



RAMBLERS' GOVERNANCE REVIEW: REVISED PROPOSALS

We have reviewed the outputs from the General Council Conference in detail, which focused on proposals for the trustee elections process and on developing a clearer, more inclusive model for our member and volunteer gatherings and debates.

For trustee elections, members highlighted the importance of meaningful choice, clarity and transparency, strong support for first-time candidates, genuine geographic diversity, and a trustworthy voting and results process. We have strengthened the proposals to reflect these points.

When we talked about member and volunteer Forums (“Gatherings” in the original proposal), you asked for a stronger model with clearer routes for influence, consistent transparency and accountability, improved accessibility, and opportunities for members to engage in a way that is both enjoyable and impactful. We have incorporated your suggestions in revised proposals for the Forums.

Inevitably there were some disagreements expressed on the day. We have endeavoured to take all perspectives into account to ensure the final proposals are balanced, clear and workable.

This report is a detailed summary of the comments and views you shared at the conference and how we have refined the proposals in response.



Above: A selection of your written feedback and suggestions from the conference.

Trustee elections proposals

Summary of what members told us

Members asked for a process that is democratic, accessible and transparent. The key themes were:

- Keep four GB-wide elected roles, alongside the Scotland and Wales elected roles, to reflect our GB-wide identity.
- Make the process welcoming for first-time applicants, with clear, accessible guidance.
- Provide consistent candidate information, including short videos, and consider opportunities for member Q&A.
- Use hybrid voting (online with a postal option) and publish the results widely.

How we have responded

We have refined the proposals to reflect this feedback. We will:

- Confirm six elected roles: four GB-wide plus one each for Scotland and Wales.
- Improve candidate support, including a clear guidance pack, standard profiles and short introductory videos.
- Promote GB-wide outreach, encouraging geographic diversity and using appointed roles to fill any remaining gaps.
- Ensure independent hybrid voting, with results published widely after confirmation at the AGM.
- Clarify eligibility rules, including a 12-month membership requirement and no proposers.
- Introduce a clear annual timetable and produce a post-election report.

Table: Summary of key points

| Theme | Refined proposal |
|------------------------|---|
| Elected roles | Four GB-wide elected trustees confirmed; Scotland and Wales retain their elected roles. |
| England regional model | Not adopted. Instead, stronger GB-wide outreach to improve geographic diversity. |
| Candidate support | Clear guidance pack, glossary, mentoring, videos, standard candidate profiles. |
| Voting | Independent hybrid voting; results published widely. |
| Eligibility | 12-month membership rule; no proposers; clearer guidance. |
| Transparency | Annual timetable, online elections hub, post-election reporting. |
| Officer roles | Chair and Treasurer selected by the Board and ratified by members. |

In more detail

Board structure

Members told us they want a Board that is democratic, representative and equipped with the skills needed for effective governance.

We propose a Board of up to 12 trustees (minimum 8), combining elected representation with appointed expertise. This follows a “6-4-2” model:

- 6 elected trustees: 4 GB-wide, 1 from Scotland, 1 from Wales
- 4 appointed trustees, recruited through an open, skills-based process
- 2 officer roles (Chair and Treasurer), selected by the Board and ratified by members

Geographic representation

Members predominantly favoured a GB-wide approach rather than introducing regional structures for England. In response, we will:

- Retain the four GB-wide elected roles
- Maintain dedicated Scotland and Wales elected roles
- Use appointed positions to address any remaining gaps in geographic diversity

This maintains strong democratic legitimacy without adding unnecessary complexity.

Eligibility

Members wanted simple, fair and accessible rules. To reduce barriers and support participation, we will:

- Require 12 months of fully paid membership to stand or vote
- Remove the need for proposers
- Provide clear guidance on trustee responsibilities

Candidate support

Members wanted to encourage wider and more diverse pool of candidates - especially first-time applicants – so we will enhance the support available. To support first-time and underrepresented candidates, we will ensure:

- A comprehensive candidate information pack
- Standard candidate profiles covering experience, priorities and commitment to our charitable purpose
- Short introductory videos for every candidate
- Exploration of online candidate sessions so members can meet those standing for election

Timeliness and process clarity

Members asked for earlier information and clearer processes. We will implement:

- A published annual timetable
- Transparent stages showing the key decision points
- Adequate time for members to consider information before voting

Voting process

Members wanted fair, accessible and trusted voting. Elections will be:

- Run by an independent provider
- Delivered through hybrid voting (online as standard, with postal voting available)
- Supported by broad publication of results following AGM confirmation

Continuity and renewal

Members expressed the need for continuity while maintaining renewal. To maintain stability while ensuring regular refreshment of Board membership, we propose:

- Three-year terms, normally renewable once
- Up to nine years total where a trustee becomes Chair or Treasurer at the end of a first term

- A rolling cycle to avoid large one-off turnovers
- A two-to-three-year transition period to move smoothly into the new Board structure

National representation

Members emphasised the importance of clear national representation. To reflect the distinct contexts in Scotland and Wales, we will:

- Maintain dedicated elected trustees for both nations
- Expect these trustees to chair their national committees
- Strengthen the link between national insight and GB-wide decision making

Transparency and learning

Members highlighted the importance of clear communication and visible learning. We will:

- Create an online elections hub with key documents, timelines and previous results
- Publish a post-election report summarising turnout, outcomes and lessons learned
- Conduct an annual review to support improvement over time

Costs

Members were concerned about costs. To balance integrity and value for money, we will:

- Use an independent provider to ensure confidence in the process
- Maintain hybrid voting as an accessible and cost-effective model

Member and Volunteer Forum (formerly “Gathering”) proposals

Summary of what members told us

Members asked for Forums that are meaningful, accessible and genuinely influential. The key themes were:

- A clearer, more purposeful name, with “Forum” preferred over “Gathering” to reflect discussion, influence and shared decision making.
- A transparent route from member proposals → regional discussion → national consideration → Board decisions.
- Timely responses and clear feedback loops.
- More member influence over agenda setting.
- Advance materials in plain, accessible language.
- Consistent trustee attendance.
- Clarity around attendance, hybrid participation and costs.
- Events that are enjoyable, engaging and supportive of volunteers, not purely governance focused.

How we have responded

To reflect this feedback, we have refined the proposals to:

- Adopt the name Member and Volunteer Forums, based on member preference.
- Introduce a strengthened feedback and accountability process, with Board responses published within three months.
- Increase member influence in agenda setting through a 40/40/20 planning model and blind topic voting.
- Enhance Board involvement, with regional outputs feeding into national review each year.
- Improve structure and inclusivity of debates with advance papers, set processes and breakout sessions.
- Provide clear guidance on who can attend, that travel expenses will be centrally covered for one member from each Area and Group, and confirm there will be no charge for attendance.

Table: Summary of key points

| Theme | Refined Proposal |
|--------------------|---|
| Language/name | “Member and Volunteer Forums” (clear member preference) |
| Agenda control | 40–40–20 planning team |
| Transparency | Full reports, summaries, digital platform, decision log |
| Board engagement | Trustees expected to attend; decisions published |
| Feedback timelines | Three-month Board response deadline |
| Debate format | Written papers, structured debate, clear processes, time limits |
| Technology/hybrid | Hybrid options, improved technology, online publications |
| National forum | Strengthened role with an annual online national review |

In more detail

Purpose of Forums

Members told us they want inclusive, engaging spaces where their views genuinely shape the organisation's direction. The Forums will:

- Provide open discussion and structured debate
- Allow members to propose, shape and select topics
- Ensure trustees attend, listen and respond
- Offer a clear route into Board decision making
- Combine governance with training, celebration, networking and volunteering support

A three-month response requirement will ensure transparent follow-up from the Board.

Regional and national structure

Members wanted strong links between regional discussions and national decisions. To support this, we will:

- Hold one annual Forum each in Scotland and Wales, and four across England
- Use flexible formats such as plenary sessions, breakout discussions, walks and networking
- Maintain no attendance charges
- Hold a national Forum at least every three years, supported by an annual online national review so regional priorities feed into GB-wide planning every year

Attendance and hybrid participation

Members sought clarity on who can attend and how hybrid options will work. We will ensure:

- All members may attend, subject to venue capacity
- Each Group and Area has at least one guaranteed place
- Hybrid participation is provided wherever practical, supported by improved technology
- Clear annual attendance guidance is published

Agenda setting

Members wanted influence over Forum agendas and debate topics. To ensure members can shape Forum agendas:

- Planning teams will follow a 40–40–20 model (40% members, 40% trustees, 20% staff/experts) and will decide the format, agenda and chair for each Forum
- Topics can be submitted by Groups, Areas or the Board
- Agendas and background materials will be shared in advance and written in plain language
- Additional outreach will encourage participation from newer and underrepresented members

Debate structure

Members asked for structured, fair, well supported debate. We will provide:

- Written reports and questions issued in advance
- A mix of plenary and breakout sessions
- A light touch, easy-to-follow debate process
- Reasonable time limits to ensure fairness
- Clear procedures for considering and escalating proposals
- Opportunities for member-led workshops and external speakers

Follow up and accountability

Members emphasised the need for visible, published follow up. After each Forum:

- Outputs will be recorded using a standard template
- Outcomes will be categorised (for action, for noting, or not taken forward with reasons)
- Both a full report and a short summary will be published
- The Board will review outputs at its next meeting
- A formal Board response will be published within three months, explaining decisions, rationale and next steps

Influence on the Board

Members wanted Forums to have real influence and a strong link to the Board.

- There will always be a trustee presence at each forum
- A formal mechanism will ensure Forum proposals feed into governance cycles
- All Board decisions relating to Forum outputs will be logged and published

Affordability and sustainability

Members highlighted the need to balance ambition with affordability. We will:

- Ensure Forums take place annually but are designed for value and sustainability
- Consider the use of hybrid participation where appropriate and feasible
- Explore sponsorship or partnership opportunities
- Strengthen feedback loops so members can clearly see the value and impact of the Forums