

Ramblers Volunteer Section Round-Up

7 October to 4 November 2009



This round-up contains the text of all items posted on the Ramblers Website Volunteer Section since 7 October 2009. 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

Special Regional Meetings

A few places left - for the Special national and regional meetings for volunteers with the chair and chief executive. (Event - posted 30 October 2009)

Thank you to everybody who has registered, you will receive further details via e-mail 30 October 2009. If you have registered without giving an e-mail address, you will be contacted via telephone or letter.

We have a few places left at some of the venues, as listed below. If you wish to attend one of these, complete a registration form now (link below). The venues have a strict limit on numbers, so please only attend if your place has been confirmed.

The two-hour meetings are being held to help improve communications between the Board of Trustees, central office and Areas and Groups of the Ramblers - Britain's walking charity. For full details see the previous notification regarding the regional meetings (News item posted 15 October 2009). The dates and times of the meetings with availability are:

Durham - full

Birmingham - places available - Tuesday 17th November, 5.00-7.00pm, Central Library

Bath - full

Leeds - places available - Tuesday 24th November, 1.30-3.30pm, The Methodist Church, Oxford Place Centre

London - full

Edinburgh - places available - Tuesday 1st December, 2.00-4.00pm, Quaker Meeting Rooms

Swansea - places available - Thursday 3rd December, 4.45-6.45pm, The Environmental Centre, Old Telephone Exchange

We would expect your Area or Group to reimburse your travel costs. If this is not possible, please indicate on the registration form, under other comments. Click here to register (Registration Form) - <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Regional+Meeting+Registration.htm>

Tom's Blog November 09

Thoughts and reflections from the Chief Executive, Tom Franklin (News - posted 29 October 2009)

What a great time of year it is to be out walking.

The trees are looking stunning at the moment. It's not only the Autumn season, but the start of the Ramblers Annual General Meeting (AGM) season – which means that I get a chance to join Areas on their pre-AGM walks, to visit parts of the countryside I don't normally get to see.

I'm looking forward to it.

For 75 years

Plans are well underway to celebrate our 75th anniversary next year. (Have you seen the fabulous vintage illustration that's currently on our home page?) It's an opportunity to celebrate all that we've achieved, as Britain's walking charity, over the past 75 years. I was watching Andrew Marr's *The Making of Modern Britain* on television last night, which covers the tumultuous first half of the 20th century - when Britain was making great leaps towards democracy and greater equality. I was thinking how the Ramblers has been very much part of that modernisation of Britain – campaigning for everyone, whatever their status or background, to have access to the countryside and opportunities to enjoy the freedom of walking. The 75th celebrations are also an opportunity for us to look forward – to celebrate how we're evolving, building on our achievements from the past 75 years, to take the Ramblers into the 21st century and remain relevant in the future. That's why we're also doing new types of activities – like promoting walking for families, and for people who don't walk at all.

Different Areas and Groups are planning their own celebrations, within the overall themes for the year. I'm looking forward to attending North East Lancashire's day of celebration on Saturday 26th June. Each of the Groups within the area - Clitheroe, Hyndburn, Rossendale, Burnley & Pendle and Blackburn & Darwen are organising one or more walks to the summit of Pendle Hill. We are all meeting at the trig point at 1.00pm for a picnic lunch.

One of the highlights of the year will be the 75th Anniversary baton walk. The baton won't directly be passed from group to group – the emphasis is on its passage through Britain. Take the baton on a Group walk, and take a photo and send it to us. These will be put on a special 75th Anniversary website. More details in the volunteering news section ([click here](#)) - and there will be more updates to follow.

We will be delighted to hear from you about your ideas to take part in the celebration of 75 years. This is an excellent opportunity to highlight the important work that Ramblers volunteers do for your community. It is also a chance to recruit new members. Please let the team know your plans by emailing them to 75anniversary@ramblers.org.uk.

Business Plan published

The Ramblers financial year runs from October to September, and we have recently published our business plan for the new financial year. A web version is available on the volunteers section of the website. We've also produced a three-minute YouTube video, for those who prefer not to go through a long document, highlighting some of our targets for the year.

The past year has been a very difficult one, for the Ramblers and for other charities. The Board, and the Senior Management Team (SMT), have needed to take some very tough decisions in a very short space of time. We're in the longest recession in living memory, and we're not yet through those tough times. But we're in a stronger position than before – with a balanced budget agreed.

A coastal access milestone

We're almost at the finishing point for the coastal access legislation. After nearly a year in Parliament, we expect the Bill to receive Royal Assent in the next few weeks. A huge congratulations to all volunteers who have helped with the campaign – over a four-year period – and also to Justin Cooke, our Senior Policy Officer, who has guided our work. We'll be celebrating and thanking our supporters during November, and then the work to achieve the coastal route changes gear. We need to ensure that the right secondary legislation is proposed by ministers, we need to work with Natural England in the selection of the four pilot areas, and we aim to recruit and train around 80 volunteers to help with getting the

best route in those pilots. Justin says that he is looking forward to spending less time in his suit in the corridors of Westminster, and more time in his boots along the coast.

See you next month.

Views on Tom's blog? Let us know - tom.franklin@ramblers.org.uk

AGM Form

AGM form - If your Area or Group has just had its AGM please let us know about any changes in volunteer roles. (Action request - posted 23 October 2009)

If your Area or Group has just had its AGM please let us know about any changes in volunteer roles. Please complete the AGM form -

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/AGM-changes-officers\(Fin\).doc](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/AGM-changes-officers(Fin).doc) and either post it to central office, or email it to membership@ramblers.org.uk.

Using the form helps ensure we have all the information we need to update our database. If you prefer to send the details in another format, please email them to membership@ramblers.org.uk.

Ramblers Business Plan on YouTube

Take a look at the highlights of our new Business Plan, in this short YouTube video (News - posted 21 October 2009)

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Ramblers+Business+Plan+on+YouTube.htm>

Please note that the video has sound - so please turn on your speakers if you have them.

General Council 2010

General Council 2010 information (Event/information - posted 21st October 2009)

Dates and information regarding General Council 2010 can be found here - <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Governance+and+General+Council.htm>

This is to advise you that General Council 2010 will be held at Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX from Saturday 10th April to Sunday 11th April 2010.

This section has been created and will contain all the information that you need in the run-up to General Council.

The Board of Trustees strongly encourages Areas that at least one delegate from each Area be somebody who has not attended General Council before. This is to ensure that different people get a chance to take part.

If you have any queries regarding General Council, please do not hesitate to contact jo.smith@ramblers.org.uk , 020 7339 8539.

GC01 Document - Key Dates -

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/GC01.doc>

GC02 Document - Motion form -

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/GC02.doc>

GC03 Document - Explanation of rules for submitting motions -

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/GC03.doc>

Special national and regional meetings for volunteers with the chair and chief executive

Meetings to take place in Durham, Birmingham, Bath, Leeds, Edinburgh, Swansea and London during November and December. (Events - posted 15 October 2009)

The two-hour meetings are being held to help improve communications between central office, the Board of Trustees, and Areas and Groups of the Ramblers - Britain's walking charity.

Each will involve both Rodney Whittaker, Chair, and Tom Franklin, Chief Executive. All volunteers are welcome, although as space is limited early booking is recommended to avoid disappointment (see booking form below).

The meetings will:

- begin with a short introduction from Rodney and Tom, explaining the priorities in the Business Plan for the year ahead and how they fit with the Ramblers work of improving places where people walk, and encouraging more people to walk .
- include an opportunity to discuss volunteer concerns, hopes, and ways forward for the year ahead, for Rodney and Tom to report back to the Board of Trustees and the Senior Management Team.

Tea and coffee will be provided.

The dates and times of the meetings are:

Durham

Tuesday 10th November, 4.45-6.45pm, Hatfield College, North Bailey

Birmingham

Tuesday 17th November, 5.00-7.00pm, Central Library

Bath

Thursday 19th November, 5.00-7.00pm, New Oriel Hall, Larkhall

Leeds

Tuesday 24th November, 1.30-3.30pm, The Methodist Church, Oxford Place Centre

London

Thursday 26th November, 6.15pm-8.15pm, The Ramblers central office, Camelford House

Edinburgh

Tuesday 1st December, 2.00-4.00pm, Quaker Meeting Rooms

Swansea

Thursday 3rd December, 4.45-6.45pm, The Environment Centre, Old Telephone Exchange

We would expect your Area or Group to reimburse your travel costs. If this is not possible, please indicate on the registration form, under other comments.

Click here to register (Registration Form) -

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/Regional+Meeting+Registration.htm>

Ramblers Business Plan 2009-2010 published

A web summary of the 2009/10 Business Plan has been published for volunteers' reference. This sets out the work which staff will be doing over the coming year to implement the strategy. (News - posted 12 October 2009)

The Business Plan covers the period October 2009-September 2010, and can be downloaded as a pdf document at the end of this page. It sets out the priorities which staff will be working to over the coming year.

Key points in the Business Plan include:

- A balanced budget, with projected income of £5 million matching spending of £5 million - the first balanced budget for many years.
- A cautious approach to income - reflecting the financial climate at the moment.
- Focus on the implementation of coastal access, and the forthcoming government review of freedom to roam legislation.
- A target of 500 footpaths opened, unblocked or newly recorded.
- Over 35,000 people benefiting from Get Walking, Keep Walking by the end of the year
- New training for volunteers, and further improvements of the volunteers website
- Improvements to member care, with faster turnaround of applications and responses to enquiries.

We are Britain's walking charity - campaigning to improve the places where people walk, and helping to get as many people as possible walking - whether for pleasure or purpose.

The new Business Plan sets out what we'll be doing in both our the traditional work areas that we are best known for (such as footpaths and access), and in newer activities (such as shorter walks and urban walking).

Download from:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Resources/Ramblers%20Association/Website/Volunteering/Documents/Ramblers%20Business%20Plan%202009%20to%202010%20web%20version.pdf>

(Please note the above document is 1.5MB, and should not be downloaded if you access the web via 'dial-up' rather than broadband. For a plain text version, without photographs or formatting - 270KB - visit the resources page for Secretaries -

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Resources/Sec.htm>)

Summary of the Board of Trustees meeting 20th September 2009

Read a summary of the decisions taken at the Board meeting in September (News - posted 7 October 2009)

Board of Trustees Meeting 20th September 2009

The board meeting took place on the Sunday, at Losehill Hall in Hope, Derbyshire, following a weekend of reviewing the strategy, Fresh Air, Firm Ground, with the Senior Management Team (SMT). On the Saturday evening, we were joined at dinner by Graham Rothery, Staffordshire Area Chair, Terry Perkins, Greater Manchester and High Peak Area Chair, and Salle Dare, Greater Manchester and High Peak Area Secretary. We were also joined by Katherine Hudson from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, who gave a presentation on the challenges faced by membership organisations.

Following the weekend, where many important decisions were taken, a letter was sent to Area Chairs and Secretaries, with the request that it be cascaded to other volunteers.

Business Plan and Budget for 2009/10

- We gave broad approval to the Business Plan for the coming financial year (which begins on 1st October). The plan sets out how we intend to raise income, and what we will spend it on. Targets for the year include: 500 paths unblocked, saved, or newly recorded; influencing the implementation of coastal access and responding to Natural England's four national pilot schemes; developing a Ramblers strategy for the review of access land; and the production of a Manifesto for the Walking Environment. The full business plan will be published shortly.
- We approved a balanced budget for the coming year. This is the first time in many years that a balanced budget has been set. The Board also agreed a specific additional investment of £50,000, to be spent on extra staffing capacity to make improvements to the CRM system. This will iron out the biggest problems which volunteers have faced, and will help to generate additional income from fundraising.

Announcements

- We noted with sadness the deaths of Gordon Edwards, Member Ivel Valley Group (Bedfordshire). A long time member of the Ramblers, he devised, created and way-marked the Bunyan Trail. He was an enthusiastic and very committed member of the footpath committee. We also noted with sadness the death of Brian Healey, footpath officer for Ceredigion.

Chief Executive's report

- We received an update on the CRM system. Individual subscription problems have now broadly been dealt with, gift aid claims are now submitted to HM Treasury on a monthly basis (important for cash flow), people who join via the website now have their details automatically uploaded into the CRM (saving staff time to focus on answering enquiries). Most importantly, the oldest membership application was now just one week old. Progress is still needed on improving the membership reports for membership secretaries, and fixing problems with label runs.
- The Chief Executive reported on a number of campaigns successes, national and local, over the past months. Our coastal access campaign is on the verge of a significant milestone, with the Marine and Coastal Access Bill about to become law. A path has been added to the map in Shiplake, Oxfordshire, with clear benefits for local people. This was a local campaign supported from central office, with advice given over the years. Our Rights of Way Improvement campaign, focussing on funding, has got off to an excellent start. We already have the support of Natural England, and the Local Government Association (LGA) – they are each helping us to build a broad coalition of supporters. The first local authority to sign up in support is Lake District National Park Authority, and three others have now signed up. Our petition on the No.10 website, calling for the repeal of the 2026 cut-off date to record public paths, had attracted 6,431 signatures by the time it closed in July. The Government responded, referring to the work of the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) - on which we have a representative. It is hoped the SWG will agree a set of proposals soon. Somerset Ramblers held a useful meeting with the Cabinet Member for the Environment in August. The council promised closer partnership working, as well as commitments to involve the Ramblers in discussions on budgets for rights of way and access. The Somerset campaign was originally set up with the help of central office staff. During July and August our profile was raised in the media via coverage on the 'cows issue'. We have successfully worked with the National Farmers Union (NFU) to produce a joint news release on cows and walkers, with further joint initiatives in the pipeline.
- Other successes include 800 people signing up at three Get Walking, Keep Walking events in Manchester, Birmingham, and Whitechapel; meetings with Olympic chiefs to discuss encouraging walking to Olympic events; completion of a family walking project in Barrow in Furness involving 120 adults and children, and the start of a small project to encourage people in cities to go to the countryside to walk.

Trustee/Area Communications

- We agreed that the Area Communication scheme – linking individual trustees with Areas had gone well and this would be continued. Rodney Whittaker (Chair) and Tom Franklin (Chief Executive) would be setting up a series of regional meetings with volunteers, to listen to concerns and to explain the background to the difficult decisions on spending.

Office accommodation

- We agreed to extend the lease on Camelford House, London, which is due for renewal early next year, and that we would look for suitable tenants to sub-let spare space, to help reduce costs. We also agreed we were minded to move the central office of the Ramblers out of London when there is a break clause in the lease, in five years time. This could save money, and also put us closer to the centre of Britain. Senior managers were asked to explore options and report back to us.

Scotland and Wales

- We received and considered reports from both the Welsh Council Executive Committee (WCEC) and the Scottish Council Executive Committee (SCEC), expressing deep concern about the reductions in spending for Wales and Scotland which we had agreed at our meeting in May, including the closure of the physical offices. We discussed the views of some members that separate organisations should be established in Scotland and Wales.
- We heard from SMT that the physical offices in Scotland and Wales would remain open for the coming year because of lease commitments, and a new project fundraising staff post had been

created for Scotland and Wales, to help raise funds from trusts and statutory sources. Both of these changes had been budgeted for.

- The unanimous view of the Board was that it is in the best interests of walkers in Scotland, Wales and England for the Ramblers to operate across the whole of Great Britain as one organisation, and we pledged to work with members in Scotland, Wales and England to achieve this. However, we also recognised that members in Scotland and Wales have the right, were they to wish to move to separate sister organisations, to be able to do so. We would, in this event, work amicably with them to make this possible.

Countryside protection

- Following widespread consultation, we agreed that our work on countryside protection be refocused onto issues specifically relevant to those who walk, and the walking environment. The topics of countryside work we will take forward will include: transport, the 'walkability' of places, national and regional planning and development, and nationally designated landscapes.

Action taken on motions to GC

- The Board considered a report on actions taken to implement motions passed at General Council, and agreed that the report should be circulated to GC delegates and Areas (included in October round-up).

Area letters

- We received and noted a number of letters from Areas, including Surrey, Kent, Derbyshire, and Glamorgan.

Agenda Committee

- The Board agreed that, in addition to Harry Mycock, Len Banister would be the second Board representative on the Agenda Committee.

Campaigns

Bovril Great Outdoors Revival

Nominate and vote for 'Rambling' projects in the Bovril Great Outdoors Revival. (Action request - posted 4 November 2009)

The Ramblers has teamed up with Bovril, the well-known drinks brand, in a new national campaign for a 'Great Outdoors Revival'. The focus of the campaign is a website - <http://www.bovril.co.uk/revival/> - where the public can nominate and vote for any outdoor facility or feature that could do with improvement.

For walkers, these might include a series of rickety stiles on a path, missing bridges, dangerous steps, the provision of access points to access land, etc. These could be in rural, urban, or suburban areas.

Nominations will then be considered by a panel of judges, and five winners will be chosen. Bovril will then fund the necessary work, up to a maximum of £20,000 per project.

Visit <http://www.bovril.co.uk/revival/> to nominate a 'Rambling' project, and to vote on the projects already there.

Help Claim the Coast

Support the Marine & Coastal Access Bill by taking action now. The final stages of the Bill will take place in the House of Commons on Monday 26th and Tuesday 27th October. (Action request - posted 15 October 2009)

Existing coastal access can be very limited. In some places, like the south west (where the coast path generates over £300 million for the regional economy every year), access is great. But all too often it is fragmented and of poor quality. The Ramblers would like to see people given the opportunity – and the legal right – to enjoy all of the coast for generations to come.

The Marine and Coastal Access Bill, when implemented, will make this a reality with the creation of a National Trail around the whole of the English coast.

But on the final day of debate in the Commons, the Bill's report and 3rd reading stage, this could all change. This is why we need you to lobby your MP to support the Bill and English coastal trail.

Take Action - Send them a seaside postcard today!

We think our coast is special and we know you love walking there as 72 million leisure visits are made each year. So why not show your MP just how special the coast is by sending them a seaside postcard?

If you live near or are visiting the coast in the next week please buy (or find in a drawer!) a seaside postcard and send it to your MP, you can find out who that is here: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/> (If your postcard won't arrive in time for the debate on 26th & 27th October, you can email your MP from the above site).

Ask them to support the Marine and Coastal Access Bill and speak in support of Coastal Access.

You can also download poster here to put up in your window or car; or a flyer to hand out on walks here.

We're almost there with the legislation. Please help us in this final push to make it happen!

Thank you.

Publicity & Marketing

Exclusive Shopping Evenings at Cotswold Outdoor

Cotswold Outdoor is holding exclusive Christmas shopping evenings with a mulled wine and mince pies for Ramblers members. (Event - posted 29 October 2009)

If you're looking for a more inspirational Christmas shopping experience, away from the crowds and the pressure, then come along to Cotswold Outdoor on 25th November 6.00pm – 9.00pm* where Cotswold Outdoor will be holding a Ramblers shopping evening exclusively for you. The store will be closed to anyone else so you can relax with a mulled wine and a mince pie while you do all of your Christmas shopping.

Your gift giving can be as adventurous and generous as you like this year. We have a range of many top outdoor brands; The North Face, Berghaus, Craghoppers and many more. You'll also find dozens of inexpensive gift sets and some unusual stocking filler ideas for the kids, our expert staff will be on hand to help you select that perfect gift.

With 45 stores across the UK, there's bound to be a Cotswold near you, for your nearest store go to www.cotswoldoutdoor.com/stores.

*times and dates may vary please check with your local store

Silverburn will hold their evening on 26th November. Liverpool store will hold their evening on 1st December.

Finance

Electronic and manual cashbook

New cashbook for Areas and Groups is now available in electronic and manual formats. (New resource - posted 20 October 2009)

The electronic annual return form now includes a cashbook for recording all of your Area/Group transactions throughout the year. The main sections of the annual return are then completed automatically. Please give it a try! (Microsoft Excel required). The annual return form is available by request to areagroupfinance@ramblers.org.uk.

If you prefer to work on paper, a new manual cashbook is now available on the Treasurer's webpage - <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/AreaGroup/Resources/Treasurer.htm> or by request to the Finance Officer - Areas and Groups.

Membership

September Membership Report Update

Update for membership secretaries on the September Membership Reports.(News - posted 16 October 2009)

Dear Membership Secretaries

You may have noticed some discrepancies in the total number of members reported in September's Group & Area membership statistics.

The discrepancies relate to the number of members paying the new concessionary rate and those members who have paid life membership.

Concessionary Membership

The total number of members recorded in the "Group membership", "Area stats for the group" and "Area statistics" sections indicate there are no members in the area/groups paying the reduced (concessionary) membership rate. Unfortunately, the discrepancy has been caused by the change in the naming convention of the old reduced membership rate, now called concessionary membership.

Whilst we carried out the necessary changes and thoroughly tested the CRM system, we failed to identify the impact this would have on the running of the monthly membership reports.

This oversight has resulted in the individual membership types (standard and concessionary) being merged together. Therefore, the number recorded under the section 'individual' & 'joint' will include members paying the concessional rate.

We appreciate this may be misleading; however there is no negative affect on the total number of members in the two (Individual and Joint) groups.

What's more, this error is purely a reporting one and does not mean that members paying the old 'reduced' rate have been automatically transferred to the standard rate.

Life Membership

The total number of life members recorded in the "Group membership", "Area stats for the group" and "Area statistics" sections is also inaccurate.

Members paying reduced life membership (individual & joint) have also been merged into the 'individual' or 'joint' standard rate counts. Therefore, those members listed as Life members are only those members paying the full life membership rate. Again, totals should be unaffected.

We appreciate you rely on accurate membership numbers and apologise for any confusion caused. The rest of the information provided in the report is as usual.

Due to the financial and time cost of producing new membership reports for all areas, we are not able to resupply new reports as a matter of course. The next batch of reports will be corrected. We're also rigorously testing new-style membership reports which we aim to start sending out from November – we'll keep you posted on this.

Many thanks,

Iain Johnston.