.

2. Walks etiquette

- At the beginning of the walk always give a brief introductory talk on the walk i.e. how long walk is, time of lunch etc.
- It is important to make new people feel welcome so make a point of going up to them and giving them some info on the group. You could introduce them to some people as well!

3. Advertising your walks / group

This is key to a successful group. If you have a good walks programme but no one knows about it then you will not get any new members.

- It is important that it is as easy as possible for new people to know about the walks that you are carrying out. The web is the key to this - people find out about new clubs via the web.
- Ideally walks should be put on the Ramblers walks finder - this is a specific piece of software which the Ramblers designed for groups.
- At least your next 5 walks should be displayed on your website. When people find your walking group on the web they want to know what walks you do and how they can go to them. Therefore full details of the walks should be put on the website.
- People need to be able to find your website when searching on the web. Putting as many links to your website from other websites is an effective way of doing this. Good websites to do this include local online newsletters (e.g. SE1 in Lambeth) or on websites that people look at locally. You can also put links online on Gumtree and Timeout.

- Running a stall at a local event can also be a good way to get new members, leaflets can be given out to the prospective new members.
- Putting on walks on walk festivals also highlights your group e.g. Ramblers festival of winter walks
- Having a good website also helps. This is the first impression people get of the group so it is important that this looks good!
- An idea is to brand your group as "the local walking group for e.g. Lambeth and South-wark" emphasizing the local aspect of the group helps.

4. Getting new walk leaders

- People will join voluntarily if they like the group. It should be made clear to new people that they can come on a walk with the group up to 3 times before deciding whether to join.
- It should be emphasized on a regular basis that the group relies on volunteers to make the group work and that it is always on the look out for new walk leaders.
- If someone complains that the group only does long walks for example then encourage them to put on a short walk.
- There should be regular appeals for new walks leaders e.g. every programme.

5. Socials

- Socials create a good bond in the group.
- An idea to attract new people is to have a new members evening where people can be introduced to the group.

6. Weekends away

- Organising weekends away is also a good idea and lets members of the group walk in different areas of the country.
- The Met Walkers introduced a "weekend lite" concept. Everyone who attends the weekends away organises their own accommodation and travel all the organiser needs to do is put on the walks! People are more likely to carry out a weekend away as a result.

Going paper-free to increase membership and reduce costs

Lawrence Jones, Media and Web Volunteer for Chilterns Weekend Walkers, explains how his Ramblers group has used paper free working to boost membership and reduce running costs (Feature - posted 12th October 2010)

If after reading this article you would like any advice on implementing these suggestions, Lawrence is happy to help. Contact him by email by [clicking here](#).

Introduction

Chilterns Weekend Walkers operates very efficiently as a paper free organisation using many of the tools which would be used by our target membership in their daily life at work or at home.

Who do we try to recruit as new members?

We try to recruit walkers who live in or like to walk in the Chilterns. There are no upper or lower age limits to the group but we target our website and media to aim for those in their 40's or early 50's who might be looking to join a walking group and who have more time than previously or want to improve their fitness. In documentation we phrase this as "CWW was set up by those who had been previously members of the 20's and 30's group". We differ from other clubs by having an extensive social calendar and a number of weekends away in the UK and overseas.

Mailing List

Members, Associate Members and Prospective Members are all on a single mailing list hosted by [Yahoo Groups](#). Friendly and chatty emails are sent out weekly with details of the upcoming walks, social events and weekends away. Only Moderators can send email which avoids trivial messages and SPAM.

The Mailing List can be exported to an excel spreadsheet and this shows the date of joining the list. The list is compared with the list of members, which comes from the RA and a list of known associate members (i.e. Members of other RA groups) which then leaves the group of prospective members, who can be chased up to join the club after a month or two.

People can add their address to the email directly by entering their email address into a box on the [mailing list](#) page of the CWW website.

Website

Our main marketing tool is our [website](#). This has been constructed in a quite clear and easy to understand format, but has elements ensure that it is kept up to date.

Specific elements to help this are

1. Picasa

Picasa is a free web based photo service from Google and we have embedded this into the front page of the website and constructed a storyboard showing typical activities and this includes captions with additional information. It gives prospective members an idea of the activities and the type and age of people they are likely to meet on one of our walks or social events.

Rights to add or remove photos and captions are given to specific members of the CWW committee.

2. Google Calendar

We had the issue that the task of compiling the walks programme was shared and as a tool we looked at the [Free Google calendar](#) so that those working on the calendar could see what the other had already planned.

We have since embedded the calendar in the website and this has been enthusiastically received

We have now expanded this greatly and here is a list of areas where Google calendar can help a club.

Planning

- Walk Coordinators can see what each other has planned

- Members can look at the Calendar to find dates which are still free and then contact the walks coordinators to add a walk.
- We haven't done this yet, but one could make this available to neighbouring clubs to facilitate joint walks.

Other Features

- The walks can be printed out in different formats such as a list or calendar and can be used to compile the weekly emails.
- Social Events and weekends away are shown in different colours
- Events can be updated to show if space is still available on events.
- The calendar can be accessed as a feed via Microsoft Outlook so that one can “drag and drop” events into the work calendar.

3. Google Maps

Google Calendar links in with Google maps. New walkers are much more likely to try to find the starting point of a walk via Google maps or via Sat Nav than via the OS Grid Reference.

The 6 digit OS Reference defines a square of 100m by 100m. The Global Coordinates are accurate to the nearest parking space in a car park.

For instance, for the walk, which started in Berkhamstead. The Information on the calendar for where the walk was:

Outside Tescos, High Street, Berkhamsted @51.760151, -0.56355 ([map](#))

And this gives a very accurate starting point. In a town, the post code would also be reasonable accurate but as many of our walks start in the middle of nowhere, the coordinates are the best solution.

Additionally with most Sat Nav units, it's possible to enter the coordinates directly. Usually go to “Where to” then “Coordinates”.

Facebook

CWW has been using [Facebook](#) for well over a year and we have 118 people registered on it. This is used as a forum with real comments from real participants good or bad and a place to put photos.

CWW would like to gain funding to trial Facebook targeted advertising. Facebook is unique in the way adverts can be targeted. They can be targeted by geography, age and interests and here is an example of how we could target adverts.

Geography	Age	Interests	No of people
Within 40km of Amersham	18+	Walking	13180

Within 40km of Amersham	35-55	Walking	6200
-------------------------	-------	---------	------

Within 40km of Amersham	35-55	Rambling	Fewer than 20
-------------------------	-------	----------	---------------

Facebook advert costs

I've tried this for a language club and paid on a “pay per click” basis. During this trial we had 16000 impressions (the little adverts on the right hand side of the screen) and about 20 clicks which cost around £4.00 in total.

This is much more efficient than printing leaflets as you would only target those in the age range and who have listed walking as an interest.

How to slash the costs for postage and printing

by David Ross, Surrey Area Secretary

Woking Ramblers have persuaded 80% of members to get their programme from the internet. Here is an opportunity for other groups to follow their approach and drive down costs and slash volunteer time spent stuffing envelopes. The key probably is their use of a Stamped Addressed Envelope and the personal follow through of Mike Lipscomb, Chairman.

Their July newsletter started with: "We are trying to save money and volunteer labour by modernising the way we publicise the Newsletter and Walks Programme. **To help us, please read the enclosed letter carefully and respond using the tear off slip and STAMPED, AD-DRESSED ENVELOPE provided.**"

Dear Rambler

Distributing the Newsletter and Walks Programme

Problem:

Sending the Newsletter and Walks Programme through the post is very expensive because of the cost of printing, stationery and most of all postage. It is also expensive in terms of the time taken by volunteers to send the printed documents. Over 1000 sheets of paper are used in the process.

Solution:

Many members have said that they would be happy to get the Newsletter and Walks Programme from the Woking Ramblers' web site. In case you have access to the internet but are not aware of how to get this information, here is a step by step guide:

Method:

Go to this web address:

<http://wokingramblers.org/index.html>

Click on the box marked "Walks" from the list on the left hand side. Then click on the box marked "Walks".

This will show you the walks planned and also let you click on the name of the walk and get more information and a map showing the starting point. (This extra information is not in the printed version.)

You can see the Newsletter or the Walks Programme the way it looks when printed by doing this:

In the Downloads section, click on "Download Walks" or "Newsletter"

In each case the document will open for you to read or print as you wish.

Choice:

Please tell us how you would like to get these publications in future by completing the slip below and returning it in the envelope provided.

The committee of the Woking Ramblers hope that you are content to download the Newsletter and Walks Programme from the internet and that you will say "YES" to the first question. We could send you an email reminder although that would entail our maintaining a list with your email preferences. Your choices will not affect any other mailing done by the Woking Group or the Ramblers Head Office – if you answer "NO" to both questions you will continue to receive both the Newsletter and the Walks Programme through the post.

Thank you for considering this cost saving change – Woking Ramblers.

.....

I am content to get the Woking Ramblers Newsletter and Walks Programme from the Ramblers' web site NO* YES*

I should like to receive an email reminder when the new version of the Newsletter and Programme are available. NO* YES*

Email address: (to receive reminder)

Telephone: (optional)

Name: (please print)

Signature:

* Delete as appropriate"

The SAE resulted in most people responding and then Mike Lipscomb, Chairman, telephoned those who did not reply.

As a result about **80% of members have agreed to take the programme from the internet**, 15% have actively requested to retain a paper copy and the remaining 5% have been difficult to contact (ex directory etc.)

New members are asked how they wish to receive their programme and again about 80% have already agreed to use the internet.

David Ross, Area Secretary
