

Avon Ramblers Area Social and AGM

Saturday 22nd February

Somerdale Pavilion, Tiberius Way, Keynsham BS31 2FF

Parking: If the car park on the right of the Pavilion is full, there is an overflow car park on the left (behind the green primary school building). For free parking, please register your car on the tablet in reception.

Arriving by train: the Pavilion is 10 minutes walk from the station - take the tarmac path to The Chocolate Quarter building and then turn left.

10.30 am 3.5-mile walk: starting from outside the Somerdale Pavilion but also stopping at Keynsham station at approx.10.40 am for any walkers who have arrived by train. (No need to book a place on the walk).

12.30 pm Buffet lunch: the Terrace Room, Ground Floor, Somerdale Pavilion***
Gluten free, vegan and vegetarian options provided.

1.15 pm AGM: the Terrace Room, Somerdale Pavilion***

***for members of Avon Ramblers or one of the Ramblers groups in Avon Area - no need to book.

2.00 pm Talk: Ross Maloney, Ramblers Chief Executive

AGM Agenda

1. Welcome by Chair of Host Group: Andy Selman, Brunel Walking Group

2. Welcome by Area Chair: Mary Young

3. Apologies

4. Minutes of the 2024 AGM

5. Adoption of the 2023/24 Annual Area Report and Accounts

6. General Council Motions: none received by the deadline.

7. Elections to Area Council

8. Bank Account Signatories

9. Election of Independent Examiner of the Annual Accounts

10. Election of two members to attend General Council General Council is the national AGM, taking place on Saturday 5th April, at the Birmingham NEC

11. Area Appointments

12. 2025 Area AGM: hosted by Kingswood Ramblers, date to be confirmed.

13. Any Other Business

2.00 pm Talk: Ross Maloney, Ramblers Chief Executive

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Draft Minutes of 2024 Avon Ramblers Area AGM

1.15 pm Saturday 24th February 2024

Somerdale Pavilion, Tiberius Way, Keynsham BS31 2FF

32 members attended from the Bath, Bristol, Brunel, Clevedon, Kingswood, Severnside, Somer Valley and Southwold groups, plus Malcolm McDonnell (Ramblers Trustee).

1. Welcome:

Mary Young, (chair of Bath Ramblers, and chair of Avon Ramblers), welcomed everyone and thanked Keith W, Ann W, and Jeff R for planning and leading the pre-AGM walk.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Bill T, Carew R, Graham H, Jenny J, Joy H, Ken M and Val J.

3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM

Approved without amendment.

4. Adoption of the 2022/23 Annual Area Report and Accounts

Mary Y said Central Office had been asked to review the IT used when members join online as some new members are opting to join as members of a Ramblers area without realising the option, (and benefits), of joining as a member of a specific group.

Mary said that if any group has any concerns about behaviour by one of their members, it is useful to be aware of the Ramblers Values, listed at the end of the AGM papers.

The Annual Area Report and Accounts were approved.

5. General Council Motions

No motions had been received by the deadline of 14 days advance notice specified in the Area Constitution.

6. Elections to Area Council

6a. Officers (obligatory) – re-elected: Mary Young (Chair), Jeff Rowland (Secretary). and Carew Reynell (Treasurer).

6b Officers (discretionary) - re-elected: Mary Young and Jeff Rowland (Joint Membership Secretaries); Graham Horn (Webmaster); Matthew Godsell (Green Routes Regional Campaigner for WECA).

6c. Two representatives of individual members (discretionary) - no one stood for these posts. Mary said that any members interested in standing for one of these posts could contact Jeff later in the year.

7. Bank Account Signatories - Carew approved as the main bank account signatory. Jeff Rowland, Mary Young and Sylvia Popham approved as secondary signatories.

8. Election of Independent Examiner of the Annual Accounts - re-elected: Bob G.

9. Election of two members to attend General Council, (national AGM), Saturday 20th April, at the Birmingham NEC

John and Latoya H were elected.

10. Area Appointments

Kathy Thomas was appointed as Area Footpath Secretary for Bath and North East Somerset. Noted that Area Council had made the following re-appointments: Bill Tate (Area Footpath Secretary for Clevedon Group area); Keith Weller (Avon Path Volunteers Committee Chair); and Roger Britton (Area Footpath Secretary for Bristol).

11. Any other business

Sylvia P said anyone interested in leading a Ramblers walk for the Wessex Wanderers Railways Walks programme should contact her, and that their walks start and finish at a rail station on the Bristol to Weymouth line.

Jeff encouraged groups to consider submitting a walk as part of the 2024 Bristol WalkFest. He also said that Somer Valley Ramblers would be leading three walks from Midsomer Norton on Sunday 8th September as part of the Somer Valley Walking Festival and would love to see members from other groups join them for one of the walks, and for tea and cake afterwards.

12. 2025 Area AGM: to be hosted by Brunel Walking Group – date to be confirmed.

2.00 pm: Talk by Malcolm McDonnell, Ramblers Trustee

Malcolm spoke about what the Ramblers are doing nationally, which led into a discussion covering topics such the difficulty some walkers would have paying to get to Ramblers walks by train or bus.

Malcolm agreed to take back to Central Office the suggestion that the Ramblers should campaign for the current £2 maximum bus fare to be continued.

Mary mentioned the online survey in a recent Ramblers Volunteer Update newsletter, which gave volunteers the chance to suggest what issues the Ramblers should campaign on prior to the General Election. Mary said members might like to take part in that survey, to submit ideas such as campaigning for keeping the current maximum £2 bus fare.

The meeting closed at 2.49 pm.

Chair's Report

Area Council continues to hold three meetings per year, in addition to the AGM, and these are on Zoom. The meetings are generally well attended and most Groups attend at least some of the meetings which are very friendly and it is always good to see new faces.

The Groups provide reports on their activities at the Area Council meetings and it is always encouraging that most Groups are able to provide a varied programme of walks and social activities. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new Walk Leaders so the practice of sharing walks between Groups is welcome – thanks to those Groups who allow their walks to be advertised within other Groups.

It was encouraging to have two members volunteer to attend their first General Council last year, so thanks to John and Latoya for representing Avon Area and for their detailed and interesting report.

As some of you will know, Central office organises Cluster meetings for the Area Leaders – we are in the South and South West Cluster and Jeff and I attend the meetings (on Zoom). We receive updates covering the national picture but it is also an opportunity to share successes and challenges with other Area Leaders which is very helpful. In advance of the meetings we receive a “Cluster Pack” with the national updates and Jeff circulates these to Area Council members and Group Chairs and Secretaries to share with their committees.

Following discussions at recent General Councils, a review is being undertaken of the Ramblers Governance Model. Prior to this year's General Council, there is the opportunity for Areas and Groups to contribute. Jeff and I will be attending a session on 20 February so may be able to provide an update at the Area AGM.

Group leaders have also been invited to attend a session although by the time we meet there will only be one date available – 26 February. Group Chairs and Secretaries may like to sign up if there are still places available.

Last year I referred to the Draft Guidance for walk leaders and mentioned that a revised, shorter version would be published. It was somewhat disappointing that the final version still seemed too long. You may be aware of a survey of Walk Leaders and the publication of the survey results – this does seem to show that a significant number of leaders are not aware of the guidance or the online training which is available.

I would again thank all members of the Area Council for the friendly way in which meetings are conducted. Special thanks to Jeff for all his hard work as Secretary, to Carew for dealing with the finances, and to Graham who takes care of the website.

Further thanks must go to all the volunteers in the Area – Group officers, walk leaders or members of a Path maintenance team - without you, your Group, the Area or Ramblers nationally wouldn't work.

Mary Young

Membership Report

As at 16 January 2024 there were 2063 members in the area and, as at 6 January 2025 there were 2154 members – giving a net increase of 91.

During the year there were 483 “new” members including members who had rejoined.

There were 314 members who either resigned or let their membership lapse. I have not detailed other smaller changes and it isn't possible to reconcile numbers precisely due to dates involved.

The Group with the largest increase was AV96 whose members are Avon Area members, rather than members of a specific group. I mentioned this last year and it is apparent that other Areas have similar problems as I have raised this at our Cluster meetings. The Membership department has recently conducted a survey of new members of these Groups and we are waiting for the results of this exercise.

Although we only know the ages of 56% of our members, it is interesting to note that where we do know them there is 41% over the age of 60.

Once again, 13% of our members are registered as volunteers – this equates to about 280 members. This includes committee members, walk leaders and path volunteers – we are so grateful to each and every one of them for their time and effort.

Mary and Jeff

Joint Area Membership Secretaries

Avon Ramblers Path Volunteers Report

ARPV have been operating for about 12 years and I hope to be able to show a selection of our work over the last year at the AGM. To give you some approximate numbers: Southwold Team continue to work fortnightly and have been out on about 21 sessions through the year. They have installed about 36 gates, usually replacing stiles, and also carried out some bridge repairs.

Kingswood Team have been out on about 17 sessions changing about 10 gates to stiles and installing some steps. They also now have a regular team who go out clearing on paths in the Kingswood area. BRAM Team (Bath Ramblers Maintenance Team) usually go out every week and did about 44 sessions in the last year - but have “only” done about 6 gates. However, they have also

installed nearly 100 steps and have improved the footbed on over 150 metres of path as well as clearance of nearly 4 kilometres of paths. This has been a notable change of workload for the BRAM Team as “almost all” (I use the term loosely) stiles in the BathNES area have now been changed to gates. It is good to see that the resource is now being used to carry out other significant footpath improvements.

Within South Glos, it is good to see that additional emphasis is now being put into changing stiles to gates. All of these measures are beneficial in reducing the deterrence that some people feel to walking in the countryside and they enable more people to do more walking more often, with more confidence that they will be able to negotiate their route without hindrances.

The members of our BRAM Shears and Secateurs Team each continue to monitor a section of the 75 miles of “Promoted Routes” within the BathNES area.

So, in all, I think we have contributed well in excess of around 1000 to 1300 person hours of work to the two authorities – and that doesn’t include the monitoring and much of the clearance time that goes unrecorded.

Ramblers’ Walk magazine celebrated 90 years of Ramblers in their winter online edition and, as part of this, they featured David Pingstone, our BRAM Team volunteer who had reached his 90th birthday.

Our expenses continue to be funded by the Local Authorities. We have had some small surplus of income over expenditure and we donated contributions for two “projects that will benefit walkers that would not otherwise be funded by the Local Authorities”. In the summer we installed a bench at Burlledge Hill, where I recommend the views over Chew Valley Lake. I am still pursuing the donation of another bench in the Frampton Cotterell area.

In October, we held a “coordination and liaison meeting” which was intended as an informal meeting where members from all teams could meet each other and our local authority Rights of Way Officers. It was also intended that we could showcase our works to Local Councillors, as we have done successfully in the past. Unfortunately, poor attendance this year has led us to question whether we could achieve those objectives more effectively in other ways in future years.

Last year I indicated that we remain grateful to our Local Authorities for engaging with us enthusiastically, which I repeat, and that it had become more apparent that many other groups struggle to get action in their own areas. This year I had contact from a former BRAM Shears and Secateurs Team Member who is now Devon Area Footpath Secretary, seeking advice on how to engage with their local PROW Officers: I hope I was able to help him get started with his volunteering teams.

Keith Weller – Chair of Avon Ramblers Path Volunteers

Avon Area Ramblers Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2024

Income and Expenditure Account

	General	Path Volunteers	Total	Previous year
Allocation from Central Office	3,540		3,540	4,465
Don't Lose Your Way	500		500	
Income from local authorities		2,275	2,275	3,590
Donations	20		20	
Total income	4,060	2,275	6,335	8,055
Payments to Groups	1,867		1,867	2,990
Practical work		1,918	1,918	1,623
Other expenditure	776		776	883
Don't Lose Your Way	43		43	
Donation to Central Office				5,500
Total expenditure	2,685	1,918	4,603	10,996
Net income	-1,374	-357	-1,731	-2,941

Balance Sheet

	30.09.24	30.09.23
Bank balance	8,588	6,857
Comprising		
General Reserve	2,216	2,798
Designated Reserves	4,591	2,278
Restricted Reserves	1,781	1,781

Notes

1. The Designated Reserves relate to i) the Path Volunteers, for planned spending on equipment and projects (£2,634), ii) provision for walk leader training (£1,500) and iii) Don't Lose Your Way funding (£457).
2. The Restricted Reserves are funds that were received from local authorities to meet the set-up costs of any new Path Volunteer teams.
3. The principal items of 'Other expenditure' were AGM expenses (£534) and Zoom licences (£144).
4. The payments to Groups were: Bristol £763, Bath £365, Severnside £261, Clevedon £246, Somer Valley £120, Southwold £112. The Brunel and Kingswood Groups did not seek any funding for the year.

The Ramblers Values

Our values are the core principles that guide us daily in our work and our membership of the Ramblers. We all share the passion that walking is for everyone and by living our shared values we can ensure The Ramblers is an organisation to be proud of. Our values will earn trust for The Ramblers brand which will allow us to open up a world of walking opportunities for even more people.

Inclusive – We make everyone feel welcome and part of the Ramblers community. We make sure we all feel respected and accepted and know our contributions make a difference in achieving our mission.

Inspiring – We strive to inspire people through the way we act and the things we say. We channel our passion and ambition so others are moved to help us achieve our mission.

Empowering – We empower and encourage each other to make a positive contribution to our teams and the Ramblers. We do all we can to make sure everyone has the ability, and feels confident, to take action.

Responsible – We take responsibility for ourselves and those around us seriously, by always acting in a safe and supportive way. We care about the environment and make sure we do what we say we will do.