

Avon Ramblers Area Social and AGM Saturday 18th February 2023

Limited free on-street parking spaces in High Street, Chipping Sodbury, BS37 6BJ, or head for the free Barnhill Road Car Park, off Wickwar Road, BS37 6RS (near Waitrose).

10.30 am 5-mile walk: starting from the Old Grammar School, High Street, Chipping Sodbury BS37 6AH

12.30 Buffet lunch: the Watkins Room, at the Old Grammar School

1.30 pm AGM: the Watkins Room

Agenda

1. Welcome from host group: (*John Forrest, chair of Southwold Ramblers*)

2. Welcome from Area Chair: (*Mary Young*)

3. Apologies

4. Minutes of the 2022 AGM

5. Adoption of the 2021/22 Annual Area Report and Accounts

6. Motions: none received by the deadline of Saturday 4th February

7. Elections to Area Council

8. Bank Account Signatories

9. Election of Independent Examiner of the Annual Accounts

10. Election of two delegates to General Council, (national AGM), Saturday 1st April, at the Birmingham NEC

11. Area Appointments

12. Any other business

13. 2024 Area AGM: hosted by Bath group

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2.30 pm:

Talk by Michael Penny, Ramblers Trustee & Honorary Treasurer

2021/22 Annual Report

1. Area Officers' Reports

1a. Chair's Report

Area Council has met four times since the last AGM and has agreed to continue meeting on Zoom. In my report to last year's AGM, I said we hoped to have a social event during 2022 but sadly this didn't happen. I still believe it would be a good idea if we can find a suitable topic.

The September meeting was severely curtailed due to the death that day of the Queen and the planned January meeting was cancelled as there was insufficient business. I think we need to look at the frequency of meetings. The Area Constitution merely states that "The Area Council shall decide when and where it shall meet which shall be at least once a year." Clearly there are some times we need to meet but perhaps members would like to think about this.

During the year we had extensive discussions to agree an Area wide policy regarding mileage claims for recceing walks.

The May meeting noted the 25th anniversary of Severnside Ramblers – well done to them!

All the Groups have restarted their Walks programmes but in some cases the Sunday walks programme isn't as comprehensive as we would all like. We have therefore asked that Groups consider sometimes sharing their Sunday walks, especially with neighbouring Groups.

All Groups have held their AGMs and it is pleasing to see new officers being elected – and we were pleased to welcome some of these to the November Area Council.

During the year Jeff and I have taken part in meetings of the SW Cluster, and we now circulate the Briefing Packs to groups. There have been some changes to the organisation of these. The Area Support team is now the Regional Engagement Team (RET) and the staff numbers increased. The SW Cluster is now the South and South West Cluster but meetings continue to be a good opportunity to discuss issues with representatives of other Areas and Groups and the member of the RET.

Central Office continues to hold online training and information sessions during the year, and I would encourage everyone to keep a look out for these and sign up where appropriate.

I would like to finish by thanking everyone on Area Council for the friendly way in which meetings are conducted. Thanks also to Jeff for all his hard work as Secretary, to Joy who has kept the finances in check, to Graham who takes care of the website and Ed who has organised all the Zoom meetings. Special thanks are due this year to Joy who is retiring as Treasurer – I am sure she will continue to actively support the Ramblers in whatever she does in the future.

Mary Young
Chair

1b. Membership Report

As at the 2022 AGM there were 2107 members in the area.

As at 30 January 2023 there were 2046 members – giving a net decrease of 61.

During the year there were about 340 new members and members who had re-joined.

This was offset by about 350 leavers which includes about 200 who had let their membership lapse and about 130 who had resigned. In addition, there was a reduction of 33 in the AV96 membership where Central office were trying to ascertain which Area they belonged to, so they had been removed from the Membership Secretary's dashboard. (AV96 members are Avon Area members, rather than members of a specific group).

It is not possible to precisely reconcile the numbers due to differing dates involved.

What is noticeable is the number of members who resign or let their membership lapse after having only been a member for one year.

It is interesting to look at some of the background statistics for Avon area:

- 47% are female, 40% males and 13% unknown
- we don't know the ages of 32% of members but of those we do - 17% are age 60/69, 22% are 70/79, 9% are 80+ - all these are slight increases on last year.
- 13% of our members are registered as volunteers
- we have email consent from 50% of our members

It is great that we have so many volunteers in the Area as every volunteer contributes to the activities we are so proud of, and helps spread the word about the good work we do.

Whilst numbers walking with us are still down on pre-pandemic levels it is pleasing that these are slowly starting to recover.

Mary and Jeff
Joint Area Membership Secretaries

2. Committee Reports

2a. Avon Path Volunteers

The three "heavy" teams have continued with their activities, as before:-

Kingswood have continued to instal gates in lieu of stiles, including kissing gates and Bristol gates, and also waymark posts. They have also helped Friends of Avon Valley with some steps. Their regular work with Friends of Syston Common has included a project called "Commons Connect". The path clearance team has still not been operating for the last year and it is hoped to recruit members for this.

Southwold have continued working with Phil (SGlos Ranger) and with 2 of BRAM Team “on loan” fortnightly, mostly installing kissing gates and Bristol gates in lieu of stiles. Notably, Southwold took out a metal kissing gate and replaced it with a larger RADAR gate. It is not known if this was a one-off project or whether there will be a move to change more. One new member has joined the team.

In one year, BRAM Team have completed about 86 work party tasks, over at least 47 occasions, amounting to in excess of 349 “person mornings”. A highlight of the BRAM Team’s work this year has been the installation of 27 steps, with handrail and revetment, on a previously treacherous slope below Prospect Stile at Hinton Blewett. Other works have been all over much of the BathNES area, including steps, bridge boards, gates, signposts, etc and clearance of 3500 metres of paths. One BRAM Team member stood down due to relocating. BRAM Team now stands at 11.

The BRAM Shears and Secateurs team have continued to monitor the 75 miles of “Promoted Routes” in Bath & North East Somerset. One more BRAM S and S Team member is needed for Hinton Blewett to Compton Martin to take over from a previous member who stood down due to ill health.

Our expenses continue to be funded by the Local Authorities. Some of our training has been renewed through the Bathscape Project. During the year we have managed to arrange “thank you” lunches for each of the teams.

I have also had approaches from some other groups during the year, seeking advice on how to set up a path maintenance team and on how to gain effective cooperation from their Local Authorities. We remain grateful to our Local Authorities for engaging with us enthusiastically as it becomes more apparent that many groups struggle to get action in their own areas.

We anticipate continuing our work to maintain and improve the footpaths throughout 2023 and we always welcome new enquiries to join the teams.

Keith Weller
Chair of Avon Ramblers Path Volunteers