

Minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Leicestershire & Rutland Area of the Ramblers Association
Saturday 29 January 2022 @ 9:30am - Zoom meeting

Present: Mark Hewitt, Roy Denney, Suzanne Elliott, Martin James (was Chair now Vice Chair), Chris Dunne, Stephen Peck, Michael Gillon, Georgina Sear, Jack Cornish, Anne Bates, Sharon Davison, Rob Jones (new Chair-elect), Yvonne Lake, Dianne Thorp, Peter Williams, Katherine Hardwick (Secretary), Lisa Parker, Charles de Podesta, Sue Bicknell, Trevor Martin, Howard Watmore, Anita Mothersole, Val Deacon, John Samson, Dave Twigg, Wendy Martin, John Williams, Richard Jack, Kim Vallance, Stuart Tyler

Agenda items

1. Chairman's opening remarks and welcome

Martin welcomed everyone to the meeting & advised the meeting is being recorded to help the secretary prepare the minutes. Apologies for the changed format. Martin was contacted by Central Office before Christmas & advised to change the meeting to online based on latest information. Apologies to Dave Twigg & Loughborough Group who had organised the In-person meeting. Martin welcomed Jack Cornish from Central Office.

2. Previous AGM minutes from meeting on 30 January 2021

Approved: 83% approved vs 17% abstain

3. Matters Arising from the minutes

- a. None

4. Officers Reports – as published in the Write of Way (WOW) magazine

- a. **Chairman** - Nothing further to add & no amendments to make
- b. **Secretary** – Nothing further to add & no amendments to make
- c. **Treasurer** – Nothing further to add & no amendments to make
- d. **Footpath Secretary** – footpath issues are now published on the website. We need a footpath secretary to look after the Coalville area. They would need to be prepared to spend a couple of hours a week looking through area planning applications & reporting any issues. Please contact Martin at landrarea@gmail.com
- e. **Walking Environment Officer** – over the last 12 months has been helping the Charnwood Forest in creating 18 walks around the Forest which are available on Ramblers' website, Leicestershire Footpaths Association website. Also working on Lost Ways; Jack Cornish will be our guest speaker later to talk about this. Roy registered his thanks to Peter Williams and Sue Bicknell for their help.
- f. **Membership Secretary** – seems like membership has turned a corner with increases seen across all groups.
- g. **Social media coordinator** – Georgina shared the formal report as published in WOW which will be updated every 6 months. We have seen an increase in followers and a small growth on Twitter so perhaps this is contributing towards the rise in membership. It has been a busy year with The Ramblers' rebrand. Georgina has updated the Area website and would like to thank Jim Storer for his help in handing over this. She has been working with Lutterworth to develop their website & working with Val Deacon to reinvigorate their Facebook page. WOW has moved to an online electronic email newsletter and members have been asked to make sure their email addresses are up to date to ensure they continue to receive this. Georgina has also updated the Area page of the GB Ramblers website. Local Groups will need to update theirs following a very simple process of filling in a few forms & including 1 picture. The deadline is 13 February. Any questions, please contact Georgina.

5. Adoption of the accounts as published in WOW

Approved: 92% of attendees vs 8% abstain

6. Jack Cornish – Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW)

Jack gave a short presentation to talk about progress over last 12 months on the Don't Lose Your Way initiative which is recording historical rights of way. The nation has until 1 January 2026 to record lost historical rights of way.

Already identified 49,000 miles of potential lost historical Rights of Way, which indicates the scale of this huge issue. A path could have been lost for a number of reasons such as a motorway being built or a reservoir or from a diversion at some point in the past. We are asking people to prioritise the paths via the DLYW website- <https://dontloseyourway.ramblers.org.uk/>. Any member of the public can suggest a priority and local volunteers are approving these. By spring of this year, anyone will be able to sign up to be a DLYW researcher.

DLYW are continuing to push government for the 2026 deadline to be delayed or abolished so that we have the most time possible to save rights of way. The Secretary of State can extend the deadline by 5 years and given the scale of the issue, this is something The Ramblers are pushing for.

This project & its campaign does attract the attention of the public; it resonates with them. DLYW has 22,000 people on their mailing list, who the team communicate with to get them involved in the research & to talk about the importance of the Ramblers.

Jack was asked how we can promote being involved in this project with our members? Roy mentioned that 2-3 of our core people aren't members of the Ramblers but they go searching for footpaths & indicative evidence of old routes. They do a mix of both on-the-ground work and searching through maps. Signs such as cobbles or a sunken path can suggest that there was a route there at some point and we encourage people to look out for these signs locally.

Action: Roy will reissue some training material to Georgina to share on the website which is a step-by-step guide for how to get involved in DLYW.

7. President's Address

Peter thanks Jack for spending time with us on Saturday morning & talking about this incredibly important issue, commenting that it is great to see how seriously The Ramblers are taking this issue. Peter encourages everyone on the call to do anything that they can to support the initiative individually and to step forward to help with the process & bring the importance home to people. Thanks to Jack also for representing Central Office at our meeting today.

Peter expresses his thanks to Martin for his stint as Chairman & the extra time he has served. He had to deal with very difficult issues through the pandemic but has approached this with dynamism and leaves us in a healthy state. Thanks also to fellow committee members who have worked very hard and are doing great things.

Thanks to Roy. Although we have come to the end of physical WOW magazine, Peter hopes Roy will continue to edit the electronic WOW. Well done and thanks for keeping us in touch with our members.

Thanks to Ramblers nationally. It's been especially great to see the progress made on the English national coastal path this year.

Enjoy local walks in the year ahead!

8. Election of Officers

Chairman – Rob Jones has agreed to stand as Chair. Proposed by Martin, seconded by Roy.

Approved: 100% of attendees

Rob then thanks members for electing him and thanks Martin for conducting the role of Chair. Rob talks about the fact that membership is increasing, walking has become more important to people during the pandemic & how he

hopes we can continue to capitalise on this renewed interest & grow membership over the coming years. He is keen to understand how we can make our membership value for money as well as communicating about the benefits The Ramblers bring, with a decent programme of well-led walks. He is keen to see us work together; we're all members of The Ramblers at the end of the day & reminds us that we're not competing with each other but with the non-Ramblers groups of which there are so many at the moment.

Roy mentioned that he was delighted to second Rob as Rob has been such a stalwart member of The Ramblers. He has been to General Council & Roy believes he is an excellent choice to follow Martin. Roy started producing WOW 22 years ago, one year before Rob joined The Ramblers

Vice-Chair – Rob Jones proposed Martin to stand as Vice Chair for a year so that he can assist Rob in his first year. It was proposed that when a Chair is in the last year of a 3-year term, moving to a Vice-Chair position would give some continuity. Anita stated she considers this a great idea.

Proposed by Rob, seconded by Peter. Approved: 100% of attendees.

Martin (Vice-Chair) continued to chair the meeting

9. Election of other officers

Charles de Podesta is to stand down as Assistant Footpaths Secretary

The Editors role is made redundant now that the WOW is electronic however Roy will continue to write articles for electronic version.

Tony Smith has asked to stand down as Member Without Portfolio

All other current officers are as shown in the WOW

Social Media Coordinator will now be called Communications Officer and Georgina will continue in this role.

Georgina mentioned that as the role is now quite broad looking after the website, social media & Mailchimp, if anyone has an interest in any of these areas it would be helpful to have someone in the background who can shadow her to learn the ropes. Please contact Georgina if interested.

Poll to elect all committee members as they currently stand:

Proposed by Peter Williams & seconded by Suzanne Elliott

Approved: 100% of attendees

10. Election of up to two members of affiliated organisations to the AEC

None present therefore this agenda point did not progress.

11. Confirmation of President & Vice Presidents

Chairman assumes the conduct of the meeting and asks members to affirm Peter Williams as President, Michael Statham as Vice President and to award John Williams the status of Vice President in recognition of his many years' service to the area. Martin thanks John for all the work he's done in Rutland over the years.

John was very pleased to have heard about it & stated that he was also surprised. Roy mentioned that John has done such a great deal for The Ramblers over the years & thanks him.

12. Confirmation of appointment of an Auditor/Independent Financial Examiner as Chris Tipper

Proposed by Lisa Parker & seconded by Suzanne Elliott

Approved: 100% of attendees

13. Any proposed changes to the constitution

There are two changes to those published in WOW and this is around the use of Zoom, to confirm in our constitution that we can use online meetings when we need to.

Proposed by Roy Denney & seconded by Suzanne Elliott

Approved: 96% For vs 4% Against

14. Any proposed motions for General Council

We are only permitted to take one Motion to General Council. Having had some discussion with Central Office we have decided not to proceed with contesting the assignment of new members by postcode as we would like to continue our discussion with Central Office without the need to go to General Council.

The Motion we therefore propose to take to General Council relates to the inclusion of local news in Walk magazine. This is to ensure we continue to reach members who don't have email addresses and won't receive the new MailChimp newsletter. It was referenced that the Southeast Walker which covers London, Essex, Surrey & Kent is included in Walk magazine as a separate mailer therefore if The Ramblers are doing it for one part of the country it is only equitable that they do it for the rest of the country.

Proposed by Roy Denney

Approved: 83% For vs 12% Against vs 4% Abstain

15. Nomination of two representatives to General Council

To take place 9th April 2022 at the NEC Birmingham, 1 day only. No observers due to space.

Roy Denney to Propose motion. One other to be elected from the floor.

No volunteers therefore referred to next AEC

16. Report of any Central Office Representative if present

Jack Cornish took several questions from the floor.

Peter asked how we recruit younger members. Jack pointed to special interest groups & learnings from Scotland specifically the Out There award for 18-26 year olds, encouraging them to kick-start their journey into the outdoors. He also pointed out that the new rebrand for The Ramblers is specifically designed to encourage younger people to join & increase our social media reach. <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/out-there/out-there-award.aspx>

Howard asked Jack why the mileage allowance had not been increased as Leicester District claim the miles and submit it to the Air Ambulance. Jack wasn't sure but committed to find out & report back.

Roy & Martin asked how we can use Walk magazine to promote the Ramblers & increase membership. A general discussion followed on this topic and the pros & cons of Assemble.

There then followed a discussion on the Membership system which has been having issues again. Melton temporarily lost six members because Central Office had transferred the membership system on to a new system and the new members disappeared. Membership allocation is a key priority for Lutterworth & Leicestershire in general as we are losing members to neighbouring groups. James Austin, Delivery Officer & Diane Simcoe, Area Support Officer from Central Office have said that when the new website is launched, they will look at this issue.

17. Area Events

- a) Area walk – Saturday, late summer - Hinckley Group
- b) Area Quiz – Friday night Oct / Nov - Lutterworth Group
- c) Next AGM - Last Saturday in January 2023 - Hinckley Group 28/01/2023

YEAR	AGM (Jan)	Quiz (Oct/Nov)	Area Walk (late summer)
2022	Loughborough	Lutterworth	Hinckley
2023	Hinckley	LRWG	Melton
2024	Melton	Leicester	Rutland
2025	Rutland	Coalville	Lutterworth
2026	Lutterworth	Loughborough	LRWG
2027	LRWG	Hinckley	Leicester
2028	Leicester	Melton	Coalville

The meeting was formally closed and then a 10-minute video from Julie Atard from Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership scheme was shown for those who wished to stay and watch.

Dates of next meetings

Type	Date	Start time	Method
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 17 Feb 2022	7.00pm	TBC
AEC	Thursday 17 Mar 2022	7.30pm	TBC
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 21 Apr 2022	7.00pm	TBC
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 19 May 2022	7.00pm	TBC
AEC	Thursday 16 Jun 2022	7.30pm	TBC
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 21 Jul 2022	7.00pm	TBC
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 18 Aug 2022	7.00pm	TBC
AEC	Thursday 15 Sep 2022	7.30pm	TBC
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 20 Oct 2022	7.00pm	TBC
Officers' Meeting	Thursday 17 Nov 2022	7.00pm	TBC