

Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up 14th January 2011 to 10th February 2011



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Website Volunteer Section since 14 January. 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.

General – 1, Walking Programmes – 4, Walking Environment – 7

General

Tom's Blog - Cumbria: think again on footpath cuts (8/2/11)

I've been in Cumbria today to join local Ramblers groups to protest against county council proposals to cut the rights of way budget by one third.

Members from Penrith, Carlisle, and Kendal joined the walk from Orton - along with press and radio. We were also joined by two representatives of the Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management (IPROW). The original proposal was to cut the rights of way budget by 2/3rds.

Thanks to public pressure, this has been scaled back to 1/3rd, which is a step in the right direction. But we want the council to be under no illusions about the effect of lopping off hundreds of thousands of pounds, as still proposed.

Walk leader, Alan Duval, told me that 25 years ago, rights of way in Cumbria were in pretty bad shape. Thanks to the foresightedness of the council and its years of investment, they gradually improved to today's good state. But with such large cuts in the offing, much of this work could be undone.

Walking tourism is so important to Cumbria. Yes, the local council is in a difficult situation. But cuts of this scale will be a false economy. The council meets next week to decide.

To view the photos from the event, visit our Flickr site from this link:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/46775550@N03/sets/72157626009840416/>

Please use the following link to view previous entries on Tom's blog:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Toms+Blog+February+2011>

General Council 2011

Especially relevant to: General Council delegates, Area Secretaries Posted: 27th January 2011 For Information and Action. Provides details of deadlines in the run-up to General Council, Keble College, 16-17 April; and electronic forms.

Latest news about General Council 2011 can be found at:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/General+Council+2011.htm>

This link includes all the information you need to know about General Council 2011 including nomination forms for Board of Trustees and Agenda Committee, booking forms, special requirements forms and full travel information.

March 2011 membership recruitment initiative - reminder

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Secretaries, Area/Group Membership Secretaries, Chairs, Area Treasurers and Publicity Officers. Posted: 17 January 2011. For information and action: Reminder about the new recruitment initiative for Areas and Groups

We would like to remind Groups and Areas about a major new recruitment initiative. Throughout March 2011 for every brand new direct debit member recruited by Groups in March 2011, through specially marked recruitment forms, we're passing on the entire first year's membership fee back to the Group. All you have to do is add the code R11G3P on the bottom right of the recruitment forms and the funds will be allocated to your Group.

We will accept completed joining forms that arrive to central office by 4th April

2011 and make payments to Areas during April / early May. Areas will then forward the relevant sum onto each Group.

We aim to end the year with more members than we started. To succeed, we need to encourage as many Groups as possible to get the message out there promoting Ramblers membership, our huge variety of 28,000 led walks each year, fantastic member benefits, discretionary member discounts and our vital work protecting footpaths for everyone who walks. The financial reward we are offering in March can be used by Groups to achieve further growth or help achieve our charitable objectives.

For ideas on how to attract new members and increase membership please visit:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/VolunteerFeatures/Volunteers+Top+Tips+How+to+increase+Group+membership.htm>

To order recruitment leaflets, display posters and poster blanks, contact publicity@ramblers.org.uk

This is a new initiative for the Ramblers and one from which there'll be lots of learning. But it's really important that we continue to try new ideas like this and we appreciate your ongoing support in helping to make that happen.

On-line Area membership to be piloted

Especially relevant to: Membership Secretaries. Posted: 18 January 2011. For information: The option of joining an Area without joining a Group will be made clearer to new online joiners as part of a two month experiment to achieve a better understanding of what members want and to increase efficiency and effectiveness

For two months from 1 February 2011, new Ramblers members joining online via the main website will be given a clearer option of choosing to be members only of their local Area rather than a Group. This will be in addition to the existing options of asking to be allocated to a Geographical Group automatically by postcode, or choosing a Group from the dropdown list. The default will remain as automatic allocation to a Geographical Group by postcode.

This is one of a series of pilot schemes aimed at achieving a better understanding of what members want, contributing to our priorities to increase membership after several years of decline and to increase our efficiency and effectiveness.

The option of not joining a Group already exists but to date has not been widely publicised. This pilot comes in response to feedback from Groups that some new members are allocated to them when they don't want to be. A substantial number of members join to show their support for the Ramblers principles and campaigning work and/or for other membership benefits, but for various reasons choose not to take part in Group activities.

This pilot will help us better to understand the level of demand for the option of not joining a Group. It has the potential to save significant sums of money that are currently spent on sending out Group information by post to members who are not interested in receiving it.

In the pilot, we will be looking at:

- the proportion of new online joiners selecting this option;
- responses from Areas and Groups;
- and in the longer term, any differences in renewal rates between those who join a Group and those who don't.

Area membership reports will start to include a new category (displayed as Group 96). They will be reported on the Monthly Membership Update and will be included in Area Mailing lists. We suggest Areas communicate with these members in their normal way. All other mailings will be distributed as per any other membership type.

Dependent on the outcomes of the pilot participants will either:

- remain as Area members
- migrate to Group 97 for allocation by postcode/most appropriate group of choice (as per current processes)
- be contacted directly for allocation to a Group of their choice

Please note that this pilot will only affect those joining through the Ramblers website, not via printed application forms. Over a two month period, the numbers involved for any given Group are likely to be relatively small. As always, any member, at any time, may change their Group allocation by contacting the Membership Services Team at central office.

For further information please contact Gemma Petty, our Group Walks Development Officer:
gemma.petty@ramblers.org.uk

Walking Programmes

Bringing Ramblers Groups and funded projects together: Manchester and Salford Ramblers

Especially relevant to: All volunteer roles. Posted: 19 January 2011. For information: A new Volunteer Feature looks at how the Ramblers externally funded project Get Walking Keep Walking has worked together with local volunteers in Manchester to help set up a brand new Ramblers Group.

A new Volunteer Feature looks at how the Ramblers externally funded project Get Walking Keep Walking has worked together with local volunteers in Manchester to help set up a brand new Ramblers Group as part of the established Area and Group structure. It is based on an interview with Salle Dare, one of the key volunteers in setting up and managing the new Group.

It focuses on one outcome of the project that was not an original target, but that helped to demonstrate the way funded projects like Get Walking and the more traditional activities of Ramblers Areas and Groups can complement each other.

To view the feature please visit:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/VolunteerFeatures/Bringing-Ramblers-Groups-and-funded-projects-together-Manchester-and-Salford-Ramblers.htm>

Getting People Walking volunteer events May 2011

**Especially relevant to all volunteers interested in led walks and promoting walking work
Posted: 25 January 2011 For information and action: An invitation to join us in a new**

series of events aimed at helping you run successful led walks, reach new audiences and build Ramblers' membership

All Ramblers members are welcome to join us for two brand new volunteer workshop events taking place this May aimed at helping you get more people walking more effectively -- and attract more members to the Ramblers -- through led walks and other local initiatives.

Sessions will cover:

- Walk leading skills
- Devising shorter and more accessible walks
- Making links with other local walking initiatives
- Promoting your activities more effectively
- The new Ramblers route development system

The events are planned to be good fun and will also be a great opportunity to meet and talk with people from different Areas and Groups and from other projects across the Ramblers.

While the events should be of particular interest to existing walk leaders, programme coordinators and publicity and membership officers, other Area and Group volunteers interested in developing our walking promotion work locally are very welcome, as are members who are not yet volunteering but are keen to get involved.

The first two events will take place in:

Newcastle

Saturday 7 May. 10am – 4pm

Literary and Philosophical Society, 23 Westgate Road NE1 1SE

Map - http://www.litandphil.org.uk/html_pages/LP_visit.html

London

Sunday 8 May. 10am – 4pm.

Better Bankside, Bankside Community Space, 18 Great Guildford Street (junction with Zoar Street) SE1 0FD

Tel: 020 7928 3998

Map: <http://www.betterbankside.co.uk/map/?x=532115&y=180274&bizid=400&showbiz=1>

Reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with our volunteer policy -- please keep your receipts and tickets. Lunch will not be provided so please bring a packed lunch.

Places are limited so book now -- using the online form located at:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/getwalkingevents.htm>

Similar events are planned in other locations later in the year.

The Leader Column launches for walk leaders

Especially relevant to all volunteers involved in organising led walks. Posted 26 January 2011. For information: A new e-newsletter, The Leader Column, has just been launched for Ramblers walk leaders.

A new e-newsletter for Ramblers walk leaders, The Leader Column, has just been launched. The newsletter is being sent to all the walk leaders that registered their email addresses on the Walk Leader volunteer page.

For over seven decades Ramblers walk leaders have worked hard to offer a huge variety of walking opportunities to a broad range of walkers. Over 28,000 led walks a year are an invaluable contribution to our charitable work, helping make walking accessible and providing the main reason why many people join the Ramblers. Walk leaders do a fantastic job in sharing their knowledge of and enthusiasm for Britain's wonderful outdoors in a safe and welcoming way.

We're committed to improving our support for walk leaders and led walks, helping existing leaders improve their skills and making it easier for new leaders to come forward. We want to improve communications with and between leaders across the Ramblers so we can share ideas and best practice, celebrate success and easily update volunteers on new initiatives and events, and essentials like health and safety and insurance.

Leading walks can be strangely solitary – you meet plenty of walkers but rarely get the chance to discuss ideas and experiences with your fellow leaders and other volunteers. This newsletter, published three times a year, together with a number of other planned initiatives, will help to pull our thousands-strong community of leaders closer together.

If you would like to subscribe to the newsletter, the best way is to register as a walk leader on the Walk Leader pages:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Led+Walks/WalkLeader.htm>

The first issue can be viewed online at:

<http://mailing.ramblers.org.uk/rp/143/process.cisp?EmailId=87102&Token=229DAD4EC025F22BAF104E7F16194357>

Walking Environment

Walking Environment Update - February 2011

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Footpath Secretaries, Access Officers, Countryside Secretaries, and others working on Walking Environment issues. Posted: 9 February 2011. News and action request: Update from the Walking Environment team

Forestry latest

As public (and media) interest in the proposals to sell and lease the English Forestry Commission Estate grows, the Ramblers has been active in restating its position from November, that access is the key issue. As the current levels of public access, and the quality of its management, are not guaranteed in the Government's consultation we have come out firmly against the sale of any Commission-owned land.

Contrary to reports in the media, the Ramblers has been playing an active part in the debate so far and has campaigned hard to get its voice heard. Details of our campaign activity can be found on the Ramblers website, at the following addresses:

- Forestry Commission Campaign Page:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/forestry.htm>
- No Access No Sale, your questions answered:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/forestfaqs>
- Ramblers Five Key Tests for any Sales: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/forestrysales>
- Lobby a Peer (Public Bodies Bill):
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/contact-peer>
- Lobby your MP:
<http://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.client.id=117&ea.campaign.id=9333>

We have recently emailed all Area Footpath, Access, and Countryside volunteers, to gather local information for our campaign. A number of campaigning initiatives are planned, including a postcard in Walk magazine and a day of action.

We will be sending our draft response to the consultation to Area Footpath Secretaries and Access Officers towards the end of next week, for comment. If you have any other thoughts or ideas on the Ramblers campaigning on the proposed Forestry Commission sell off, please let Anastasia know: anastasia.french@ramblers.org.uk 020 7339 8584.

Local authority cuts

The Dead End? campaign is progressing extremely well. We have now sent out 8000 postcards to Areas and Groups across England, which walkers can fill out and return to us, stating where they have walked and why they enjoyed it. Already we have had hundreds of cards returned which we are sending on to councillors at the relevant highway authorities to demonstrate how

much people value walking. If you haven't already, please complete the online version here: <http://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.client.id=117&ea.campaign.id=8352>.

Tom Franklin has attended several campaigns walks in the past couple of weeks, which have generated lots of local media coverage highlighting cuts. Below is a photo from the most recent walk in Cumbria. Also if you live, work, study (or even walk!) in Warwickshire, please make sure you have signed our petition calling for the Council to re-consider their proposed drastic cuts: <http://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.client.id=117&ea.campaign.id=9220>.

However, we are still receiving extremely worrying reports from councils across England with regards to proposed cuts to rights of way budgets. Please do not wait until the cuts are announced before telling councils that you don't agree. We need to ensure that walking is considered at all budget consultation stages. We have produced a webpage of advice on things you can do now to ensure that the cuts to rights of way budgets are not disproportionate to others cuts being made: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/deadend+extra+action>. If you would like any further advice or support please contact Rachel Alcock, Campaigns Officer at rachel.alcock@ramblers.org.uk.

Training days

The Walking Environment Team are currently offering a number of training days aimed at volunteers with all levels of experience. The Volunteer Induction Days are taking place all over England and Wales with the next three taking place in Swindon on the 1 March, Rhayader, Powys on 17 March and then in Leeds on the 9 April. As well as these two days we are running two advanced courses. The first is taking place in Manchester in May and will focus on Public Inquiry training and then in September we are running a day for those who already run training or are interested in running training. If you would like to attend one of these days or would like to discuss how we can support you in delivering training for volunteers please get in touch with Ed Wilson - ed.wilson@ramblers.org.uk.

NATROW (National Rights of Way Casework Team)

Following the decision by the Government to abolish all of the regional Government Offices, Defra has decided that the rights of way casework currently carried out by the National Rights of Way Casework Team in the Government Office North East will transfer to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol.

As from 1 February 2011 any new appeals under Schedule 14, or new requests for directions under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 should be referred to the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate will be fully operational in respect of this additional work as from 4 April 2011, but please note that until that time it will only receive and acknowledge new appeals/directions. Any existing casework currently with Government Office North East still outstanding on 1 February will transfer from them to the Planning Inspectorate and all interested parties will be notified of the transfer.

On Schedule 14 appeal cases, Inspectors will now be issuing decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State rather than a separate decision and report being issued, as previously. All existing cases currently awaiting an Inspector's report will now have an Inspector's decision, which will be issued if complete before 4 April.

Any queries between 1st February and 4 April should be directed to Yvonne Oddy (0117 372 8064) or Tracey Clarke (0117 372 8021) at the Planning Inspectorate (Rights of Way Section), Zone 4/05 Kite Wing, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6PN.

Path success in Kent

Concluding a story which made the national press in the summer of last year (“Get off my land! Queen's banker in battle to close Chaucer's footpath to Canterbury”, etc), on 7 January 2011 the Secretary of State confirmed a definitive map modification order to add approx 1190 metres of public bridleway and 1480 metres of public footpath in woodland at Adisham, Kent. Villagers led by local resident David Leidig, who was assisted throughout by advice from central office [and from the Law Clinic at Canterbury University] testified in the autumn at a public inquiry lasting several days to their use of these tracks, some of which are reputed to have been those used by Canterbury pilgrims in mediaeval times. At a celebratory party on 5 February in the village hall, David Leidig referred to the great help he had received from the Ramblers without which, he said, they would not have succeeded.

Keep reporting path successes

Please let us know of any paths opened, saved, or recorded as a result of the Ramblers work in your Group or Area. This can be done online at:

http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes, by email to walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk, or by letter to the central office address.

Tell walkers about your practical path work

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Footpath Secretaries, Countryside Secretaries, Area/Group Secretaries, Area/Group Access Officers and Publicity Officers. Posted: 19 January 2011. For information: New plaques promoting Ramblers practical work

Ramblers volunteers undertake countless hours of practical improvement work along the path network – from cutting back overgrown vegetation to installing new footbridges and stiles. This work benefits all walkers, but has often gone unnoticed by the public... until now!

We have produced small way mark-sized plaques that can be fixed to fence posts or gates at points where Ramblers volunteers have improved our public footpaths. Sticker versions are available for use on metal.

Plaques and stickers will be provided with copies of the practical pathwork guidance manual (these are available on request from walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk). Additional plaques can be requested via publicity@ramblers.org.uk.

Plaques will be sent out for free, though bulk orders (over 25) may be charged at cost price. If you order plaques, we'd love to see some photos of them in place at sites that you have worked on!

Please order in time for your next practical pathwork project so that walkers can see how they benefit from the work of Ramblers volunteers. (Please remember that the necessary permission, for example from the highway authority, should be obtained before the plaques or stickers are used).

Ramblers update on forestry consultation

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Footpath Secretaries, Countryside Secretaries, Area/Group Secretaries, Area/Group Access Officers and Area/Group Publicity Officers. Posted: 9 February 2011. For information: Re-cap of Ramblers response to forestry commission consultation

Public and media interest in the proposals to sell and/or lease the English Forestry Commission Estate has grown rapidly in recent weeks. The Ramblers has been committed in restating its position from November - that access remains the central issue. As the current levels of public access, and the quality of its management, are not guaranteed in the Government's consultation we have come out firmly against the sale of any Commission owned land.

Contrary to reports in the media, the Ramblers has been playing an active part in the debate so far and has campaigned hard to get its voice heard. From direct lobbying of MPs and Lords, to our public call for the government to fulfill five key tests for public access, as well as expressing our concern over the Public Bodies Bill, the Ramblers has been playing an active part in the debate so far and has campaigned hard to get its voice heard. Further information on our campaign and what you can do can be found on the campaigns section of the website: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/forestry.htm>

Going forward, further action is planned to highlight the recreational benefits of woodland and continue to lead with the message that access must be guaranteed in any proposed sales. Current plans include:

- A day of woodland access, which may involve led walks through woodland that is at risk
- A postcard that will be included with Walk magazine that will be sent to the Secretary of State as part of our consultation response
- Continued lobbying of MPs and Lords in response to the Public Bodies Bill.
- Joint recreational benefit media / campaigning via specific woodland examples in partnership with organisations such as the British Horse Society and the British Mountaineering Council.

We are currently consulting with Area Footpath Secretaries and Access Officers on the next steps to take.

If you have any questions then please contact Anastasia French, Campaigns Officer:
anastasia.french@ramblers.org.uk

New resource available for practical path workers

Especially relevant to: Area/Group Footpath Secretaries and others carrying out practical path work. Posted: 10 February 2011. For information: new footpath handbook available for volunteers

The Ramblers are providing local groups with new resources to better support those volunteers undertaking footpath maintenance for the benefit of the walking public. The need for this type of material was highlighted at the 'Dead End?' road shows last autumn.

Copies of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers publication 'Footpaths: a practical handbook' are now available for those carrying out practical path work. This excellent resource provides guidance on path clearance, repair and management, as well as helpful tips on equipment use and safe working practices.

If you would like to request a copy or have any queries about this area of work please do not hesitate to contact Ed Wilson, Volunteer Support and Development Officer:
ed.wilson@ramblers.org.uk