

Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up

5 November to 2 December 2009



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Website Volunteer Section since 5 November. Some of the items had deadlines which have now passed. These are included for interest only.

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

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General

Tom's Blog December 09

Thoughts and reflections from the Chief Executive (News - posted 1 December 2009)

I'm writing this on the train back from the West Essex Group AGM (<http://www.westsexramblers.org.uk/>). What a lively meeting - the group is involved in so many different activities: four walks a week, ranging from country to city walking, short to long walks (even more over the Christmas break); coach rambles; holidays; path clearance; footpath checking; adopt-a-parish scheme....wow! I've come away inspired. We had a good conversation for about an hour, with some very lively questioning. Thanks in particular to the chair, Richard Iles, and the secretary, Mike Whiteley, for being so welcoming.

Walking in a winter wonderland

It's getting colder, so it must be time for the Ramblers Festival of Winter Walks with Nature Valley - <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Festival+of+Winter+Walks+2009.htm>. This year, from Boxing Day to 3rd January, we're laying on more than 700 fabulous wintery walks. That means an army of more than 700 walks leaders! Thank you to everyone who is helping to put on these walks, which will be enjoyed by many thousands of people. Also a thank you to Nature Valley for once again sponsoring the festival. There's a competition on their website, inviting people to send in a photo of their favourite winter walk. It'll be judged by Ben Fogle, and the winner will get a weekend break. Click here for more competition details, and don't forget to tell others on the walks to enter too - http://nature-valley.net/winter_walks_comp/.

We get loads of new members joining from the Festival of Winter Walks. They're a great way for people to try the Ramblers out - and if they like what they find, to join up. So please remember (I know you probably don't need telling) to give a special welcome to those who are new, and to carry some membership leaflets with you.

Listening to volunteers

Rodney Whittaker (Chair of the Ramblers) and myself have been getting out and about during November, taking part in special regional and national meetings with volunteers. We've held meetings in Durham, Birmingham, Bath, London, and Leeds, and we've got more meetings in Swansea and Edinburgh shortly. In total 150 volunteers have attended and have given us their views. Lots of issues have come up: concerns over the finances and the cutbacks in spending we've needed to make, the problems with the membership database, widening consultation, and the need for better communication.

I am finding the meetings helpful. They are helping me to better understand what volunteers need, and I'm picking up some good ideas along the way. At the same time, there are many misperceptions around and the meetings mean Rodney and I can try to correct these. People at the meetings don't always see

eye-to-eye - with me, or with each other. I know that for some people, I'm pressing for faster changes than they feel comfortable with. But it's good that there's a lively debate in the Ramblers. People are passionate about the Ramblers because they care. And the meetings do let people express how they feel. "I feel better now that I've been able to get that off my chest!" somebody said half-way through the recent Bath meeting, to general agreement.

This December we want to hear the views of all volunteers - in our Ramblers Volunteer Survey 2009. This is a chance for every single Ramblers volunteer, whatever your role and no matter how involved you are, to say what you think about volunteering at the Ramblers. The Ramblers simply could not function without our volunteers - and that's one reason why we want to make volunteering a satisfying experience. It'll only take about 10 minutes, so click here - <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BZ9M6BH> - and give us your views.

Safeguarding our footpaths

I mentioned that the regional and national meetings had brought up various misperceptions about what we're doing. One such misperception is that we have downgraded the importance of our work on safeguarding footpaths. Let me be clear: this is not true. For the past 75 years the Ramblers has been the guardian of our footpaths, and it will continue to be. Only last week, we were in the High Court on one piece of footpath casework; and we have a target to open, unblock, or record on definitive maps some 500 footpaths over the course of this year alone. In the month of October, staff gave advice on 65 footpath and access enquiries - mostly to volunteers concerned about blocked footpaths. (By the way, when you get a footpath opened, unblocked or recorded, we'd really like to know about it - http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm)

We need to continue with the work we are famous for. But we also need to evolve and do new types of work, so that we remain relevant for the future, and broaden our appeal so that more people see the Ramblers as for them. There are more than five million people who walk in this country, and just 2.5% are members of the Ramblers. That's why we're also pleased to be doing new schemes like our family walking pilot project in Barrow in Furness (<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Walking/Projects/England/walkingfurness/>). We want to roll out schemes like this across the country. As Britain's walking charity, we need to tackle the new issues as well as the traditional. I mentioned that I'm on my way back from the West Essex Group AGM - one of the members stopped me as I was leaving to say she was so excited about the work she is doing to help the Ramblers and a mental health charity work together to help people suffering from bipolar disorder. We've heard of 'talking therapy' - well, the Ramblers is provides 'walking therapy'.

Anyway, that's enough from me for this month. Have a good December and enjoy the Festival of Winter Walks.

Tom

Ramblers Worldwide Holidays offers list - November

Holiday offers for volunteers. (Offer - posted 1 December 2009)

The latest offers from Ramblers Worldwide Holidays for Ramblers volunteers are available here: http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/ramblers_holidays_nov_09.pdf

Ramblers Volunteers Survey 2009

Calling all volunteers - we want to hear your views. (Action request - posted 1 December 2009)

FILL IN THE VOLUNTEERS SURVEY 2009

Fill in on-line survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BZ9M6BH>

What do you like about volunteering for the Ramblers?

What could be better? This is your chance to tell us.

There are more than 12,000 volunteers at the Ramblers, giving their time and expertise for free. Without the work that you do, the Ramblers couldn't achieve what it does. So we want to make sure that volunteering is as satisfying as possible.

Whatever your role, at whatever level, if you give your time free to help the Ramblers, we want to hear from you.

Whether you lead Ramblers walks, help to keep footpaths open, run the local group or area, or are a member of General Council – tell us what you think.

We are listening.

It'll only take you about 10 minutes to fill in online, and it will help to guide what we do.

Follow the link below – and thank you.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BZ9M6BH>

Closing date: 1st January 2009

Ramblers Walkmag website scoops top award

Congratulations to the Walk team for big success. (News - posted 27 November 2009)

The website for Walk, the magazine of the Ramblers, has this week received a top industry award.

The International Customer Publishing Awards, which highlight editorial effectiveness in print and digital media, gave it top prize in the category Best Digital Solution of the Year for charities, not-for-profits, and the public sector. Runners up were the NSPCC, the Royal Air Force, Transport for London and The Landscape Institute.

Congratulations to the Walk editorial team, and our publishers, River Publishing, and all of the volunteers who are contributing to the website.

The magazine and its website were relaunched earlier this year, with new features such as walking route information and interactive features.

If you haven't done so recently, take a look: <http://www.walkmag.co.uk/>

Ramblers Cymru business plan published

(News - posted 23 November 2009)

The Ramblers Cymru Business Plan for 2009/10 has been published. Linked to the Business Plan for the Ramblers across Britain as a whole, it sets out the specific targets in Wales, including:

- A national pilot for the all-Wales coastal path
- Intervening to improve the performance of the bottom 5 performing local authorities for rights of way
- Unblocking, saving, or newly-recording 50 footpaths
- Engaging in the new land management scheme in Wales - Glastir

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/Ramblers%20Cymru%20Business%20Plan%202009%20to%2010%20web.pdf>

A web summary of the business plan can be downloaded as a pdf below. It is 1.5mb and we recommend only downloading it via a broadband connection. We intend to produce a text-only version which will be placed on the Ramblers Cymru pages in the near future.

75th Anniversary logo

The Ramblers 75th Anniversary logo available for volunteers to download. (New resource - posted 19 November 2009)

Download the Ramblers 75th logo today!

Please find below the 75th anniversary graphic that we would suggest Areas and Groups use across their materials in 2010 in order to generate publicity for the Ramblers throughout their 75th year. The Ramblers recommend that this graphic is only used on materials that are due to be re-printed and are designed to last for 2010 only.

If you experience any problems or have any questions, please e-mail 75anniversary@ramblers.org.uk or call 020 7339 8500.

Below is the full colour version of the 75th logo, further versions and templates will follow.

http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/ramblers%2075_smallWEB.jpg

Fill Your Flask

Hold your own Fill Your Flask party during 2010 and toast our 75th birthday with a tippie of your choice! (Event - posted 18 November 2009)

Every birthday deserves a party and the Ramblers 75th is no exception. We'd love our valued volunteers everywhere to join in the celebrations with us by holding 'Fill Your Flask' parties – helping to raise money for the Ramblers in the process.

Our Baton Walk, which will track around Britain throughout 2010, launches on 31st December 2009 and, as the baton travels around the country, we'd love each group to hold a Fill Your Flask party to celebrate each new stage of the walk. It's an easy way to raise funds for the Ramblers and a fantastic way to generate publicity for both the Baton Walk and our 75th anniversary.

The idea of Fill Your Flask is simple. Invite everyone to bring a flask to fill with their favourite tippie (whether that's tea, coffee or something a bit stronger!) and raise a birthday toast at the start of the walk. In return, ask everyone to make a donation of 75p to the Ramblers. Every penny raised will help to ensure we can continue our valuable work for walkers well beyond our 75th year.

Don't forget to take photographs and post them to our Flickr group, Ramblers 75. We'd love to see pictures of ramblers everywhere toasting our big 7-5! We'll post our favourites on the 75th anniversary microsite.

For more ideas and advice on organising a Fill Your Flask party visit the 75th anniversary microsite, coming soon, or contact Ruth Collins - ruth.collins@ramblers.org.uk

75th Baton Walk pack

75th Baton Walk packs - on their way to Group Secretaries. (News - posted 16 November 2009)

The Ramblers will be 75 years young in 2010. To mark this celebration Ramblers Groups are invited to take part in the Ramblers Baton Walk.

Over the course of 2010 the Ramblers Baton will go on a passage through England, Scotland and Wales, starting in the south west of England in January.

A Baton pack, including a media guide and the all important Baton itself, should be hitting doormats of Group Secretaries any day to help your planning.

For more details about the Baton Walk and other 75th celebrations visit

www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/75th+Anniversary

Please email any queries about the 75th Anniversary to 75anniversary@ramblers.org.uk

Contact us

The key staff contact list is now available. (New resource - posted 16 November 2009)

Walking Environment matters
(including footpaths, access land and urban paths)
Campaigns admin
walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers ecampaigns
(such as Facebook, social networking sites and website campaigning)
Sarah Gardner
ecampaigning@ramblers.org.uk

Get Walking, Keep Walking
(Big lottery funded projects, encouraging people to start walking)
Chris Wingrove
getwalking@ramblers.org.uk

Led Walks
(training and advice for walks leaders and walks programme coordinators)
Audrey Watson
ledwalks@ramblers.org.uk

Walks Finder queries
(for our database of walks on the website)
Brenda/Chris (volunteers at central office)
volunteer@ramblers.org.uk

Area and Group membership reports and address labels
(monthly reports of Area and Group membership and labels for sending out walks programmes and newsletters)
Membership Services
membership@ramblers.org.uk

Notification of changes in officers and other volunteers
(let us know about any changes in volunteers after your AGM and throughout the year)
Membership Services
membership@ramblers.org.uk

General and other volunteer queries
Volunteer Support Officer
volsupport@ramblers.org.uk

Area and Group Finance
(budgets, year-end returns, bookkeeping and training for treasurers)
Kevin Edwards
areagroupfinance@ramblers.org.uk

Area and Group local websites
(technical queries on local website)
ICT team
ict@ramblers.org.uk

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
(for reporting concerns or general queries)
Children and Vulnerable Adults Officer
childandvulnerableadults@ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers volunteer website and newsletter matters
(comments, suggestions and queries on the volunteer website and newsletter)
Adrian Morris
volunteerwebsite@ramblers.org.uk

Civil liability insurance matters
(clarification of our cover, reporting incidents and requests for a copy of the insurance certificate)
Karen Inkster
insurance@ramblers.org.uk

Area and Group AGMs, General Council and Board of Trustees or governance/ constitutional enquiries
(including motions to General Council, queries on our Memorandum and Articles and Model Constitution)
Jo Smith
governance@ramblers.org.uk

Directors Office
(meeting and event invitations for Directors, excluding AGM's – see above contact)
Hazel Robinson
directorsoffice@ramblers.org.uk

Media enquiries
(queries about dealing with the press)
Ruth Somerville
press@ramblers.org.uk

Fundraising queries, including appeal and raffle queries
(queries about Ramblers fundraising)
John Wightman
fundraising@ramblers.org.uk

Area and Group publicity and membership recruitment queries
(queries about recruiting new members and publicising your Area/Group)
Mariusz Wilczynski
publicity@ramblers.org.uk

Walk magazine: editorial
(letters to Walk magazine and comments)
Dominic Bates
walkmag@ramblers.org.uk

Walk magazine advertising
(enquiries about advertising in Walk magazine)
River Publishing
kandrews@riverltd.co.uk

Campaigns

Walking Environment Update - December 09

News from the Walking Environment Team. (News & Action request - posted 1 December 2009)

Induction training for Walking Environment volunteers

The 2007 strategy for rights of way work highlighted the importance of improving the induction and training of our volunteers, and to that end we have started to develop a new training programme. An induction day for new volunteers is a key element of this and several of these events have already been held. We are planning to run at least three more in the current financial year.

To help us assess the best places to hold induction days in 2010 (i.e. locations accessible by the greatest number of new volunteers requiring induction training) we would be grateful if you could let us know the names of any new volunteers requiring induction training and their main areas of interest (i.e. rights of way, urban access issues, access to open country, or countryside issues). The induction days are intended to cater for volunteers working in all aspects of the walking environment but the timetable for each event will be tailored to the participants (so if everyone who attends is a footpath worker then that will be the focus of the day). The main issues to be covered will be:

- A brief history of the Ramblers and its achievements
- Our charitable aims, and an outline of 'Fresh Air, Firm Ground' (the Ramblers strategy for 2008-2013)
- Ramblers structure (How General Council, the Board of Trustees, Areas and Groups, volunteers and staff all work together)
- What Walking Environment volunteers do
- Basics of rights of way law/access law etc. as appropriate
- Ramblers policies

Please can you send details (names; e-mail addresses if available, otherwise postal addresses; area of interest) to Janet Davis, Senior Policy Officer (janet.davis@ramblers.org.uk) by 31 January 2010 at the latest.

Clarification on 500 paths target

Thank you to all those volunteers who have already started to report their path successes, either by email or online here: http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm. This feedback is really appreciated and is helping to build a better picture of our work on paths 'on the ground'. Not only is it vital in measuring our progress towards the 500 paths target, but it also helps to identify trends and enables us to better judge the support we can offer to Areas and Groups.

Some volunteers have been in touch to seek clarification on what type of success should be reported. For example, is clearing overgrowth from a stile a Ramblers path success? And, what about a problem reported by the Ramblers, which is later taken up by a parish council?

Our advice is to report everything that you achieve as a Ramblers volunteer on the path network. If something wouldn't have happened without you, then we want to know about it. Staff will then be in a much better position to provide support, and we can assess which successes will count towards our 500 paths target.

Thanks again.

New guidance on seeking path casework support

In the coming week we will be emailing all Area and Group Footpath Secretaries with new guidance on seeking casework support from central office. Staff will also be contacting Area Footpath Secretaries by phone, to discuss this and other issues. If you have any queries please get in touch with Adrian Morris, Head of Walking Environment - adrian.morris@ramblers.org.uk 020 7339 8524.

Round-up of Walking Environment items already posted on the Volunteer News section

Coastal Access

Earlier in the month we celebrated the Royal Assent of the Marine and Coastal Access Bill. More information is available here: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/coast.htm>

Review of maps of open countryside

The first review of maps showing 'access land' provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act will soon be underway. We'd like to hear your views on how access to open countryside in England might be improved. More information is available here:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Review+of+maps+of+open+countryside.htm>

Where You Walk campaign: our walking environment manifesto

We'd like to hear what improvements you would like to see to the walking environment, or any examples of best practice. More information is available here:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/wyw-vol.htm>

Where You Walk campaign: our walking environment manifesto

Request for input to our manifesto/policy process. (Consultation/action request - posted 30 November 2009)

One of the key aims in the Ramblers strategy Fresh Air, Firm Ground, is to ensure walking environments are of the highest quality. We are therefore asking for members of the public and volunteers to contribute their ideas on top priorities for improvement, or best practice.

Ideas will be fed into our Walking Environment Manifesto, which will enable us to develop new policy areas and campaigns.

Please tell us your ideas for improvements here:

<http://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.client.id=117&ea.campaign.id=4965>

Review of maps of open countryside

The first review of maps showing 'access land' provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act will soon be underway. Give us your views as to how access to open countryside in England might be improved. (Consultation/action request - posted 23 November 2009)

The Ramblers campaigned for a public right to walk on open countryside for more than 70 years. Our efforts were rewarded in 2000 when the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) was passed.

As a result of the CRoW Act, some 936,000 hectares - an area roughly equivalent to the size of Cyprus - of the wildest and most beautiful areas of open countryside in England are now open to walkers. Of this, 733,000 hectares is land to which no right of access previously existed. For example, when the new right of access commenced, the amount of land legally accessible to walkers in the Yorkshire Dales leapt from 4% to 64% overnight.

The CRoW Act has been in force across the whole of England for almost four years. All the indications are that it is working well in practice. Measures put in place to protect nature conservation, privacy, public safety and the interests of landowners are proving successful.

Under the Act, the maps showing where the new rights of access apply must be reviewed every ten years. The first of these reviews (to be conducted by Natural England) is due to begin at the end of 2011, and must be completed by 2014-2015. Over the coming year, Natural England and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be developing their approach to the review of maps, in consultation with stakeholders.

The Ramblers strongly supports the CRoW Act and wants to see the benefits of the legislation extended. We hope that this review will provide an opportunity to increase public access on foot to open landscapes and to improve the experience of walkers who visit these areas.

We would be pleased to hear your comments as to what specific improvements the Ramblers should seek. For example, should we aim to increase access to downland? Or focus our efforts on improving the management of access land?

Please send your thoughts to walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk by 6 January 2010.

For further information about the review of maps of access land, please go to Natural England's website: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/openaccess/mapping.aspx>

Ramblers claims the coast

Breaking news as Royal Assent is given to the Marine and Coastal Access Bill. (News - posted 12 November 2009)

WE DID IT!

Thanks to all your support, coastal access is a reality!

After ten years of campaigning and lobbying by the Ramblers, the Queen has given Royal Assent to legislation which will create a legal route around the whole of England. Thousands of miles of inaccessible and out-of-bounds coastline will be permanently opened up to the public with the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act. This piece of legislation has taken almost two years to go through parliament and now, thanks to continuous lobbying from you, it will become law. This means that you will now be able to enjoy your coast, without fear of trespassing or being diverted miles inland.

Currently nearly 50% of the English coast has no public right of way, and the public can only walk an average 1.9 miles on the coast on a 'secure or satisfactory path'. The Act creates a duty to put in place a continuous coastal path around England, which will join with the Welsh Coastal Path and the existing rights of access in Scotland, to give the public the right to walk around the entire British coast for the first time. The new legal path is expected to bring unprecedented access to millions and vitally boost the rural economy.

Many, many thanks for all the lobbying and campaigning you have done to make coastal access a reality - this historic Act would never have been possible without the fantastic support you have given us in this campaign.

However the hard work is not over!

After the passing of secondary legislation needed to turn the act into reality and public consultations on Natural England's Coastal Access Scheme, the Ramblers will be looking to play a full and active role in the planned 54 local access reports which will be needed to put the path in place over the next 10 years.

To do this we need local ramblers and volunteers who know their section of the coast. If you want to get involved in this important work check out our Volunteers website - <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/> - over the next few months and get involved via your local group - http://www.ramblers.org.uk/areas_groups/areas_and_groups.htm.

Thanks very much and congratulations for ensuring legal access to your coast!

More information on the history of the campaign can be found here: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Campaigns/Claim+the+Coast.htm>

Walking Environment Update - November 09

News from the Walking Environment Team. (News & Action request - posted 6 November 2009)

500 Paths target

Every year hundreds of rights of way are opened up or otherwise secured through Ramblers work, but we have never kept comprehensive records of where these successes have been achieved.

In the 2009-10 business plan we have set ourselves the target of getting 500 paths unblocked, saved or newly-recorded. In order to measure progress towards this target the Walking Environment team would like to hear of all your path successes, from October 2009 onwards.

The easiest way to let us know about Ramblers successes on the path network is via the path successes page: http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/successes.htm

If you prefer, you can email the details below to walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk

Date of success
Path type and number (e.g. Footpath 14)
Parish, town, locality
Highway authority
Issue (e.g. blocked path, extinguishment proposal)
Lead volunteer name
Contact email
Ramblers staff member name (if applicable)
Ramblers action taken
Status of path

It is important that we only count a path once the outcome of any process is known.
For example:

The path has been unblocked at the point that the practical work takes place, or the public-interest diversion is in place, and the path is walkable
The path has been officially 'saved' at the point that the extinguishment order is rejected, or prior to that, the pre-order consultation decides that the path is needed
The path has been newly-recorded at the point that the DMMO has been confirmed
Wherever possible, it would be great to receive photographs of the paths in question. These can be uploaded on the [path successes page](#), or sent by email to walking.environment@ramblers.org.uk

Once the new CAMS (Countryside Access Management System) database is in place, we will be using that to record path successes.

Generic email addresses for council rights of way teams

As part of our RoWIP Campaign, From Paper to People and Places, we are making contact with every council rights of way team in England. If you know any of these addresses please take a look at our list of outstanding council addresses here: http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/emails.htm

Coastal Access on the cusp of success

Thank you to everyone who contacted their MP in advance of the final coastal access debates and votes in Parliament on 26/27 October. The necessary clauses of the Marine and Coastal Access Bill were successfully guided through Parliament at 3rd reading and report stage. We now await the Bill's return to the Lords on 11 November, and look forward to celebrating the planned Royal Assent the day after. Look out for more news when that happens.

Defra Rights of Way Circular (1/09), Version 2

A revised version of Defra's rights of way circular, Circular 1/09, has been published. It is available on the Defra website through the following link:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/countryside/prow/rowcircular1-09.pdf>

The principal reason for the update is the publication, by the Department of Communities and Local Government, of a new circular on costs, Circular 3/09, which supersedes Circular 8/93. As far as rights of way cases are concerned, Circular 3/09 will not change the procedure for costs applications and awards. The revised section of Circular 1/09 clarifies and confirms this, explains more about how the costs regime works, and provides examples of circumstances under which costs may be awarded.

Goodbye to Martin

After almost 3 years at the Ramblers, Martin Key is leaving to take up a new post at the Central Council for Physical Recreation. He will be dealing with policy related to recreational space, so we expect to stay in touch! We have already started the recruitment process to replace him.

Walks Leaders

Walks Finder disruption

Walks Finder disruption 15th-25th November. (Action request - posted 25 November 2009)

27/11/09 - Update - All data from the Walks Finder has now been recovered. Any missing walks will be restored over next couple of days. Please keep an eye on this page for further updates.

26/11/09 We are sorry to announce that the previously reported server hardware failure at our data centre has caused an interruption to data loaded onto Walks Finder between 15-25th November.

This is the first time in the 7 year history of Walks Finder that this situation has occurred. Please accept our sincere apologies if this affects you or your Group.

It is possible that walks loaded onto Walks Finder during this period may need to be put on again. Please check to see if any walks submitted during this period are affected.

Led Walks Update

News from the Led Walks team. (News - posted 26 November 2009)

Clarification on issues arising from our new insurance documentation and Walks Leader checklist can be found on <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Basics/FAQ.htm>

TEXT HERE:

Insurance FAQ 2009/10

FAQ on the insurance guidance for 2009/10

In response to some queries received since the new guidance was issued, here are some points of clarification.

1. Recces are not compulsory. They are seen as good practice and recommended, where possible, but it does not invalidate the insurance if you have not recced your walk.
2. Members are covered while carrying out a recce and mentoring walks (assisting new leaders).
3. Registers are not compulsory but, again, are seen as good practice.
4. " *Have a nominated Leader, and ideally a backmarker who are both members and who ideally together, or separately have recced the walk* ".

The words "ideally" here mean that it is ideal that the walk has been recced by both a leader and a backmarker at some point before the walk, but, again this is not compulsory. We realize it is not always feasible for both to recce and that some backmarkers are appointed on the day. We do however encourage all walks to have a backmarker.

5. "Walks should be publicized in advance".'

'Normal' weekly or monthly walks should "Be publicised in advance in at least one of: Walks Finder, a printed programme or the Group/Area website." As described in the insurance policy, this is to allow both

members & potential members to know about walks in advance – in accordance with our charitable objectives. If it is publicised via the Ramblers website (Walks Finder), the public can access the information, which is a great way to encourage more people to experience the pleasure of walking. A printed programme may also be produced and many Groups use local libraries, cafés, local press to display their walks.

Walks involving an overnight stay need to be advertised to members & ideally to the public also in the same manner, for example through the Group Programme.

6. Non members are covered and should be encouraged to join the Ramblers after a few (usually 3) taster walks.

7. Sponsored/fundraising walks

The Ramblers is a charity and therefore our resources can only be used to fulfil our charitable objectives. Areas and Groups should not assist other organisations to approach our members for money or recruitment purposes or help other organisations raise money by assisting them to run fundraising events and activities.

Exceptions to this principle should occur only when there is a clear, substantial (and preferably financial) benefit to us at either national or local level. At all times, fundraising, recruitment and volunteer efforts should be directed towards the benefit of the Ramblers.

Individuals may choose to help out at an event but no organisational support (e.g. promotion in walks programmes or group websites, requests for sponsorship or donations, recruitment of volunteer marshalls etc.) should be loaned without clear reciprocal benefit. If a group of Ramblers volunteers goes along to staff an event in an official capacity, it's worth remembering that that would lend credibility to the organisation of a sponsored walk and that therefore some benefit (such as the distribution of recruitment leaflets, acknowledgement on event materials, press coverage, or even a donation to the Ramblers in recognition of the contribution) should be forthcoming.

8. Cover is worldwide except for USA and Canada so Groups are covered for trips overseas. To fulfil the charitable objectives of the Ramblers, activities should take place predominantly in GB. Cover is for civil liability only and does not apply to lost luggage or cancelled trips or personal accident. You should arrange your own cover for this. Please see section 1.3 of the guidance for companies that may be able to provide such cover.

9. *The activity is led or organised by a Ramblers member and/or a volunteer registered by Ramblers staff.*

“Registered” volunteers may be those involved in a Get Walking, Keep Walking event or someone recruited for the day to help out at an event.

10. *If walk leaders do not follow the best practices suggested in the walk leaders check list, and an incident occurs, will the leader's civil liability insurance protection be invalidated and will they be exposed to litigation?*

A: Under the terms of our insurance, the walk leader's civil liability insurance protection will **not** be invalidated if they ignore the best practices suggested in the walk leaders check lists. If they are exposed to litigation, their costs will also be covered though it is much more likely that any civil action would be only against the Ramblers, not the individual walk leader (and bear in mind that in 75 years, we believe that nobody has taken legal action against the Ramblers following a led walks incident).

In the event of a serious incident resulting in death, there is a very small risk that the walks leader, in addition to the Board of Trustees could be prosecuted under the new Corporate Manslaughter Act. This is highly unlikely where the walks leader has acted in good faith - criminal prosecutors are looking for criminal negligence or recklessness. The risk of a prosecution happening, however small, goes up if best practice has not been followed. The insurance would cover the costs but cannot protect anyone from a sentence passed in court.

By issuing best practice guidance and the walks leader checklist, we definitely have not increased the risk of litigation to the led walks leader. This is because we have made it clear that the procedures are optional and the walk leader does not need to follow them if they do not want.

Such serious incidents do occur from time to time. In the last 12 months there have been two such incidents, in Snowdonia and the Lake District . We will shortly be issuing details of these, as case studies, for groups to consider. In the future, our insurers may take a tougher approach with us and insist that best practice is not only issued, but followed – if that happens, we will have no alternative but to

follow it. Further, if our insurers do in future settle major claims, our premiums would be likely to rise substantially. However, this is not the situation at the moment.

The work of the Led Walks team is **not** invalidating the walk leader's civil liability insurance protection, **nor** increasing walk leaders' exposure to litigation. It is protecting our volunteers, by advising on sensible steps to reduce their risk. This is also helping to protect our reputation, and keeping the Ramblers insurance premiums down by presenting a lower risk to the insurers.

It is important to keep these risks in perspective: both walk leaders and walkers are much more likely to face civil or criminal legal action arising out of careless driving on the way to and from the walk.

11. *What incidents should be reported?*

We do not need to know about minor incidents such as someone being scratched by a bramble or getting a blister or tripping over their own feet and getting up again with no injury. We do, however, want to know about incidents where outside assistance is required or where someone is injured and needs first aid.

Examples could be:

A walker sustains an injury resulting in them being unable to complete the walk

A walker sustains an injury requiring first aid treatment (except applying plasters to minor cuts and scratches) before they can continue

The walk leader is taken ill and the walk has to be ended before reaching the designated finishing point

One or more members of the group are attacked by livestock or their safety is threatened by the behaviour of livestock (including dogs)

Escape of livestock (e.g. through a gate which has been opened to allow the group to pass through)

Damage to third party property

Defective path furniture or obstruction on path which is so dangerous as to present serious risk of injury to the public even though no member of the group has actually been injured (this does not mean every broken stile but would include, for example, a footbridge which looks sound but proves not to be when you put your foot on it).

12. *What is a near miss?*

Near misses can be a range of things. An example could be where a group becomes badly lost and do not get back until after dark but no-one is injured; where perhaps someone does not feel well or is injured but carries on and slows the party down such that they do not get back until after dark; where someone forgets essential medication like an asthma inhaler or epi-pen and is OK after a rest or turns back (but could have been a more serious outcome); where a party is by or crossing a road and a car swerves to avoid them or a walker is forced into a ditch by a car. The list can be quite long!

13. *What is the liability regarding incidents caused by dogs?*

In essence, it is actually not very different from the limit of liability for any Ramblers walk with only one distinction. If an incident of whatever type happened on a Ramblers walk, the claimant would sue Ramblers in general and the leader, the committee and all members would be covered by dint of their being Ramblers members and thus under the protection of our civil liability. *It is possible, legally, that the Committee / Walk leader could be sued as a result of the actions of a dog present on the walk. The **Ramblers policy will provide insurance protection for the committee / walk leader** in the event of them being sued for the actions of a dog. It is the individual dog owner who will not receive protection*

If that incident involved a dog, say attacking cattle, then the farmer would sue Ramblers in general but the difference in this case would be that the dog owner WOULD be liable as it specifically states in our policy that incidents involving dogs are not covered and that owners must take responsibility for their dogs. The leader and committee would be covered as for any incident but the dog owner would not. It certainly should not lead to people deciding to ban dogs on walks as the liability is unaltered as far as the leader is concerned but it is probably worth reminding leaders to point out to owners at the start of a walk in which dogs are present of the responsibilities of the owners

New Guidance on Young People Leading Walks can be found on the Walks Leader page:
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Resources/WalksLeader.htm>

TEXT HERE:

Guidance on young people (under 18) leading walks

A key charitable aim of the Ramblers is to make as walking as accessible to as many people as possible, whether young or old.

We are committed to helping youngsters adopt a life long love of walking and welcome children to join any Ramblers activities with their parent/guardian. Our Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy outlines our approach to this. On our policy, anyone under 18 is classed as a Child.

Some young people may wish to take their interest further and lead walks for their group and we would encourage their enthusiasm and interest in further developing their skills.

A 'junior' leader may be very adept at planning routes, route finding and some aspects of Group management – all skills that we would like to encourage and instill in children from as young an age as possible.

However the leader, legally, has an enhanced duty of care for all participants. For example, leaders need to be prepared to deal with walkers who may not be properly equipped; or who may walk ahead causing the group to become spread out; deal with road crossings; and to generally manage situations as they arise on the walk. In addition it is not uncommon for leaders to have to cope with medical incidents that arise.

We do not see it as appropriate to place this enhanced duty of care solely on a minor.

Ramblers aims to foster an environment that encourages children to get involved, whilst ensuring that walks are safe, and adopting standards that can be applied on all Ramblers walks across Britain in order to protect the leader, participants and the organisation overall.

In order to ensure the safety of participants and to protect the junior leader, our recommendation is that, where a junior (under 18) wishes to lead a walk, a recognized adult member is named and takes overall responsibility for the walk, assisting the junior leader where necessary.

ICT

Website problems

Status update on problems with some parts of our website. (News - posted 25 November 2009)

25/11/09 14:29

Dear all,

As reported earlier there was a major hardware failure at the Datacentre where the ramblers.co.uk server is hosted.

The issue is now resolved- breakdown of events below:

24/11/2009 10.37am - ramblers.co.uk server outage. Outage resulting from 'double-disk' failure on physical server at Datacentre.

24/11/2009 12.53pm - have been advised by Datacentre that restore process 80% complete

24/11/2009 14.37pm - recovery process at data centre unsuccessful. Advised that service will be restored 'shortly'

25/11/2009 08.10am - responses from data centre suggest that recovery process unlikely to be achieved within acceptable timeframe.

25/11/2009 08.15am - decision made to relocate hosted services to a temporary Limethinking server.

25/11/2009 08.30am - restore process on new server initiated

25/11/2009 10.30am - server configured and data restored.
25/11/2009 10.35am - DNS configs updated to point ramblers.co.uk to new server
25/11/2009 11.30am - Worldpay payment system reconfigured
25/11/2009 11.50am - Payment systems tested.
25/11/2009 12.10pm - Server up and running and live payment processing working.
25/11/2009 12.21pm - Walksfinder and Forums tested and re-instated.
25/11/2009 14.00pm - Review of all systems in progress to ensure no outstanding issues.
25/11/2009 14.09pm - investigating issue with display of walksfinder mapping

25/11/09 - 10.30am

We are sorry to report that a server hardware failure at our data centre has not yet been resolved.

Services affected include our credit card joining/donation pages, the group Walksfinder and the online forums.

A resolution has been promised for this morning. In the meantime we have arranged for the services to be restored to an alternative hosting provider.

We hope to have the situation resolved as soon as possible and apologise for the inconvenience caused in the meantime.

Updates will follow shortly.

Membership

Definitions in membership report - information for membership secretaries

Changes in definitions in the monthly membership report. (New resource - posted 27 November 2009)

Membership secretaries are asked to note the following information regarding a change in our definitions for the various membership types. These will be introduced from the November run onwards (to arrive with you in early December).

These are generated by the 'master database' of our CRM system and include new membership counts.

1 Background

Following many months of development we are now in the position to provide accurate data on the size of our membership base. We will have readily available information to assist in membership administration and the management of our membership across areas and groups.

This builds on the CRM improvements and we now have data from the system that covers a range of key performance measures including, for example:

- Membership numbers (by individuals ie a joint membership equals 2) for Areas and Groups
- Membership status changes – new members (active), payment pending, lapsed, resigned, deceased (see below for definitions)
- Membership numbers split by membership type – annual, life, individual, joint and concessionary

These reports will include updated information from the reported period.

Please note: these reports will not yet show affiliated groups/clubs. We are also not yet able to provide full membership lists – these are, however, in development.

2 Membership Status definitions

An important part of this process has been the review of our membership status definitions; these are the core descriptors that are used to specify our different types of 'membership status' and they underpin the numeric data as referred to in these reports.

These replace the previous definitions over which there was much confusion (e.g. the 'overdue' status).

Status – Active

1. The person has a current paid subscription to the Ramblers
2. The person is included in membership counts

The membership count on the front of the report only includes members who are 'active'

Status - Payment Pending

1. The person's last subscription has ended within the last 3 months and the renewal has not yet been processed
2. The person may have sent in their payment and it is awaiting processing
3. The person will not be included in membership counts whilst in this status
4. The person will not be reported as having left an area and group
5. The person will still receive their membership benefits e.g. Walk magazine, and also appear on label extractions.

Status - Lapsed

1. The person's last paid subscription ended more than 3 months, but less than 15 months ago
2. The person is not included in membership counts
3. The person's record is stamped with a leave date (3 months after their last subscription ended)
4. The person will be shown as having left their associated area and group in the next monthly reports (if renewal payment is not processed meanwhile)
5. Further attempts to engage the former member to renew are made via direct mail etc.

Status - Inactive

1. The person's last paid subscription ended more than 15 months previously
2. The person is not included in membership counts.

Status - Resigned

1. The person has actively notified us of their wish to resign their membership
2. The person is not included in membership counts
3. The leave date is the date at which they notified us of their wish to resign.

Status – Deceased

1. We have been notified in this period that the indicated person is deceased.

If you have any queries, please contact lain.johnston@ramblers.org.uk

Improved Membership Reports - information for membership secretaries

You will notice some improvements to your November membership reports. (News - posted 27 November 2009)

For the attention of all Area Membership Secretaries - from Tom Franklin, Chief Executive

We are pleased to confirm we will be providing November's monthly membership report in a new and improved format (to arrive with you early in December). We know only too well that the current reports have not provided membership updates to you all in a user friendly fashion, often supplying misleading or inaccurate information.

The new report will supply accurate information, in a user friendly format, to enable all membership secretaries to carry out their roles more easily and effectively.

For November updates only will be providing both the old and new style reports together for comparison purposes. Please do not be alarmed to see information appearing in one report of the other Please refer to the new report for the correct information.

We have tried to incorporate as many of your suggestions as possible in the new reports. They have been designed to evolve and change over time; therefore it may be possible to incorporate further requirements in future developments. Once the reports have been in circulation for a few months, we will

be carrying out a user survey to identify your likes and dislikes, plus any further development needs – we will then see what is best to do.

For the time being, these reports will only be supplied in a pdf format only.

We will provide an explanatory document outlining the purpose and the type of information contained in each section of the new reports to help you further. This document will also be on the membership secretary page in the volunteering section of the website for future reference.

We are confident the information contained in these reports is correct, however we recognise that you may have queries about some of the information provided. To help us answer your specific membership report enquires, we have created a new email address for you to use when contacting membership services - membershipreports@ramblers.org.uk; We will try to respond to your emails as quickly as possible, however due to the large scale of this task and the many changes included for areas, we may have a significant number of questions. Hence, we cannot guarantee to respond to them all before Christmas.

Please note the reports do not yet include details of affiliated groups/clubs. We are also not yet in a position to provide you with full membership lists. These are in development.

You will shortly be receiving another email from Iain Johnston, Membership Services and CRM Manager, explaining the new membership status definitions which will be used in the reports.

We do hope you find the reports a marked improvement and appreciate your patience as we have been working on these matters over the past few months.

Please feel free to disseminate this information throughout your area.

With best wishes

Tom Franklin

Chief Executive