

Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up

10 February 2010 to 3 March 2010



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Web site Volunteer Section since 10th February. 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 March '10

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

Follow me on Twitter for (almost) daily updates: <http://twitter.com/RamblersTom>

Dear Volunteer,

Success in East Sussex

Click on the picture above to view a 4-minute 'video log' on YouTube from me about the recent footpath success in Withyham in East Sussex, and the importance of recording all local footpath successes. It helps with our campaigning, and with recruiting members. The video shows you how to record footpath successes – which you can do by going to http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm. It's my first attempt at doing a video, so it is a little rough around the edges! Feedback is always welcome - you can use the link at the bottom of this page.

Islwyn web site

My 'unsung hero' award for March goes to Islwyn Ramblers, and in particular their webmaster, Phil Jenkins, for a great web site. The pages can be found at <http://www.islwyn-ramblers.co.uk/index.htm> - particularly good are the Talk of the Walk features.

Ramblers groups web sites are quite a mixed bag. There are some fantastic ones, but others are a bit basic. With more and more new members coming via the web, your web site is the equivalent of your shop front so it is really worthwhile making it look good.

Walks finder

While I'm on the subject of web sites, thanks to everyone who uploads walks to the Ramblers [walksfinder](#). Both members and non-members use this to help decide which walks they take part in. But I was amazed to discover that about 25% of Ramblers walks are not put up onto [walksfinder](#) at all. That is a waste – there are people who might join the Ramblers if only they knew about walks that we put on in their local neighbourhood. If your group doesn't advertise all your walks on [walksfinder](#), why not start doing so? Get in touch with the [walksfinder](#) volunteers, Brenda and Chris, who will be very happy to give you support.

AGMs out and about

It's been great to meet up with so many volunteers at AGMs. The picture on the right is from the Warwickshire AGM (where there were nearly 200 people, and we had a great town walk around Stratford-upon-Avon); and the one on the left from Hampshire AGM (where the walk was on the border of the South Downs National Park).

Keeping our led walks a jewel in our crown

Whilst on the subject of the Ramblers led walks, I wanted to say something about the future of the led walks programme – which for some volunteers will be welcomed, and for others may be controversial.

Each year, thousands of volunteers put on a programme of 28,000 led walks. We reckon that about half a million individual walks are enjoyed with the Ramblers each year. They are one of the jewels in the Ramblers crown, and I feel humbled when I hear about the work which is involved in putting them on.

In 2006, we commissioned a led walks expert called Bob Barton to undertake a review of the Ramblers led walks. He concluded that he was very impressed by what he saw and heard, but that we did need to take more notice about issues such as safety.

Since 2006, we have set up a small led walks team of two members of staff, who provide help and guidance on led walks issues, and we have emphasised the importance of reporting incidents when they happen. Walking is generally a very safe activity, and most incidents are minor, but sometimes things go seriously wrong. The team issued a case study of one such incident recently. They have also re-issued the walk leader's checklist, with basic first aid information.

In the recent volunteers survey, two thirds of walk leaders said that they wanted more opportunity for training, and we're currently discussing options for this. We're looking to focus on those who lead walks on remote and challenging terrain, but I also hope in the long run that we can ensure all walk leaders get the training they want.

We'll very soon be consulting with groups on this, and we're also going to release the Bob Barton report.. It is a very controversial subject. Some volunteers tell me that they want more training opportunities. Others tell me that if we introduce training, they will stop leading walks for the Ramblers. We'll need to tread with great care. But it is a discussion which we need to have. We'll also be reprinting the walk leaders checklist soon, and we've made a few changes to take on board comments from volunteers. We'll be asking for feedback on this.

Volunteer features, and volunteer vacancies

I wanted to draw your attention to two parts of the web site you may not have seen: one is called volunteer features. This is where good ideas and initiatives from Areas and Groups are reported. Examples in the last month include: Ramblers member and volunteer, Stewart Ram-sden, talking about what he gets from volunteering for Get Walking, Keep Walking in Manchester; Andover Ramblers Chair, John Frankham, on how to increase membership; Black Country Walkers' Paul Davies on ideas for membership recruitment, and the success in East Sussex thanks to the work of Area Footpath Secretary, Malcolm McDonnell.

The other is called volunteer vacancies. This is where vacant volunteer posts can be advertised. We've just set it up, and it is aimed at helping Areas and Groups to fill posts which are sitting empty. When talking with volunteers, I know this can be a particular problem – so I hope this helps.

Ramblers on BBC One Show

Finally, if you didn't see the Ramblers 75th anniversary featured on the BBC's One Show last Monday, go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/theoneshow/> for your last chance to see it on iPlayer (it is available up for a few more days - the feature starts about 2 minutes into the programme). Thanks to the Chelmer and Blackwater Ramblers for taking Giles Brandreth on their walk.

Anyway, that is enough from me for March. Have a good month, and thanks for giving the Ramblers so much.

P. S. If you'd like to follow my twitter log (which I update most days), you can do so with this link: <http://twitter.com/RamblersTom>

Summary of the Board of Trustees meeting 20th February 2010

Read a summary of the decisions taken at the Board meeting in February (News - posted 1st March 2010)

The Board of Trustees meeting was again held at Central Office rather than an external venue, in order to reduce costs. On the Friday evening, trustees and managers heard a presentation from Sir Graham Wynne, Chief Executive of the RSPB. The Board meeting took place on the following Saturday.

Announcements

The Board noted with sadness the deaths of Marjorie Kerr, former editor of Hampshire Area News and very active in the New Forest Group, Denis Nesbit, former president of Essex Area and Countryside Secretary of Shropshire Area, Roger MacAllister, chairman of Teignmouth and Dawlish Group, and David Taylor MP, Leicestershire and Rutland President.

Chief Executive's report

Walking environment: the Chief Executive reported that secondary legislation for coastal access was progressing well through Parliament, and that we had responded to Natural England's consultation on coastal access implementation, with the assistance of Ramblers Areas. A re-shaped Access Committee had now met to advise staff, which now included three Area access officers. He reported that several responses to policy consultations had been submitted, including ones on level crossings, and the extension of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. A successful induction day had been held in Gloucestershire for 28 walking environment volunteers (mostly new footpath and access secretaries) with two more planned.

Walk leading: The Chief Executive reported that a survey would shortly be going to all groups inviting comment on the number of walks leaders and the type of walks offered, to gain a better understanding of the type of training for 'remote and challenging' walks that may be offered. The plan is to introduce a form of cascade training. He also reported that 6,000 copies of the walk leaders checklist had been requested by Groups, and a reprint is due shortly. Volunteers would be asked to comment on the text, which had been slightly revised to take on board feedback received.

Get Walking: Keep Walking: he updated the Board on Get Walking, Keep Walking. As a result of an article in the Daily Mirror, which had then been circulated via social network web sites like Twitter, more than 17,000 Get Walking packs had been requested within a one-week period on the Get Walking, Keep Walking micro-site. These would be sent out, with a recruitment leaflet and letter. The Get Walking project, which is funded entirely by grants, is currently meeting all of its targets in all five locations: Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, South London and East London.

Special meetings with volunteers: he reported that the Chair and he had now completed 11 special national and regional meetings, meeting around 250 volunteers. A summary of the main issues raised would be circulated to attendees shortly.

Media coverage: finally, he reported that there had been some excellent media coverage for the Ramblers recently, including articles in the Guardian, on BBC1 Countryfile, and (due for the following week) the BBC's One Show [until 7th March, click here to watch on iPlayer - item

starts 2 mins into the programme]. The Festival of Winter Walks had involved more walks than ever before, at 880, and received twice as much media coverage as last year including interviews on 40 radio stations - although attendance on the walks had been lower because of the bad weather.

Financial accounts and Key Performance Indicators

The Board received the management accounts up to the end of January 2010 (the fourth month of the financial year). These showed a financial surplus compared to a projected small deficit. However, the bottom line was being flattered by bills yet to be paid for campaigns legal expenditure and new recruitment materials. We are currently on course to break even by the end of this financial year. A re-forecast until the end of the year is due to be carried out soon.

The Board also received the dashboard of Key Performance Indicators up to the end of January 2010. These are 14 indicators which help the Board to assess whether we are achieving our targets for the year - they are a mixture of financial, development, and business targets. All are on track apart from two - the target of 500 footpaths unblocked, opened, or recorded on definitive maps as a result of Ramblers efforts this year; and the 10-working day turnaround for membership applications and renewals.

Reporting footpath successes

The Board heard that many Areas were not yet reporting their successes with footpaths. It was agreed that there was a need to explain better why this is important - because it helps our campaigning and lobbying work, getting media coverage, and helping membership recruitment and fundraising. Trustees agreed to promote the importance of recording successes when speaking at meetings and in their post-Board meeting discussions with Area Chairs. *Click here to watch a 4 minute video on why reporting successes is important, and how to do so, from the Chief Executive's blog.*]

Membership processing turnaround: the Board received a report from the Director of Marketing and Communications regarding the time taken to process membership applications and renewals. The target is for all to be processed within 10-working days, and while this was achieved last Autumn, a number of factors (including the postal strike, a large number of gift memberships, a large lapsed member mailing, and the Christmas shut-down) had meant that this target had been missed since December. Lessons had been learnt about the need to increase staffing resources in the pre-Christmas period.

In the meantime, the focus was to return to the 10-working day turnaround as quickly as possible, with the aim that this would be achieved by the beginning of April. Full membership lists are due to be sent out the Areas and Groups in March, a key outstanding request from Areas and Groups.

The Director of Marketing and Communications also reported that as at 4th February, active (i.e. fully paid-up) membership stood at 121,700. A further 7,000 were in payment pending (i.e. within three months of their payment due date).

General Council

The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts subject to minor changes, and agreed the update on actions arising from motions at General Council 2009. It agreed the General Council agenda, including more time for debates than at either GC2009 or previous GC's, which had been held over three days. It agreed to submit three motions to GC - on devolution, the need to broaden and increase our membership, and the importance of our public path and public access work. *Click here to visit the General Council web page.*]

Broadening our Walks Programme

The Board received a report from the Director of Policy and Campaigns on broadening the Ramblers walks programme. It agreed to contact all Areas to encourage them to pilot the es-

establishment of new 'specialist' groups - for example, based on age, interest or type of walks. The setting up of new Groups is an important way to help to boost membership.

Affiliated Clubs

The Board discussed a paper on the role of affiliated clubs and organisations. It agreed to develop affiliated clubs as a major part of our member recruitment activity - many members of clubs were also people who might become members of the Ramblers.

Walk Magazine

The Board discussed a paper on Walk magazine, which had previously been discussed by the Board's Campaigns and Marketing Sub-Committee. It agreed that Walk magazine should continue to be seen as a major benefit for all Ramblers members, and that whilst it should be primarily aimed at Ramblers members, it should also continue to be on retail sale to the general public as a way of promoting the Ramblers more widely. It agreed that the magazine should have an increased campaigning edge and hence do more to communicate our campaigns and successes. The Board agreed Walk magazine was and should remain a high-quality consumer magazine and it should not move towards an internally facing 'newspaper' content and style, as this would reduce its appeal to the readership and risk the loss of advertising revenues. The Board also discussed a possible electronic replacement for Hike Magazine (for 20s-30s members), which ceased publication last year. This will be discussed in more detail at the next Campaigns and Marketing Sub-Committee, for consideration for next year's business plan.

Walking Environment priorities

The Board received a paper detailing the results of a consultation on walking environment issues. It agreed that this would form the basis of further consultation both internally and externally. The Board also agreed that a briefing note would be provided to volunteers of key points to raise with parliamentary candidates during the general election.

Business Planning

The Board began its discussion on the budget and business plan for 2010/11. It noted that the tight financial situation was likely to continue for the next few years. There would be additional pressures on income (legacy income which has not been notified being excluded from the budget, lower membership income as a result of falling membership, and the end of some project funding) and on expenditure (higher inflation, the need for IT equipment replacement, and the need for higher budgeted spending for Areas). The Board agreed to consult with Areas on their priorities for 2010/11. The budget and business plan would be discussed again at the Board's May meeting.

For information about the role of the Board of Trustees, and details of who is on the Board, go to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Meet+the+Trustees.htm>.

Situations Vacant Now Available

The new Volunteer Situations Vacant page is now available for use (Information - posted 23 February 2010).

You can now view the new Situations Vacant page on the volunteer pages of the Ramblers Web site at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Volunteer+Situations+Vacant.htm>. The page gives an opportunity to all those looking to fill a volunteer role within the Ramblers to advertise this to a wider audience. If you would like to put details of a specific role on the page you can do this either by e-mailing us or by following the link on the page.

If your Group or Area would like to advertise a role on the Situations Vacant page we need just a few details. These are:

- Area/Group
- Role
- A Brief Description
- When you would like to recruit somebody by
- Who the primary contact should be (Please note we will not give out the contact details but will send any details of possible candidates on to you)

For further information please contact Ed Wilson Volunteer Support and Development Officer at Volsupport@ramblers.org.uk.

Minutes of General Council

Minutes of General Council between 1997 and 2008 (Information - posted 17 February 2010). The minutes for previous General Councils can be seen by going to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Minutes-of-general-council> and selecting the relevant year.

The minutes of the 2009 General Council will be available following their approval at the 2010 General Council in April 2010.

For further information or if you have any queries please get in touch by e-mail at governance@ramblers.org.uk.

Membership Services Update

The latest update on the development of Full Membership Lists and Membership Services processing times (News / posted 3rd March 2010).
Membership Services Update

This update provides you with a progress report on the development of the Full membership lists and Membership Services processing times.

Full Membership Lists

We will be providing full membership lists with February's monthly membership update by the end of the second week of March (12th). Both reports will be provided in the same format (paper or electronic) as you currently receive monthly membership updates. As with the introduction of the monthly membership updates last November we will be providing an explanatory document for guidance.

We had hoped to be in the position to supply full membership lists by the end of February. However, while developing the report we noticed a large number (approximately 1500) of minor errors within the database that would have caused inaccurate reporting of some members' information.

Although the erroneous information is contained in the CRM system, these errors are not a direct result of the system itself. The vast majority of these errors are a result of human processing errors, many of which pre-date the current CRM system.

The Membership Services team are working through and correcting the known errors with the aim of providing more accurate information for when the reports are issued next week.

Membership Services processing times

Our target is to turn around all membership applications and renewals within 10 working days from date of receipt.

Last Autumn, we were achieving this.

However, a number of events in November and December impacted service delivery over this period including: a large number of gift memberships (which take longer to process because they are hand-written) these needed to be a priority of course at this time to ensure delivery in time for Christmas Day; Royal Mail strikes bunching up mail delivery and delaying the receipt of incoming post; a very large lapsed member mailing which was sent at the end of November; and the Christmas holiday.

Some of these we ought to have predicted, others were unforeseen circumstances, however we'll learn for next year to make sure the impact of the Christmas period is lessened.

As of 2nd March:

-telephone/online applications are being processed within 10 working days

-postal applications/ renewals were outside of the 10 working days – the oldest one being 22 working days (i.e. receipt in central office from 29th January). Please note that this is not the average time for processing – it is the oldest.

-with membership servicing enquiries, some categories of enquiries were actioned within 10 working days from receipt (e.g. resignations and changes of address) whilst others were outside of the target. All enquiries that require a response will be responded to although not all are within the 10 day turnaround target at present.

These numbers change on a daily basis, as new emails/post arrives and others are processed. We are monitoring the situation very closely, and the team is working to get back to all categories being within the 10 working days. We are committed to reduce almost all response turnaround times to within 10 days by the end of March.

Please bear with us. However, if you have a very urgent query, please pick up the phone and call the membership team on 020 7121 9595; we are always happy to help

Iain Johnston

Membership Services Manager

Volunteer Features

I am pleased and proud to be a Get Walking, Keep Walking volunteer

How a Ramblers member, Stewart Ramsden, got involved in the Manchester Get Walking, Keep Walking scheme, and how others can get involved too. (Features - 24th February 2010)

In the summer of 2008, I received a letter from the Ramblers asking if I was interested in becoming a volunteer for Get Walking Keep Walking (GWKW) in Manchester. I found out some more about it and decided that it would be a worthwhile thing to do and as I was recently retired, I had some time to devote to it.

After receiving my initial training I became first a route-developer and then an ambassador, accompanying groups on their walks. I now undertake both roles. The groups are very varied in nature including young mums with toddlers, the elderly Chinese community and people with social problems. The common thing with them all is their enthusiasm and it is encouraging to hear their individual testimonies about the benefits the GWKW programme has brought them. Both route-developing and walking with the groups has had an unexpected benefit for me personally: although I was born and grew up only three miles from the centre of Manchester, through GWKW I have visited places I had not been to before and I have discovered places I did not even know existed. Perhaps my favourite walks have been those in the city centre be-

cause, despite a love of countryside and mountains, both me and my wife Prue like visiting and exploring cities, although these have been cities such as London, York, Rome, etc, and ignoring what great interest, history and architecture is on our doorstep.

I have also benefited from my involvement with GWKW from courses such as walk leadership and first aid and from making new and interesting friends. There is a great social aspect to GWKW as well, with the occasional night out and I have had the honour of organising and leading on two social walks for the volunteers, one over Shutlingsloe and one around Edale. I am pleased and proud to be a GWKW volunteer, benefiting both the community and myself and I can honestly say that I have done that and got the T-shirt!

If you would like to know more about becoming a Ramblers Get Walking Keep Walking volunteer by going to <http://www.getwalking.org/volunteer-partner/volunteer-opportunities/>.

Growing your membership

How the Andover Ramblers have achieved a 2.5% increase in membership each year, and their highest-ever membership level in 2009 (Features - 23rd February 2010)

Download their excellent PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/VolunteerFeatures/Andover+Ramblers+Feature>.

Clive Frankham, Chair of the Andover Ramblers, explains the steps they have taken to increase their membership.

There are three key parts to the Andover Ramblers' publicity activities:

1. We identify and exploit all possible means of publicising our activities and events. Consideration is given to all the opportunities that may arise, however improbable they might seem.
2. We tailor our publicity to exploit issues that are popular with the press e.g. health, environment, etc
3. Repetition, repetition, repetition. Publicity is not a one-off activity. It must be done at least once a month, preferably once a week.

To be really effective, the publicity officer needs to work closely with the walks co-ordinator and the webmaster. Our publicity model has been developed so that publicity can be targeted effectively and carried out in a timely manner. It can now be shared with others. Some of the ideas, however, will rely on the help of the Ramblers staff.

Where to publicise

I began by identifying as many places as possible where we could publicise. These I grouped into 5 main categories i.e. home, work, leisure activities, travel and other. If an individual is at home they will have access to the television, radio, newspapers and the Internet. At work they will have access to notice boards, breakout areas and in-house magazines. Many will work in places that have large car parks. How many of those cars have a National Trust membership sticker in their window?

If people are not at home or at work, they may well be pursuing leisure activities, e.g. shopping, visiting the library, visiting friends and family, etc These are all great opportunities for publicising the Ramblers.

How many times have you been stuck in a traffic jam, staring at the rear window of another car? You could be publicising the Ramblers while you are stationary if you had a sticker in your car window. Additionally, regular announcements on your local radio station will be heard by hundreds of drivers.

How do people you meet when you are out walking know that you are Ramblers? Why not wear something that catches their eye? I've had some bandanas produced which I wrap around my Tilley. Buffs are both versatile and popular with many walkers. If enough of us express an interest, maybe the Ramblers could consider having some produced to sell to members. I have also had some polo shirts produced, which I wear around town, at group social events and whenever we are away. Wearing them often leads to conversations with members of the public, and gets me discount when I forget my membership card!

What to publicise

Having decided where to publicise our activities, I began looking at what to publicise. The obvious things to publicise are our walks and social events. It is also good to write about how walking directly relates to, and benefits matters that are popular with both the local and national press, e.g. health, the environment, transport, etc

How to publicise

The next stage was to look at how to go about publicising the group in an effective manner. As our group's webmaster I had already created our award-winning website. I then created our colourful, eye-catching static display, which is erected in Andover library and at the premises of local employers throughout the year. We also man the stand in the high street during the summer. My father - a member of the Staines Ramblers - made us a full size stile that can be dismantled to fit in the boot of my car. We were also given a footpath sign. Apparently it did not meet the council's specifications! Waste not, want not!

I also collect unwanted walking magazines and distribute them amongst the waiting rooms of the town's doctors' surgeries. Edited programmes and Ramblers literature are also left at the surgeries, the library, the tourist information centre, and outdoor shops. I also write a monthly article for the local newspaper and send details of forthcoming events to our local radio stations.

Create a plan

Having worked out where, what and how to publicise, the next stage was to develop a plan to make sure publicity activities are carried out on a regular basis. The plan-on-a-page is attached to the wall above my home computer. It focuses my attention on what needs to be done, and when.

The plan is then broken down into key activities and then by individual tasks. A deadline is then put against each task. It is then simply a case of ticking off the tasks as I complete them. Job done! Having set everything up, I now spend about half an hour per week on publicity activities.

Displays

I mentioned the colourful, eye-catching static display that I have created for the group. This uses the coloured poster blanks that are available, free of charge, from the Ramblers. I have created a number of pre-formatted templates which other groups can download, update and print. I laminated ours to enhance the colours and keep them looking good for many years.

Is it worth it?

In a word, yes. Since becoming involved in the publicising the group, our membership has increased by an average of 2.5% each year. In 2009 the Andover Ramblers achieved their highest membership total in their 40-year history. There will also come a time when another member assumes the role of publicity officer. Having well-established practices should help with continuity.

Our publicity model and the aforementioned templates are available to download at www.andoverramblers.hampshire.org.uk/publicity_model.htm.

Any comments on this article? Let Clive know by e-mailing [clive](mailto:clive@ramblers.org.uk) at volsupport@ramblers.org.uk.

Ramblers - perceived issues, potential solutions?

Ramblers - perceived issues, potential solutions?

A personal view, by Paul Davies, Publicity Officer, Black Country Walking Group (Discussion - posted 11th February 2010)

The Ramblers are moving forward. Good progress is being made. We have a new strategy, a fresh new modern branding, an excellent web-site, and more environmentally friendly (and cost saving) electronic communication. However, there will always be issues to address in order to reach full potential and maximise growth. This report concentrates on:

- offering perception of value for money membership subscriptions,
 - transparent membership subscription discounts
 - treating all members fairly
 - counteracting reducing membership numbers
 - cost reduction / alternative revenue streams
- all with the aim of substantially increasing membership numbers.

Subscription rates

- Currently individual single members, (who may be having to make ends meet on one income) may appear to subsidise joint members (who may have the benefit of two incomes). Cost savings to the Ramblers of joint membership are not transparent.
- The lower concessionary rates may have stigma attached, (means tested benefit).
- There is no reward for paying by Direct Debit (DD), although this reduces bank charges and other costs, and maximises membership retention.
- Some members just want to donate to the cause; they do not want magazines & other correspondence. Unwanted post is increasingly seen as not being green.

The proposal is to amend subscription rates to give choice (two membership options), and increase transparency of cost savings. Members should be encouraged to donate whatever amount they feel appropriate, but subject to the following minimum payments.

Paper-less membership - (no 'hard copy' correspondence, magazine, handbook, etc.)

Annual minimum subscription £22. Pay by DD and benefit from 10% discount i.e. minimum of £19.80 a year (equivalent to 38p per week).

Postal membership - (hard copies of Walk Magazine & all other literature by post).

Annual minimum subscription £33. Pay by DD and benefit from 10% discount i.e. minimum of £29.70 a year (equivalent to 57p per week).

- Encourage only one postal membership per address. If two members share same address, communications & magazine, have one paper-less and one postal. Combined minimum then £55.00 per year. Pay by DD £49.50 a year (equivalent to 48p each per week). (N.B. Both could choose paper-less membership then if pay by DD total minimum would be £39.60 a year for the two).
- Increase DD discount from 10% to 20% for first year only for new applications who apply online if never previously been a member of the Ramblers.
- Encourage Gift Aid Declaration.
- Scrap concessionary & joint rates.

Membership Benefit - Web site

Have a members only area on the web site. Members to email membership number via link on web site; Ramblers capture email address and issue a password. Need in-force membership number and password to gain access.

In this area have:

- 1) Electronic version of the Walk Magazine, members handbook, etc.
- 2) Competitions with prizes funded by organisation who are receiving publicity for the products they are donating as prizes.
- 3) Easily searchable electronic nation-wide walks library built up of walks provided by Ramblers members. Members can download details, do these walks on their own, or use them to lead their group. Members provide updates if anything changes, they discover additional points of interest, etc.
- 4) Offers, discounts & deals.
- 5) On-line shop. Procure a supplier of quality, but value for money, Ramblers branded merchandise, e.g. fleeces, caps, umbrellas, etc. All branded with new Ramblers logo and web address. Supplier to pay commission to Ramblers based on value of sales.

Publicity

- Amend landing page of Web site to have a clear message about Hike groups aimed at younger adults with link to page giving more details.
- Send car sticker for rear window with membership card, (like those issued by National Trust), displaying Ramblers logo & web site address).

Additional alternative revenue streams / expense reduction

- Sell banner advertising space on web-site.
- Encourage all groups to reduce expenses, (BCWG currently spending less than £1 per member per year in running costs). Achieved by electronic communication, negotiation of free room hire for AGM on basis they make profit from refreshments sold. Also no food supplied at AGM, members supply their own, or partake in optional social meal afterwards where each member attending pays for what they receive.

What do you think about Paul's ideas? E-mail Tom Franklin at Tom.franklin@ramblers.org.uk to let us know.

Withyham footpath on the map

Ramblers in Sussex Area get a footpath added to the map after 10 years of campaigning. (News - posted 9 February 2010)

After a lengthy procedure lasting precisely ten years, Ramblers volunteer Malcolm McDonnell has succeeded in getting a historic footpath in the village of Withyham, East Sussex, officially recognised after landowner the 11th Earl de la Warr barred the way in February 2000.

The path led from the centre of Withyham, near the village pub and hall, up a set of steps by the B2110 road, and ascended a field to reach the 14th-Century parish church of St Michael and All Angels. It had been in use for at least 120 years, and probably far longer, to judge by the well-worn depression in the ground throughout the route.

On discovering the obstruction, bemused residents – all used to walking the path at one time or another to get to church or Sunday-school, visit graves and to further walks beyond, like to Ashdown Forest – approached Malcolm, a member of the parish council's footpath Advisory Committee. Malcolm, a keen country walker, had himself been walking the path for about 20 years; and, concerned by the closure and the furore it had caused, contacted Ramblers central office for advice on how to proceed. They advised him to collect evidence of use and to

apply to East Sussex County Council for a definitive map modification order to have the path officially recorded as conclusive legal proof of its public status.

The Council took seven years to determine the application. Then in 2007 they rejected it, for reasons which astonished Malcolm and the Ramblers staff. The Council said the way was a "church way" and, so, it was not possible for the public to acquire rights over it, on account of a court-ruling in another case.

Ramblers staff tracked down the judgment in the case and found that the Council had misunderstood it: it was, in fact, perfectly possible for the public at large to acquire rights over a route even if it was originally a way used since time immemorial for people of the parish. The Council also said that since the landowner was unaware of use, it failed another legal test which required the use to be such that the landowner realises that the public are asserting a right. In fact there is no such test.

Ramblers staff advised Malcolm to appeal to the Secretary of State against the Council's decision to reject the order. He did, and the Secretary of State found the Council's decision to be legally flawed and directed them to make an order. This they duly did, but seemed unpersuaded by the Secretary of State's reasoning, as they took a neutral stance at the inquiry which followed when the Earl de la Warr objected – leaving the Ramblers to present the case for the route's recognition.

The inquiry took place in Withyham village hall in January 2010, before Inspector Peter Millman. Snow prevented some witnesses from attending, but nonetheless several long-standing Withyham residents testified. So did Ben Perkins, of the Society of Sussex Wealdsmen, who had considered the route public enough to include it in a walks-guide, *Village Walks in East Sussex* (1998, Countryside Books); and another 20 or so people wrote in, one from Canada, stating their use over many years.

On 3 February 2010, the Inspector announced his decision to confirm the order. He found not only that the public had walked the path for the statutory 20-year period prior to its obstruction, but also that there was demonstrable historical uninterrupted use by the public since at least 1935.

The path is a real gem. Its confirmed existence continues to provide villagers with a short circular walk, so that they can approach the church via its main entrance and return by the path, which has spectacular views over the village and to distant hills. It is to be hoped that East Sussex County Council will take no time in signposting the path and in ensuring that any obstruction is removed.

Lockwood bridleway on the map

Ramblers in North Yorks and South Durham Area get a bridleway added to the map after 15 years of campaigning. (News - posted 9 February 2010)

Local Ramblers, working in partnership with Guisborough Bridleways Group, and with technical support from central office staff, have succeeded in establishing public status for a bridleway at Lockwood, near Guisborough, Redcar and Cleveland, at the northern end of the North York Moors. It's a mile and a half (2.1km) long, along a disused railway line. It directly links Boosbeck with Slapewath, providing a significant addition to the bridleway network; and for walkers it opens up a superb additional circular walk for all.

It was as a result of evidence supplied by the Guisborough Bridleways Group and by John Birrell of the Ramblers that the order was made. The evidence was of upwards of 20 years use by the public on foot and on horseback.

But, this is a longer story than is usual. There was a public inquiry because the landowner objected, having during the 20-year period lodged certain documents with the council to demonstrate that he had no intention to dedicate. He did that in 1995.

Normally the 20 years is counted backwards from the deposit of those documents. But the council somehow lost the documents, and, since they could not therefore have come to the attention of the public, the Inspector acting for the Secretary of State decided that the public's right to use the path was not challenged until the landowner erected a "No Horses" sign in 2001. So that made 20 years' use, said the Inspector, from 1981 to 2001 -- scuppered by the documents of 1995, even though the council could not find them. So, he did not confirm the order as 20 years' use could not be shown. This bemused the applicants, who were sure that it was not the intention of Parliament that the legislation was meant to allow claims to be defeated by evidence they knew nothing about.

They referred the matter to central office, where staff saw at once that the Inspector had misapplied the law as laid down by the law lords in our Godmanchester case. If the lost documents could not count as questioning the public's right to use the path for the purpose of setting the 20-year period, then so neither could they count as evidence scuppering the claim by showing the absence of an intention to dedicate. There is meant to be symmetry between the two concepts.

The matter was referred to Ramblers lawyers; who took Counsel's Opinion; Counsel agreed with the Ramblers -- we then brought an action for judicial review in the High Court to have the Secretary of State's decision quashed. In the end, DEFRA lawyers saw that we were right, and caved in, i.e. "submitted to judgment", agreeing that the Secretary of State's decision should be quashed by the High Court without them contesting it at a hearing.

Campaigns

Walking Environment Update - March 10

News from the Walking Environment Team. (News & action request - posted 3 March 2010)

Coastal Access training and celebration event

Bookings are trickling in for this event, to be held at central office on Tuesday 20 April (2-7pm). This is an opportunity to hear breaking news on the implementation of the English coastal trail, and to find out how the Ramblers intends to engage with the process.

It is a must for those Areas which will be covered in the first phase of roll-out – Dorset (Weymouth), Somerset, Norfolk, Kent, East Riding, Cumbria. If any Ramblers Areas have short stretches of coast, which are covered by a single Group, we would be pleased to take bookings from Group officers. Given the nature of coastal access implementation (a national trail with 'spreading room'), volunteers from both open access and footpath backgrounds will be encouraged to take part.

Bookings can be made by emailing walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk or phoning 020 7339 8584.

Walking Environment priorities

A separate news item on this important consultation can be found at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/we-priorities>. Please let us have your views on the top ten Walking Environment priorities for the Ramblers by Friday 30 April.

'Beeching axe' appeal highlights rationalisation by neglect

Many of you will have received an appeal letter in connection with the campaign we are running nationally on the issue that can be summarised as 'prioritisation + funding cuts = rationalisation by neglect'. The campaigning and media elements of this work continue to gather pace, and our new Campaigns Officer, Rachel Alcock, recently contacted Area Footpath Secretaries

to seek statistics on the latest funding situation in highway authorities. If any other volunteers become aware of information relating to rights of way budgets or staffing issues please let us know – rachel.alcock@ramblers.org.uk or 020 7339 8586.

Now Open

Please keep reporting your path successes, whether seemingly minor or momentarily major, by filling in the online form, emailing the team, or picking up the phone. Sussex Area produces a regular newsletter of path successes, *Now Open*, which is sent to any members who want it. It would be useful to hear how other Areas celebrate success.

To report a path success:

Online form at: www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm

Email: walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk

Phone: 020 7339 8584 (Anastasia)

Yellow roads on OS maps

We have been alerted to an apparent change of approach at Ordnance Survey regarding the criteria used for colouring roads yellow (which shows clearly that they are publicly-maintainable). This is potentially worrying for rights of way users, as the public status of 'white roads' which lead to rights of way can be unclear. A past success for the Ramblers was to secure the mapping of 'other routes with public access' (ORPAs – shown with green dots) over white roads. However, it seems that in some instances the yellow colouring is being removed from a road, without any consultation, and without its replacement with ORPA dots.

We'd like to hear from any volunteers who have encountered this problem on new versions of maps. Please email walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk or write to the Walking Environment team at central office.

Walk Leader 2010 Group Survey

Plans are outlined regarding the possible introduction of co-ordinated training for Walk Leaders. Each Group is invited to take part in a survey to determine the number of people who lead walks. This information will help inform planning. (Action request – posted 3 March 2010)

Your Group is invited to take part in a survey to discover, for the first time, how many people lead Ramblers walks. The results will be used in helping to explore the possibility of introducing a co-ordinated training package for Walk Leaders. The Walk Leader 2010 Group Survey is available at

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=WkYBG24kYs8R1HH99%2bNLpt%2fZ2K0jqbLGAVbEG0afZEw%3d&>. One response only per Group please. The closing date is May 31st 2010.

'Led Walks – The Way Ahead,' found at

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Resources/WalkLeader.htm>, sets out plans that are being considered to introduce training for Walk Leaders. It outlines that there is demand from Groups and volunteers for more training opportunities and provides some context to help explain why Led Walks are a focus of development activity for the Ramblers.

Walking Environment Priorities

Area and Group consultation on Ramblers Walking Environment priorities in the coming years. Closing date: 30 April 2010. (Consultation / Action request - posted 3 March 2010)

Following an open online policy consultation the Ramblers has created 3 lists of possible work areas to help in determining its campaigning priorities for the coming years. Area and Group officers are asked to list their top 10 priorities, across the 3 lists.

The list of work areas can be found at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/we-priorities>.

For example:

Position	Issue
1 (highest priority)	A6
2	C8
3	B4
Etc - up to 10	

This feedback will be used to establish the organisation's top 5 Walking Environment priorities, to be taken forward in its business planning processes.

Process

Top 10s will be accepted from Area and Group Officers as individuals, and also on behalf of the Area or Group (perhaps following a meeting of officers). Please make clear in your submission on whose behalf you are responding.

Top 10s should be submitted by **Friday 30 April 2010** by:

Emailing: walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk

or, if that is not possible, by:

Writing to: Walking Environment Team, Ramblers, 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TW.

If you have any questions please use the email address above, or call Adrian Morris on 020 7339 8524.

National Association of Local Councils: Local Council Awards

NALC Awards 2010 nominations now open (News - posted 1 March 2010)

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has opened nominations for its Annual Council Awards (England and Wales). The Awards give you the opportunity to get a Parish, Community or Town Council, Councillor or Council Officer recognized for the work they have done to make a real difference to the community. For example, if you have worked closely with your Parish, Community or Town Council on achieving a campaign or in the footpath work you have carried out this is the perfect opportunity to formally recognize them for their work and support. The categories for nomination are:

- Council of the Year;
- Clerk of the Year ;
- Councillor of the Year;
- Council Worker of the Year ; and
- Much Improved Council of the Year .

The closing date for nominations is the 31st March 2010 and you can get further details on nominating by going to

http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Latest_News/NALCs_Local_Council_Awards_2010.aspx.

Ordnance Survey free data consultation

The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) is consulting on policy options for geographic information from Ordnance Survey, including government proposals to make maps such as Explorer and Street View free for use and re-use. Comments are invited on our draft response to this consultation by 8 March 2010 (Consultation / action request - posted 16 February 2010).

The government has proposed to make certain Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping data sets available for free and without restriction on re-use in the context of the broad long-term strategic options for Ordnance Survey and as part of its Making Public Data Public initiative. OS's parent department, Communities and Local Government (CLG), is currently consulting on vari-

ous options for taking this forward, with options that include continuing the status quo, a major release of licensing constraints on large-scale data, and the compromise option of a "staged transition".

Both the options for change involve the release of a selection of products that include Explorer, Landranger and Street View mapping and various other data sets such as gazetteers and local government boundary information. These datasets would be available to view, download or via an API (Application Programming Interface) system enabling web applications and "mash-ups" to be built on top of the existing base maps.

These developments could be extremely beneficial to the Ramblers, removing the need to pay for licenses when we use OS maps in print and online, resolving some of the issues around intellectual property for planned web-based collaborative projects and hopefully addressing the ongoing problem of local authorities using copyright to restrict access to official mapping such as definitive maps.

The changes will however also have implications for the future structure of OS, and there are potential worries about the sustainability of the income stream for ensuring the base mapping remains of the highest quality and the possibility that the continued availability of paper maps will be endangered.

The CLG consultation document can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/ordnancesurveyconsultation>

Ramblers staff have drafted a response that can be downloaded at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/os-free-data-consultation>.

Comments from volunteers are invited on our response by close of business on Monday 8 March 2010.

Please let us know if you are responding on behalf of an Area or Group or as an individual volunteer, and let us know your Area and Group and your position or volunteer role.

Responses should be sent to Des de Moor, Senior Everyday Walking Officer, des.demoor@ramblers.org.uk.