

Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up

3rd September - 8th October 2010



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Web site Volunteer Section since the 3rd September. 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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In September the Number of Footpath Successes went up to 571 you can let us know about your successes by filling in the Path Form at www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm.

Updates

Tom's Blog October 2010

News and views from the Chief Executive (news - posted 24th September 2010)

Dear volunteer,

I've often mentioned how inspirational I find Sheffield Ramblers. Well, they've done it again! I took part in Walk Sheffield 2010, a week-long festival of walks put on by the Ramblers and other organisations, with the help of the city council. The week began with a walk organised by the Ramblers, led by Terry Howard. Terry is Chair of Sheffield Ramblers, somebody with decades of involvement and, more recently, a volunteer for the Ramblers Get Walking, Keep Walking project in the city (aimed at bringing new people into walking). He led a 'heritage trail' walk from Manor Lodge to the Town Hall, telling us about Sheffield history as we went. What I love about Sheffield Ramblers is that they are passionate about protecting public paths and access (Sheffield is one of the 'birthplaces' of the Ramblers), and equally passionate about making the Ramblers welcome for everyone. Hear Terry speak on the video above, alongside the Sheffield 'walking champion' councillor, and a volunteer who talks about the mental health problems he has had, how the Ramblers has helped him, and how he now volunteers himself.

Learning from the Scouts

For about 15 years, the Scouts were in decline. Each year, the decline was steeper. Then about five years ago, as a result of changes they made to become more relevant to more people, the Scouts began to grow again. At first it was slow – just a fraction of a percent increase. But each year, the growth sped up. In the past year, the Scouts have grown by about 4% - I understand this is one of their fastest increases in their 100-year history. They've made themselves relevant to more and more people. They are now flourishing.

As we begin our new 'financial year' with a target in our business plan of ending the year with more members than we started (which would be the first time since about 2004), I think we can learn from the Scouts. We, too, can grow again. And by growing, we will have a louder voice for walking and footpaths, more potential volunteers, and more resources available.

It is going to need a massive effort, though. It will need everyone to take part. If you haven't done so already, have a chat in your Area and Group about what you can do to have a membership drive. More ideas are available at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/VolunteerFeatures/Andover+Ramblers+Feature.htm>. Let me know how it goes.

Award winning

I'm delighted that the Ramblers has won an award for 'brand development' at the Third Sector Excellence Awards. The re-branding we did last year was a huge effort by both volunteers and staff – it has gone very well, with it being introduced in almost all Areas and Groups without hitches. It's all about projecting a more modern image, and attracting people to the Ramblers. This award is for everyone involved. Brilliant!

Keep the pressure up

We need to keep the noise up to protect the coastal route, and to defend the rights of way network, while ministers and local authorities debate what public services to cut. In terms of return on investment, the Coastal Path costs relatively little and yet its benefits to both the British economy and the British public are vast. Walkers in the English countryside spend around £6.14billion a year, generating income in excess of £2billion and supporting up to 245,000 full time jobs. The South West Coast path, which is the best current example of an (almost) complete coastal path, generates £307million per year for the regional economy – that's a benefit of over £390,000 per mile of coastline.

The Coastal Path will also be a source of attraction and enjoyment to tourists both from home and abroad. We are seeing more and more people ditch their holiday to Spain in favour of a trip to the British seaside and a complete coastal path will continue to be a magnet for holiday makers during the recession and beyond. It is imperative that the government continues to promote the path and its part in the quintessential British seaside holiday, for the sake of our economy, our jobs and our enjoyment.

If you're not already involved in our campaigning, we need your help go to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/nocoastalcuts.htm>.

That's it for this month. Nominations for the special 75th anniversary volunteer awards are just closing, and I'm looking forward to being on the judging panel and reading about the fantastic work which volunteers are doing.

All the best

Walking Environment Update – October 2010

News from the Walking Environment team. (News & action request - posted 6 October 2010)

Dead End Campaign Roadshow events

Local authorities face the toughest financial challenges in a generation – and the Ramblers

must act to protect rights of way and access services. These events will be held in four locations across England, and are open to all volunteers in England and Wales. Book now to secure your place: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/dead-end-roadshow>

Information and advice on campaigning against cuts is already available online at: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/deadend> If you would like any help please contact Rachel Alcock, Campaigns Officer – rachel.alcock@ramblers.org.uk 020 7339 8586.

Natural Environment White Paper

Individuals' views are sought on this discussion document, issued by Defra – to which the Ramblers will be responding centrally. Comments are particularly welcome on ways in which access and recreation could be better integrated with the other themes of the paper, and highlighted in their own right as important priorities for government. Please let Adrian Morris have any views by Friday 22 October – adrian.morris@ramblers.org.uk 020 7339 8524

The document is here: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/documents/newp-discussion-260710.pdf>

You can also respond directly to Defra here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nature-of-england> It would be very helpful if you could stress the value of access to the natural environment (rights of way, access land, etc), and of recreation, in your comments.

Preparing for inquiries

Staff at central office are preparing for public inquiries into the proposed addition of rights of way to the definitive map at Vixen Tor, Dartmoor, and on land at the former Bayham Abbey Estate, Tunbridge Wells. The outcome of these cases will be reported online and in walk magazine.

Draft response to the Law Commission on level crossings

The Ramblers draft response to the Law Commission's consultation paper on the reform of level crossings legislation will be available shortly on the volunteer section of the website at: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/consultation>

The response needs to be looked at alongside the consultation paper which can be viewed at www.lawcom.gov.uk/level_crossings_consultation.htm The main document is 210 pages long but there is also a summary paper which can be accessed from the same page and which is easier to digest.

We have not sought to answer all of the questions posed by the Law Commission as much of it is outside our remit but if anyone with experience or knowledge of the rail industry feels that there are other aspects of the paper on which we should have commented then please do let us know. We have yet to decide whether to amalgamate this response with that being prepared by colleagues in Ramblers Scotland on the Scottish aspects of the paper.

Comments on the Ramblers draft should be sent to Janet Davis – janet.davis@ramblers.org.uk – by Monday 15 November, and thanks are due to all those volunteers who have already sent Janet information about level crossings and the problems being experienced with rights of way over them.

Putting London on the Map campaign

We are lobbying inner London Borough councils to create definitive maps showing all rights of way in their authority. These councils are the only ones excluded from current legislation which requires paths to be mapped in this way. You can watch videos of the launch event, where the need for definitive maps was clearly shown, here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=72yvUY0RQzU. You can also get updates on the progress of the campaign by joining our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=149441145066347. You can read more about the cam-

paign, and discover the importance of definitive maps for footpath protection, here: www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/maplondon+FAQs.

Updated policy information

In the first stage of making our policy positions more accessible we have put together a web-page featuring Ramblers rights of way policy. You can search for information on the use of vehicles in the countryside, the building of wind turbines or alley-gating for example, all in one place. The link is: www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns+Policy/Rights+of+Way+Policies.

500 path successes

Many thanks to everyone who responded to our appeal for details of path successes in the last financial year. This information is already proving very useful in demonstrating the impact the Ramblers makes on the ground – to the benefit of all walkers. As well as campaigners, staff in the marketing and media teams are able to use this data in their work.

Please keep reporting path successes online at:
http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes

Membership figures for September 2010

Overall and Country/Area membership figures published, as we prepare for a focus on driving up membership - starting in October (News - 16 September 2010)

The Ramblers membership numbers for the beginning of September have been published, in the run-up to the start of a concerted effort to increase our membership. They show overall active (i.e. currently 'paid-up') membership at just over 121,000*.

Membership has been gradually declining over the past decade, and a priority for the whole charity is to finish the next financial year (which starts next month, and ends in September 2011) with more members than we started. More members will mean a louder campaigning voice, more potential volunteers, greater resources, and a securer future for the charity. More details are in our business plan. Areas and Groups are being encouraged to draw up their own plans to grow their membership, and to spread examples of successful recruitment and retention. Volunteers' top tips are available here.

This data will be published on a monthly basis. The next set of data - at the beginning of October - will be the 'baseline' data that we will use to monitor our progress each month.

You can see a membership breakdown by country and area at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Membership+Figures+for+September+2010>.

* Please note: this data is a snapshot - it shows membership on a particular date (in this case, 2nd September) and time. Membership numbers will change continually, when people are added or removed from the membership list.

General Council 2010 - Action taken on resolutions, and decisions taken on remitted motions

Governance - find out about the action being taken on resolutions passed at General Council earlier this year, as well as decisions on those motions which were remitted to the Board of Trustees (News - posted 27th September)

Eight resolutions were passed by General Council, and a further eight motions were remitted to the Board of Trustees for it to consider.

The document below sets out the Board's decisions on whether to act on the motions that were remitted. It also explains the action that is being taken on those resolutions passed.

Another update will be provided in March next year, shortly before General Council 2011.

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/General+Council+2010+-+Action+taken+on+resolutions+and+decisions+taken+on+remitted+motions>

Summary of the Board of Trustees meeting 19th September 2010

Read a summary of the decisions taken at the Board of Trustees meeting in September (News - posted 29th September 2010)

The Board of Trustees met over the weekend of 17th-19th September, at Hafan Y Coed, Abercrave, Swansea. We spent much time considering the question, *'How do we increase the membership of the Ramblers?'.* The weekend also gave the Board and Senior Management Team time to get a better understanding of Welsh history, geography and political issues, devolution, as well as many of the projects which Ramblers Cymru are running (most of which are funded from external funding sources, such as the Wales Assembly Government, or charitable trusts). We took a walk through the nearby 'Celtic Rainforest' on the Saturday afternoon, led by a ranger from the Brecon Beacons National Park. Our thanks to Ramblers Cymru President, Richard Lloyd Jones; Ramblers Cymru Chair, Helen Lloyd Jones; members of the Welsh Council Executive Committee; and Wales staff.

There will be a further informal meeting of the trustees and senior managers on 30th October, to discuss how to unite the organisation around the need for membership growth.

Announcements

The Board noted with sadness the death of Trevor Antill, who was the Worcestershire Area President and prior to that, Area Footpath Secretary for more than 10 years. The Board noted the formal resignation of Helen Johns from the Board because of work pressures. The Board was pleased to hear that the campaign to make the South Downs a national park had won a Sussex Eco Award.

Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported that with the Business Plan for the coming year now in place, he wanted the focus of activities to be our four priorities: more members, more charitable income, protecting and improving the path network, and greater efficiency/effectiveness. We have some very ambitious targets in the Business Plan, particularly around membership, and it will need all parts of the charity – volunteers, staff, trustees, Areas, Groups, countries – to focus on these. Other issues may need to be delayed.

The Chief Executive gave an update on the campaigning around the coastal route/ protection of footpaths, in the face of severe public spending cuts. He explained that the focus of the former was national, and the latter – local. Model press releases had been sent to Areas, as well as requests to lobby MPs and local councillors. This campaigning would be a major focus for the next few months, and would also be used in our fundraising/membership drives. He reminded the Board that the proposed spending cuts posed the biggest threat to the walking environment in decades.

Finances

The Board received the latest forecast to the end of the financial year (end of September) as well as the latest monthly accounts (to the end of August). They show a forecast surplus to the end of the year of c£560k. This is partly due to one-off items (for example additional legacy income and more efficient Gift Aid collection), and partly due to better than budgeted membership income.

Key Performance Indicators

The Board reviewed the latest monthly Key Performance Indicators. 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 are on track with 15. The only one of concern is progress on implementing coastal access – due to uncertainty over government funding.

Appointment of Auditors

After many years with our current auditors, Sayer Vincent, the Board agreed to appoint Horwath Clark Whitehill as our new auditors, following a tendering process.

Area and Group Budget Allocations

The Board noted that the submissions from Areas for budgets this year was only slightly above that budgeted (£406k, against a budget of £400k), and agreed to fund these in their entirety. It also agreed that a sympathetic review will take place to look at the cost of Area activities and offer guidance/advice on best practice on how to allocate funds more effectively. This is important due to priority 4 in this year's Business Plan (to become more efficient and effective). The review would be undertaken in consultation with the Area Treasurers' Sounding Board.

Business Plan Scotland

The Board received for information a draft Business Plan for the coming year, for Ramblers Scotland. The Board also agreed to fund for one year an additional staff post in Scotland for promoting walking, linked to opportunities around the Commonwealth Games, to be funded out

of reserves. The Board hoped that this investment would generate external funding in Scotland to continue with the work after this year-long investment had ended.

Devolution Working Party

The Board received an oral report on the progress of the devolution working party. It noted that while Wales is seeking greater autonomy within the current organisation (as there is too great a financial burden to separate completely), Scotland is pursuing an option of becoming independent. The Scottish representatives on the working party are looking at the financial details of how such a separation would be funded and viable.

General Council Motions remitted to the Board

The Board considered eight motions which were not discussed at General Council and thus had been remitted to the Board. The Board also considered actions being taken on those motions passed at General Council. Both of these matters are detailed in a [separate report](#).

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults – policy and guidance

Following consultation with volunteers on a draft re-write of this policy and guidance, a further re-drafting had taken place, to simplify the information as much as possible. The guidance had been divided into six sections – each for a different audience (for example, walk leaders who don't lead walks for children or vulnerable adults). Volunteers would only need to read the section relevant to them (in the case of the above example, at little over half a page). The Board agreed the policy and new guidance, which will be circulated via the website shortly. The Board received a reference from East Yorkshire and Derwent Area on this matter, and agreed a response.

Guidance

Business Plan 2010-11 now available

The Ramblers Business Plan for 2010-11 (beginning on 1st October) has just been published. It sets out the priorities for the coming year. (News and action - 14th September 2010)

It contains the four priorities that we'll be working on over the coming year:

- 1. To end the year with more members than we started**
- 2. More charitable income**
- 3. Protecting and improving the path network**
- 4. More efficiency and effectiveness**

The business plan contains many ideas in the plan for how Areas and Groups can get involved in these priorities - for example:

- A new Area and Group Membership Beacon scheme, so that Groups can share membership recruitment successes
- Membership recruitment plans for Areas, with guidance and training
- Contacting lapsed and resigned members to see if they will rejoin
- Training for volunteers campaigning to stop rights of way spending cuts
- Practical path work teams, to help keep paths open for walkers

Tom Franklin, Chief Executive, said:

"The Business Plan sets out the focus for the coming year. Our four priorities are for the whole charity - Areas and Groups, volunteers and staff. The targets we're setting ourselves are tough, but they will help to protect the places where we love to walk (especially during the current public spending cuts), as well as secure the Ramblers future by making us stronger. We can achieve them if we all work together.

"In particular, we've set ourselves a goal of ending the year with more members than we started - after many years in which membership has gradually declined. I hope everyone gets on board with this, and we go all-out to increase membership. Are there things that your Area or Group could do to support this and the other goals?"

"No plan goes entirely as predicted, and I'm sure this one won't either. But it does mean we have a clear framework for the coming year. We'll be reporting progress during the year."

Click on the links below to download either the full web edition or the executive summary at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Business+Plan+201011+now+available>.

Protecting members personal information

Guidance on protecting members contact details after companies have been requesting this information in exchange for group discounts. (News - posted 24 September 2010)

Protecting our members' personal information

At the Ramblers, we take our members' data protection very seriously.

It has come to our attention that some companies are bypassing Central Office and approaching groups and areas directly to offer discounts and special offers in return for which groups are asked to supply the personal details of members.

Please note that **under no circumstances** should members' personal information – including email addresses – be traded for access to discounts or special offers.

Recently, a number of groups have contacted us to report that Nick Day from Blacks has sent such an email, which offers groups a "Specialist Group Discount Card" worth 15% off in return for supplying members' email addresses. Last week, I wrote to Mr Day to inform him that we do not supply members' personal information in this way and that any proposal for marketing to our members should be directed to us here at Central Office.

Please let me know if you have received any emails of this kind, or if you do so in future.

Best wishes,

John Wightman

Head of Marketing

New membership rates

New membership rates and a new Direct Debit incentive for new members (News - posted 1 October 2010)

Our membership subscription fees have gone up from the 1st October and are as follows:

Individual Membership £31

Joint Membership £41

Life Membership £685 (or £340 if aged 60 or over)

Joint Life Membership £815 (or £420 if both members are aged 60 or over)

Individual Concessionary* £19.50

Joint Concessionary* £25.50

Affiliated Club £45

**Concessionary rates are available for full time students, people on means tested benefits or solely reliant on the state pension. These rates do not apply to overseas members.*

We have also introduced a new incentive for new members who join at the full rate by direct debit – £10 off Individual and Joint membership (concessionary rates paid by direct debit will not qualify for the discount). The discount only applies to first year's membership and has been introduced to improve retention rates of new members. This replaces the previous '13 months for the price of 12' offer.

The £10 discount offers the best possible joining deal and we should try and encourage as many new members as possible to join by direct debit.

New recruitment leaflets have now been sent to all Areas and Groups and should replace old leaflets, which expired at the end of September. To order additional copies, contact publicity@ramblers.org.uk [ublicity@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:publicity@ramblers.org.uk)

Revised guidelines on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults published

Volunteers who work with the wider membership and the public are asked to read and implement new and improved policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, which includes targeted guidance for Area and Group volunteers (News / action -- posted 5 October 2010).

Following a thorough review which gave much consideration to volunteer views, we have extensively revised our policy and guidelines on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The new comprehensive policy includes several sets of guidelines targeted at various groups of people involved with the Ramblers, including different groups of volunteers, the public and staff.

The policy and guidelines are available at www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding.

The new policy much better reflects the realities of delivering Ramblers activities for the full range of Ramblers volunteers, including sections for Area and Group committee members, walk leaders and project-based volunteers managed by staff. At the same time it meets our legal,

moral and insurance obligations to look after vulnerable people who participate in our activities as well as the expectations of our partners and funders.

The updated policy includes a very short and simple set of guidelines for leaders of walks not specifically targeted at families, young people or vulnerable adults, who might encounter children and those with special needs only on an occasional basis. There is a more detailed set of guidelines for Areas and Groups, which is of particular interest and importance to those volunteers who run targeted activities, for example family walks, walks for people with disabilities or partnership projects with community groups.

A new innovation is a Parental Consent Card, provided free on application by Central Office for 15-17 year olds who want to attend Ramblers activities unaccompanied by a parent or other responsible adult.

All Ramblers volunteers should look at the Safeguarding page at www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding. We ask you to read the section of the guidelines that is relevant to your role in the Ramblers and implement it as appropriate. Familiarity with the guidelines is particularly important if you run activities specifically targeted at, or likely to attract, children, young people (under 18) or vulnerable adults on a regular basis.

The policy and guidelines will be reviewed as required and at least annually, and comments can be submitted at any time to the email address below for consideration in the next review.

Read a summary of the feedback received from volunteers during the consultation conducted as part of the review at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/safeguardingresponses.htm>.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback on the policy and guidance or any other enquiry related to safeguarding children or vulnerable adults, please email childandvulnerableadults@ramblers.org.uk.

Support

Dead End Campaign Roadshow

Invitation to book a place at a Dead End Campaign Roadshow in October or November. (Event - posted 28 September 2010)

Why?

As local authorities face the toughest financial challenges in a generation, it is important that the Ramblers steps up its work to protect vital rights of way and access services across England and Wales.

What?

The Dead End Roadshow events will give volunteers and staff the opportunity to discuss and plan for three types of intervention:

- Active campaigning to protect services from cuts
- Development of partnerships to help authorities deliver their services
- Direct action to improve the path network (i.e. practical work)

The Roadshow agenda will concentrate on these three areas - with information and advice sessions, and opportunities to share best practice and ideas.

The events will run from 10.30am until 4.00pm. Attendees will need to bring a packed lunch, but tea and coffee will be provided. Travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Who?

Any volunteers concerned about the state of rights of way and access are invited to attend - particularly where they are already involved in campaigning or partnership working with authorities. If the events are over-subscribed, places will be allocated to ensure the largest number of Areas and Groups are represented.

When and where?

Saturday 30 October - London

Thursday 4 November - Leeds

Saturday 6 November - Birmingham

Tuesday 16 November - Taunton

Details of precise locations will be advertised when venue bookings have been confirmed.

To book - please complete the form here:

www.ramblers.org.uk/campaigns+policy/dead-end-roadshow-booking

Improved volunteer advice now available

Experienced volunteers now available to help and advise you

The Whom do I contact? page, for volunteers to use when they need advice, has now been extended to include experienced volunteer contacts as well as staff.

Tom Franklin, Chief Executive, said,

"Sometimes a volunteer would prefer to talk to another experienced volunteer for help and advice, rather than a member of staff. We've made this easier, by listing twenty such volunteers on the website. They have all kindly agreed to help answer questions posed to them - on topics ranging from blogging, to rights of way monitoring, to membership recruitment."

The list of volunteer advisers will be extended over time.

[As well as the staff/volunteer list, there is also a wide range of factsheets available from the online Factsheet Library.]
