

AGMs | The essentials of organising your AGM

At your Annual General Meeting (AGM), you'll carry out formal business in line with your constitution. Once the formalities are done, your AGM is also a great opportunity to engage with your wider local membership. It's a chance to celebrate what you've achieved in the past year and look forward to what's ahead – enjoy it!

This guide is for area and group chairs and secretaries, and covers the basics of organising your AGM, whether you choose to do it online or in person.

1 | The date

- **Area AGMs should be held between 1 October 2021 and 28 February 2022** ahead of General Council and Scottish and Welsh Councils.
- **Group AGMs should be held between 1 October and 31 December** before your area's AGM.

2 | Location: online or in-person?

- It is your choice whether to hold AGMs online or in-person.
- Online AGMs are recommended for 2021-22 due to the unpredictability of coronavirus during winter and the fact many people are still anxious about travelling or meeting indoors.
- If you choose to hold an online AGM, [Zoom](#) is a good platform – the pro option allows up to 100 people to join the meeting. Subscriptions are monthly and can be cancelled at any time, and you can claim that cost on expenses.

“Area meetings work well on Zoom as we have broad representation from all reaches of the county in Gloucestershire”.

Michèle Holden, Area Chair

- If you're holding an in-person AGM, bear in mind you'll probably need to complete the venue's risk assessment, and that any changes in governments coronavirus restrictions could impact on travel and transport and cause the cancellation of venue bookings. Any cancellation costs will not be covered by Ramblers insurance.

- We don't recommend hybrid meetings (some people attending in person and others online). While they seem to offer the best of both worlds, they rely on a very good internet connection and can be complicated to manage – especially when it comes to sound.

3 | Inviting a trustee

- Whether you're in England, Scotland or Wales, you can invite a trustee and/or one member of staff to attend area AGMs, either by putting in the request when you inform us of your AGM date or by contacting the Area Support Team on AST@ramblers.org.uk. Trustee and staff allocation for in-person AGMs will be limited in 2021-22 and based on people's availability.
- In Scotland, at least one member of Ramblers Scotland's Strategic Committee and one member of staff will attend all area AGMs (online only in 2021-22).
- In Wales, one member of the Welsh Council Executive Committee and/or one member of staff will attend all area AGMs (online only in 2021-22).

4 | The agenda

- All AGMs must cover the formal business, including:
 - Approval of last year's AGM report and any matters arising
 - Presentation and approval of annual reports and accounts
 - Election of committee members and independent examiner
 - Discussion of motions
 - Nomination of council delegates
- If a Ramblers trustee, member of Ramblers Scotland's Strategic Committee, member of the Welsh Council Executive Committee or a member of staff is attending your AGM, please allow time for them in your agenda.
- Alongside formal business, it's great if you can also organise some informal activities to make your AGM as engaging and enjoyable as possible. This could be a guest speaker, quiz, short video or film, recognition of team or individual contributions, a panel discussion or a virtual walk.

5 | Inviting members

- Let members know the date and agenda at least 14 days in advance of your AGM. You could use your website, newsletters, social media, emails, mail outs – whatever you think is the best way to get in touch with your members. Groups should also let their area know the date of their AGMs.
- [Area AGMs](#) will be listed on the main Ramblers website, so if your date or venue changes, please contact the Area Support Team on AST@ramblers.org.uk so we can update this for you.
- You may want people to pre-register for your AGM, so you have an idea of numbers. If your members already use an online booking system such as Eventbrite, use what they've used before.
- Ahead of the AGM, areas and groups should share a written financial report and updates on annual activities with members.
- If you're holding an online meeting, make sure you follow up with those who are attending to provide clear guidance about how to join the meeting.

“Our AGM gave us the chance to contact members who weren't opted into emails – not only to let them know the date of the meeting and share the papers, but also to remind them they were missing out on our area newsletter. This helped us increase the number of member email addresses and opt-ins.”

Judith Anson, Area Secretary

AGMs are an opportunity to ask members who have opted out of emails whether they would like to opt back in, because they provide an opportunity to contact everyone in an area regardless of their mailing preferences. This doesn't infringe any data protection

6 | Housekeeping and notetaking

- If you're holding an online AGM, kick off the AGM by letting everyone know what functions are available and how to use them eg. raising your hand, using the chat box for questions and going on mute when not speaking.
- Whether you're holding an online or in-person AGM, you must keep a record of the meeting. This doesn't need to be long. It can simply state the decisions taken, the approval of the

report and accounts, and the names of newly elected committee members and appointed council members.

- An advantage of an online AGM is you'll be able to record the meeting and save the chat box conversation as a record. Let participants know that you are doing this and why.

On Zoom the host can mute everyone at the same time – something worth doing at the beginning of the meeting.

7 | Voting

- You can give members the option of voting in advance by post or email using the proxy form. If you choose to give this option, it needs to be offered to all members and include information on who/when/how to return the votes.
- If you're holding an online AGM, you can use the chat box for voting by asking members to type yes or no. You can manage online voting by explaining you'll assume everyone's happy with a resolution unless members raise their hands, ask questions or add comments in the chat box.
- Platforms such as [Zoom](#) also provide a polling function which can be used for votes. If you are using this extra functionality, we recommend carrying out a test beforehand.
- If votes are tied, refer to your constitution. Most state that the chair has the casting vote.

8 | Actioning the outcomes of voting

Your elected committee members

Once you've elected your committee members, your records on Assemble need to be updated.

- If someone is stepping down, you need to follow these steps on Assemble to end their role:
 - In the volunteer's profile, choose the 'role and responsibilities' tab.
 - Select 'leave role' in the bottom left corner.
 - Select the role(s) they are stepping down from.
 - Enter the reason and end date.
 - Select 'start leaving process'. Once completed, the role will become greyed out in their list of roles and responsibilities.
- If someone has been elected to a role, the chair or secretary will need to follow these steps

to get it recorded on Assemble:

- Complete the [New group and area officer form](#).
- We'll update the records within 14 days.

General Council

- [General Council](#) takes place in April each year.
- Each area can appoint up to two council members to attend and vote at meetings of the General Council (note: Inner London, Surrey and Essex can appoint three council members).
- In line with the motion passed by General Council in 2019, you should look to review how new council members are appointed to ensure that the body of council members is both diverse and properly representative of the wider Ramblers' membership. We encourage areas to appoint at least one new council member at their AGM.
- Areas should seek nominations from members prior to AGMs. When more than two members are interested or nominated, you'll need to vote on who will be appointed at your AGM.
- If you cannot find members who will be able to attend General Council, you should still try to appoint council members as they will be able to participate and vote by proxy.
- Potential motions for General Council should be presented by members to committees in advance of area AGMs and have the support of a seconder. At each area AGM, attendees will vote on the wording of the motion and whether to submit it for debate by General Council.
- If your area decides it wants to put forward a motion to General Council, please follow the [motions submissions process](#) on the main Ramblers website.

Scottish Council

- [Scottish Council](#) takes place in March each year.
- Each area can appoint two delegates and each group can appoint one delegate to attend and vote at Scottish Council.
- Members can propose a motion for discussion at Scottish Council. These should be submitted by their area or group. A maximum of two motions can be submitted by groups and a maximum of three by areas.
- As well as suggesting formal motions, you can email topics you would like discussed at Scottish Council by emailing jeannie.cranfield@ramblers.org.uk by 31 January 2022.

Welsh Council

- [Welsh Council](#) takes place in March each year.

- Delegates are nominated as specified in the Constitution of Ramblers Cymru.
- At Welsh Council, elections are held for honorary officers and for members of the Welsh Council Executive Committee (WCEC). Any formal motions are discussed and voted on.

If you have questions about organising your AGM, please get in touch:

- **Richard, Nicky and Diane | England** via AST@ramblers.org.uk
- **Jeannie | Scotland** via Jeannie.cranfield@ramblers.org.uk
- **Maria | Wales** via maria.hamlett@ramblers.org.uk