

Avon Ramblers Area Social and AGM

Saturday 24th February 2024

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

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 a place

AGM Agenda

1. Welcome: *(Mary Young, chair of Bath Ramblers, and chair of Avon Ramblers)*

2. Apologies

3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM

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

5. General Council Motions: (no motions received by the deadline of 14 days advance notice specified in the Area Constitution)

6. Elections to Area Council

7. Bank Account Signatories

8. Election of Independent Examiner of the Annual Accounts

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

10. Area Appointments

11. Any other business

12. 2025 Area AGM: hosted by Brunel Walking Group

2.00 pm: Talk by Malcolm McDonnell, Ramblers Trustee

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**Draft minutes - 2023 Area AGM
1.30 pm Saturday 18th February 2023**

34 members attended from the Bath, Bristol, Brunel, Clevedon. Kingswood, Severnside, Somer Valley and Southwold groups, plus Michael Penny (Ramblers Trustee and Honorary Treasurer).

1. Welcome from the host group

John Forrest (chair of Southwold Ramblers) welcomed everyone.

2. Welcome from Area Chair

Mary Young welcomed everyone.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Bracey, Jacqueline Cadwgan and Kathy Thomas.

4. Minutes of the 2022 AGM

Approved without amendment.

Jeff Rowland said staff had confirmed that they were looking into ways the Ramblers might build connections with the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

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

No questions raised. Both documents were approved.

6. Motions for General Council

None received by Saturday 4th February deadline.

7. Elections to Area Council

7a. Officers (obligatory) – re-elected: Mary Young (Chair) and Jeff Rowland (Secretary).

Joy Harrison stood down as Treasurer, and Carew Reynell was elected to fill that role.

7b. Officers (discretionary) – re-elected: Mary Young and Jeff Rowland (Joint Membership Secretaries); and Graham Horn (Webmaster). Area Access Officer, Area Environment Protection Officer, Green Routes Regional Campaigner, and Publicity Officer were not filled.

7c. Two representatives of individual members (discretionary) - elected: Sylvia Popham. Second vacancy not filled.

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

9. Election of Independent Examiner of the Annual Accounts - vacant.

10. Election of Delegates to the General Council (national AGM), Sat 1st April
Jeff Rowland and Sylvia Popham elected.

11. Appointments

Noted that Area Council had made the following re-appointments: Bill Tate (Area Footpath Secretary for Clevedon Group area); Kathy Thomas (Area Footpath Secretary for Bath and North East Somerset); Keith Weller (Avon Path Volunteers Committee Chair); and Roger Britton (Area Footpath Secretary for Bristol). Sylvia asked if Vice Presidents, (such as herself), needed to be re-appointed each year. Jeff said that was not necessary. Jeff said vacancies for Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW) volunteers were being advertised on Assemble. There were also vacancies for DLYW Coordinators for Bath & North East Somerset and for South Glos, and anyone interested in becoming a coordinator should contact him.

12. Any Other Business:

Joy encouraged members to support the Wessex Wanderers Railway Walks.

13. Date and venue for February 2024 Area AGM:

To be hosted by Bath Ramblers - details to be confirmed late 2023.

14. Talk by Michael Penny, Ramblers Trustee and Honorary Treasurer

Michael spoke about what the Ramblers are doing nationally, which led into a discussion covering topics such as the benefits of organising more social events, how to encourage more young people to join the Ramblers, and the need to make the Ramblers more inclusive.

Joy said Wessex Wanderers had introduced a simplified Risk Assessment form, which listed 'standard' risks and just asked leaders to add any specific additional risks identified on their forthcoming routes. A request was made for Walk magazine articles to focus more on reasonably priced walking kit, and Michael said he would pass that message on to staff.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

2022/23 Annual Area Report

Chair's Report

Area Council has met three times since the last AGM and continues to meet on Zoom. This does seem to work well and the meetings are well attended and conducted in a friendly manner. The Groups provide reports at the Area Council meetings and it is pleasing to note that activity is increasing and social events are becoming more common and popular again. The sharing of walks between Groups has certainly helped to improve attendances on walks and I would thank those Groups who allow their walks to be advertised within other Groups.

We were pleased to welcome Matthew Godsell as the Green Routes Regional Campaigner for the WECA Region. I am sure he would welcome input from others.

As I mentioned last year, Jeff and I continue to join the Regional Cluster meetings and I hope that Groups circulate the Cluster Packs to their committees as they do have useful updates on what is happening nationally.

During the year considerable time has been devoted to two main developments:

a) Refreshed Strategic Plan – this was widely discussed across the organisation and was the subject of an Extraordinary General Meeting of the General Council. The document was broadly agreed but is being refined and the final version is not available at the time of writing. There was a suggestion that the Area might submit a motion to the 2024 General Council Annual General Meeting asking for the scope of discretionary membership fees to be extended – I suggested this be deferred until we see the final document where it might be addressed.

b) Draft Guidance for walk leaders – this has, again, been the subject of extensive discussion. The document has been revised and is considerably shorter but is not yet ready for final publication although it is hoped it will be finalised in the spring.

I had agreed to write to the members of the AV96 Group (Avon Area members) and have recently completed this. I suggested these members might like to transfer their membership to one of the geographical groups or Brunel group in order that they are kept up to date with what is happening locally. Please look out for any transfers from AV96 into your Group.

In conclusion I would like to thank all members of the Area Council for the friendly way in which meetings are conducted. Thanks also 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 – whether running the local Group, leading walks or maintaining our footpaths. The Area wouldn't function without you.

Mary Young

Membership Report

As at last year's AGM (18 February 2023) there were 2046 members in the area.

As at 16 January 2024 there were 2063 members – giving a net increase of 17.

During the year there were 366 new members and 37 members who rejoined.

There were 316 members who either resigned or let their membership lapse. We 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. We believe this is due to the Membership system not being entirely clear about how to select a group. We have however recently written to the members of that group so we will see what happens. We are concerned that we have little contact with them.

It would be interesting if we could find out why members resign or let their membership lapse – perhaps Central Office could be asked to produce some figures.

Although we don't know the ages all members, the average age of those known is 66.

As last year, 13% of our members are registered as volunteers – this equates to about 268 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 Young and Jeff Rowland, Joint Area Membership Secretaries

Avon Ramblers Path Volunteers

This year, Kingswood Team have continued their work with SouthGlos Council to instal gates in lieu of stiles and carry out other path improvements. They have also worked with Friends of Avon Valley and with Friends of Syston Common. The path clearance team has now reformed and meet monthly, having notably cleared an impassable footpath on Lyde Green Common.

Southwold have also continued working with SouthGlos Council, mostly installing kissing gates and Bristol gates in lieu of stiles. SouthGlos Council are now making a more positive move towards changing more stiles to gates.

This year BRAM (Bath Ramblers Maintenance Team) have completed about 62 work party tasks, amounting to 222 "person mornings". In 2023, one of our longstanding BathNES

Council Footpath Officers retired, which caused some disruption to the work flow. There has been a shift in effort from “building things” to “clearing things”, which could reflect the fact that most stiles have now been replaced by gates (where landowners have agreed). We are now working well with the person who replaced the officer who retired. The other longstanding BathNES Footpath Officer is also due to retire in 2024.

The BRAM Shears and Secateurs Team have continued to monitor the 75 miles of “Promoted Routes” in Bath & North East Somerset, with a current full complement of allocations, although more footpaths can be found for monitoring if other volunteers come forward.

Our expenses continue to be funded by the Local Authorities. We have had some small surplus of income over expenditure and we donated £500 to Ramblers’ Central Office towards Volunteer Support. We are also donating contributions for two “projects that will benefit walkers that would not otherwise be funded by the Local Authorities”. These will be a bench at Burlledge Hill and another bench in the Yate/ Sodbury area.

Ramblers Central Office Paths Team have now set up regular online “Footpath Forums”, which I have attended. These have generally been attended by about 100 members from all over the country and allow for an interchange of ideas between different areas. 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 2024 and we always welcome new enquiries to join the teams - further details here: <https://www.avon-ramblers.org.uk/volunteering.html>.

Keith Weller – Chair of Avon Ramblers Path Volunteers

Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2023

Income and Expenditure Account

	General	Path Volunteers	Total	Previous year
Allocation from Central Office	4,465			4,549
Income from local authorities		3,590		2,095
Total income	4,465	3,590	8,055	6,644
Allocations to Groups	2,990			3,048
Practical work		1,623		1,769
Other expenditure	883			
Donation to Central Office	5,000	500		1,000
Total expenditure	8,873	2,123	10,996	5,817
Net expenditure	4,408	-1,467	2,941	-827

Balance Sheet

	30.09.23		30.09.22
Bank balance	6,857		9,798
Comprising			
General Reserve	2,798		
Designated Reserves	2,278		
Restricted Reserves	1,781		

Notes

1. In view of the level of reserves, it was decided to make donations of £5,500 to the national Ramblers.
2. The Designated Reserves relate to the Path Volunteers and are for planned spending on equipment and projects.
3. The Restricted Reserves are funds that were received from local authorities to meet the set-up costs of any new Path Volunteer teams.
4. The principal items of 'Other expenditure' were AGM expenses (£489) and Zoom licences (£322 for two years).
5. The allocations to Groups were: Bristol £1,489, Clevedon £470, Bath £345, Severnside £260, Southwold £237, Somer Valley £189. 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.