

Rutland Ramblers - Report for 2023

Membership of the group has remained very stable throughout the year at around the 140 mark, with a few leavers being replaced by a similar number of new members.

Our regular fortnightly Sunday walks continued to be really well supported, averaging 20-25 people per walk over the period. A series of shorter walks were added to the programme during the summer and autumn to gauge interest. However, the response was rather mixed in terms of numbers.

Our two main social events were the annual lunch in May, and afternoon tea at Launde Abbey in November. The latter is now a regular fixture on the calendar, and is a great incentive in attracting people to an early winter walk and our AGM - taking place as we enjoy the refreshments. It obviously works as a 'bribe', with a record-breaking 27 folks in attendance!

In other news, two more of our walk leaders attended a First Aid training day right at the beginning of the year, efficiently arranged, as always, by Lutterworth group. We also have a regular newsletter available now, courtesy of our membership secretary. Professionally produced and jam-packed with all things walk related, 'Rutland Ramblings' is circulated to all our members - and definitely makes for a 'good read'.

Earlier in the year some important submissions were made by our group objecting to the controversial Mallard Pass Solar Farm proposal. This massive project, set to cover hundreds of acres of east Rutland countryside, will have a huge impact on users of public footpaths if given the green light, and we certainly needed to have our campaigning voice heard. Solar farms are essential in any future energy mix, but they need to be in the right places. In our view this one isn't!

More recently, closer ties have been forged with the local authority (Rutland County Council), specifically with their new Rights of Way Officer. A dozen or so of our members have volunteered to help assess the state of the county's footpaths, and to get their hands dirty with some simple practical tasks (painting way marker posts etc). Both of these initiatives are now up and running, and will continue throughout 2024.

Michael Gillon
(Secretary - Rutland)