



**Leicestershire
& Rutland**

MINUTES

36th Annual General Meeting

25 January 2025

Location: Wing Village Hall

Start time: 10:00

Present:

Martin James - **Acting Area Chair** (Melton), Rob Jones - **Acting Area Treasurer** (LRWG), Peter Williams – **President** (L&R Area), Roy Denney – **Area Walking Environment Officer** (Coalville), Sue Bicknell – **Area Member without Portfolio** (Lutterworth & Market Harborough), Trevor Martin – **Area Member without Portfolio** (Hinckley)

Hinckley: Wendy Martin, Tony Smith, Mike I'Anson

Leicester: Mark Woodall, Sue & Ian Forsythe,

Melton: Ruth & Barry Clarke, Helen & Nigel Mee, Suzanne Elliott, Chris & Jo King, Simon Peacock

Coalville: John & Moira Boodle, Glynis Batchen, David Rogers

Rutland: Michael Gillon, John Pitts, Kate Hitchcock, Anne & Jay Ivory, Julie Rolland

Loughborough: Tess Kay

Lutterworth & Harborough: Anita & Tony Mothersole

LRWG: Yvonne Lake, Mark Hewitt

L&R Area: Rachel Hooke

Undeclared: Steven Pain, Debbie Hoy

Ross Maloney – **Ranblers Chief Executive**

1. Chair's welcome

Martin welcomed all to the AGM, and thanked Michael Gillon and Rutland group for hosting.
Richard Siddaway (Area Secretary) is currently unwell, therefore Suzanne Elliott is taking the minutes.

2. Apologies for absence

Richard Siddaway (Area Secretary), Ray Phipps (Area Membership Secretary), John Samson (Area Newsletter Editor), Bob Lucas (Rutland), Nan Ingrams, Helen Czasznicka.

3. Approval of minutes of previous AGM on 27 January 2024

Minutes approved

4. Matters arising

none

5. Presentation of Annual Reports

All reports were circulated prior to the AGM.

a. Chair's report (Rob Jones)

As circulated

b. Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts (Rob Jones)

As circulated

Additional info: Area began the year with c £6k and ended on £5.4k, which is still a healthy balance so additional funds have not been requested this year. Area anticipate spending c £1k over the coming year. Simon Peacock asked where reserves are kept? Rob responded that Area accounts do not work like group accounts (ie they have no reserves)

Mike l'Anson queried if Newsletter Distribution refers to the Area newsletter which is circulated online so no printing costs. Rob confirmed that the amount shown is for the Mailchimp account. Roy Denney asked if the balance shown on the Area account includes money for the Local Access Forum.

Action: To be checked after the meeting (MJ confirmed since the meeting that Lost Ways / LAF is a separate account, and not shown on the balance sheet)

David Rogers stated that Coalville use Mailchimp for free, but that after a certain limit £15/month is demanded. This is why he couldn't use Mailchimp to send out the AGM agenda, and had to use John Spink's email. Can groups use/link with the Area Mailchimp account? Does the RA recommend that groups pay this fee?

John Boodle asked if Ramblers is saying that groups can't communicate due to costs?

Action: Area to investigate the most cost-effective way for Area and groups to communicate with members, by using a shared Mailchimp account.

David Rogers asked if the accounts identify extra money supplied from Area to any groups? Which groups have requested extra funding and how much?

Rob responded that the accounts do not identify extra money supplied to the groups, that Hinckley have been given £75 due to an unforeseen increase in mileage.

Simon Peacock stated that looking at the financial model, funding from Area can't possibly sustain travel expenses at 45p/mile, therefore how does it work?

Rob responded that groups could request from Area if they believe their basic allocation won't cover this, however he believed that a cap may be needed. He went on to say that mileage claims can be made for a pre-walk, however it is L&R area policy that trips away are classed as holidays/social events and therefore must be self-funded. Ramblers guidance is that **areas** decide whether or not to fund pre-walking for trips away. Most areas do not fund this.

Action: Rob to send a reminder to all groups of how they can spend their allocation, and clarify mileage claims and pre-walk costs

Martin reminded the AGM that the Ramblers is a charity, and that claims should be made only if you need to claim. The Area committee is mindful of the needs of all members including those who do not walk; therefore any spending needs to be limited.

David Rogers stated that Coalville applied for further funding from Area, which they have only partially received. If groups are expected to keep the level of spending down to 1 year, and Area have a lot of funds, why does this not apply to Area?

Rob replied that Area have not ruled out further payments to Coalville, but that Area need a breakdown of Coalville expenditure. Hinckley had a portion of their recent request turned down by Central Office. Mike l'Anson to pick up this point with David Rogers.

David Rogers asked why Area holds c £5k year on year?

Rob replied that Area has not requested funds this year, and that Area will continue without funding until the balance is down to standard levels.

Martin clarified that Area had built up funds in budgeting for expenditure related to the Lost Ways project, which were then not required.

Additional info following the meeting: Martin realised that some of the surplus was generated when the Area switched to electronic communication.

c. Secretary's report (Richard Siddaway)

As circulated

d. Footpath Officer's report (Martin James)

As circulated

Additional info: Network Rail want to close 2 crossings (N59 and N54) on grounds of health and safety, and are going to apply for a Temporary Traffic Restriction Order (TTRO) for a 3-month closure to sort out the issue of trains stopping on crossings.

Roy said that there are a couple of very long trains only at night, and in his experience temporary closures mean forever, therefore we should object. Roy also suggested a site visit.

Dave Rogers asked if the Coalville Footpath Officer is aware of the situation. Martin confirmed that the info had been sent to him as soon as it was received.

Action: Martin to arrange a site visit with Network Rail, following which the Footpath Committee will look at the proposal.

e. Walking Environment Officer's report (Roy Denney)

As circulated

Additional info: Lottery funding of Charnwood Forest Project is running behind schedule due to Covid, and has been granted 18-month extension. The path in Bradgate Park to Old John has been approved.

Roy asked all present to remember Stan Warren, who passed away last year. Stan did a lot for the Ramblers and rights of way in general.

f. Membership Secretary's report (Ray Phipps)

As circulated

Additional info: In Ray's absence Martin summarised his report: there have been no significant changes in membership numbers, with Area total at 1529 members (from 1526 last year). Some groups have increased, others decreased. LE96 (L&R Area members not allocated to a specific group) numbers are increasing.

Rachel Hooke stated that people joining do not easily get to choose which group they are assigned to, and then Central allocate them to L&R Area. Sue Forsythe said that people may not realise they can choose a group.

Martin replied that group allocation used to be done on Postcode, and that people joining now have to choose. If people want to move groups at a later date then they have the option to do so.

Action: Martin to get Ray to send out a communication to L&R Area Group members, to help them decide.

At the last AGM a question was asked around whether Area receive funding on a per head basis for LE96 members. Rob confirmed that Area does not receive a per head funding for this group.

Roy Denney asked if the membership figures show the level of churn. Martin confirmed that they do not.

g. Communications Officer's report (John Samson)

As circulated

Additional info: In John's absence, Martin summarised his report: John thanked Georgina for her help. He is currently managing the website, however he does not want to continue with this part of the role, therefore if anyone wants to be considered for this then get in touch with Area.

Mike l'Anson is looking at updating the Hinckley website. Martin said that John will be able to help with this. *During the interval Martin spoke with Trevor Martin (Hinckley webmaster)*

h. Group reports

See reports, as circulated.

6. Adoption of accounts and acceptance of the officers' and groups' reports

Accounts adopted and all reports accepted. Proposed by Ruth Clarke, seconded by Helen Mee.

7. President's Address (Peter Williams)

Peter gave a short address.

8. Election of Officers

a. Area Chair

Martin James (Proposed by Peter Williams, seconded by Michael Gillon)

b. Area Vice Chair

Roy Denney (Proposed by Martin James, seconded by Chris King)

c. Area Secretary

Carol Gillespie (Proposed by Martin James, seconded by Roy Denney)

d. Area Treasurer

Rob Jones (Proposed by Martin James, seconded by Anita Mothersole)

e. Area Footpath Secretary

Martin James (Proposed by Rob Jones, seconded by Sue Bicknell)

f. Area Membership Secretary

Ray Phipps (Proposed by Roy Denney, seconded by Jo King)

g. Area Walking Environment Officer

Roy Denney (Proposed by Sue Bicknell, seconded by Trevor Martin)

h. Area Newsletter Editor

John Samson (Proposed by Martin James, seconded by Rob Jones)

i. Area Website & Social Media Editor

Vacant position

j. Area Member without Portfolio

Sue Bicknell (Proposed by Roy Denney, seconded by Mark Hewitt)

k. Area Member without Portfolio

Trevor Martin (Proposed by Roy Denney, seconded by Mark Hewitt)

l. Members of affiliated organisations – up to two members to the AEC

Vacant positions

9. Confirmation of Presidents

Peter Williams to continue as President. This was approved via a show of hands.

Action: Appointment of a Vice President to be discussed at Area committee.

10. Confirmation of appointment of Auditor/Independent Financial Examiner

Chris Tipper is happy to continue in the role. Proposed by Sue Bicknell, seconded by Roy Denney.

The Area members would like to thank Chris Tipper for his many years acting as our Independent Financial Examiner.

11. Any proposed changes to the Area constitution

none

12. Nomination of two representatives to General Council

5th April @ NEC Birmingham 10.30-4.30. No nominees were identified at the AGM

Action: To be discussed at Area committee.

13. Address and Q&A session with Ross Maloney [Ramblers CEO]

Ross said that this was a great opportunity to meet members, and thanked everyone for the time and effort they put into Ramblers.

He spoke of footpaths, membership, strategies and campaigns, finances, and volunteer support. People associate Ramblers with its values: its campaign work, and enabling people to get out there.

Question & Answers

Q. What strategy is there to get younger people involved? (Julie Rolland)

A. We could spend time targeting younger people but people who join are typically in their 50's, where the kids have moved on.

Q. There are lots of people walking. How do we get these people to join the Ramblers (Yvonne Lake)

A. Walking is free, and should we have the monopoly on that? We are more than a walking club, we are a charity, and a charity is a public benefit that should go beyond our membership. People associate the Ramblers with its values.

Q. If people are on a low income, how do they afford to buy decent walking equipment? What if we had 2nd hand sales of gear, or grants to buy gear? (Sue Forsythe)

A. Schemes do exist. Centrally we have got to think differently about how to enable this. There are lots of barriers to walking, so can we make it easier. We need to think how we utilise resources.

Q. The biggest barrier to walking is fear. How to go on walk, where, how to get back. What is being done about this? (Roy Denney)

A. The strategy is to build confidence to get out there.

Q. If more money was given to groups they would use it. When you joined the Ramblers did you join to work, or as a member? Are all staff members? (David Rogers)

A. They get a staff benefit to opt in.

Q. You are a Paid executive, we are volunteers. The Ramblers website says each volunteer has a volunteer manager. Who is this for us? (David Rogers)

A. I don't know who, as the role of Volunteer manager is not about hierarchy, it is based on issue/topic.

Q. The membership website feels incomplete as you can't see demographics, ethnic groups, etc, and there isn't a box to say who's middle class! There is a lot of stuff on there, that seems to disappear, a search box is needed. (Tony Smith)

A. Demographic data is extrapolated from many systems behind the scenes. Search function – Ross will take that back to Central Office.

Q. What about using TV adverts to encourage new people? Is it worth investing in targeting social media or are we already doing this? (Ruth Clarke)

A. TV campaigns are super expensive and don't always work. It could be a challenge between what we sell and the experience that people have. Facebook provides the biggest conversion rate into new members.

Q. Could the Ramblers target schools? (Ruth Clarke)

A. Ramblers have looked at specific programmes, family walks, and engaging young people, but we need to focus on what we're good at – campaigning and getting people out there.

Q. Are there ways to propose new paths? Some areas are a challenge. (Ian Forsythe)

A. The CROW act review of land designation has been delayed numerous times, but would open up the opportunity. More houses are planned, and we are involved where footpaths are involved. (Roy Denney commented that local authorities already have power to create new paths although probably not the resources needed)

Q. Concentrating on the over 50s is ok, but youngsters' attitudes are different these days. (John Boodle)

A. Youngsters are the most activist by nature. They care about the planet and nature.

Q. A lot of work has been done to engage more diverse groups. A common trend is collaboration, and asking people what they wanted. They want to feel ownership and fitting into something. (Tess Kay)

A. Community outreach officers are there to build confidence in groups. We can't just run in to communities and leave, we need to deliver something that is sustainable and long term.

Q. With the Lost Ways 2031 deadline now scrapped, there is the temptation to forget all the work that has gone on. What will the Ramblers do nationally to bring this to completion? (Peter Williams)

A. There were lots of missing rights of way identified, and much of that work is now with local authorities. The campaign continues, and we can help local authorities to free up the process.

Q. Where are we with the right to walk woodlands and waterways? (Roy Denney)

A. This is part of the Access to Nature bill.

Q. What information needs to be collected on walks? Leicester have different system and versions. (Mark Woodall)

A. Central Office need to know what's going on in groups, and if we don't know much about who is walking, then we can't understand the difference we are making. (Martin commented that this question came up at Area committee recently, and will be discussed with group chairs)

Q. Tell us about your background, and interests outside of walking. To settle a dispute, what colour is your fleece? (Simon Peacock)

A. Ross gave an overview of his background, interests, and some of the key roles and experience that has led him to the Ramblers. He confirmed that the colour of his fleece was terracotta!

Martin thanked Ross for his interesting talk, and providing answers to the many questions.

14. Any other Business

none

15. Area events

The dates for the area events for the next twelve months are as follows:

- a. **Area walk – Saturday in early summer – Lutterworth group**
- b. **Area Quiz – Friday in October / November – Coalville group**
- c. **AGM - Saturday 31 January 2026 – Lutterworth group**

Full Rota of Area events

YEAR	AGM (Jan)	Area Walk (summer)	Quiz (Oct/Nov)
2025	Rutland	Lutterworth	Coalville
2026	Lutterworth	LRWG	Loughborough
2027	LRWG	Leicester	Hinckley
2028	Leicester	Coalville	Melton
2029	Coalville	Loughborough	Rutland
2030	Loughborough	Hinckley	Lutterworth
2031	Hinckley	Melton	LRWG
2032	Melton	Rutland	Leicester

The meeting closed at 12.35