



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
MINUTES**

Tuesday 9 December 2025, 2pm – 5pm  
NCVO, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>WELCOME, APOLOGIES, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND ANNOUNCEMENTS</b></p> <p><b>Welcome and apologies</b></p> <p><u>Trustees</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lucy Robinson, Chair</li><li>• Malcolm Dingwall-Smith</li><li>• Kelly Evans</li><li>• Gavin Baker</li><li>• Dan Firmager</li><li>• Janet Gee (by videoconference)</li><li>• Joerg Kasproski</li><li>• Mark Lavenstein</li><li>• Tina Lewis</li><li>• Graham Taylor</li><li>• Rowan Williams (by videoconference)</li><li>• Mark Chung</li></ul> <p><u>Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chris Hodgson</li><li>• Gulshun Rehman</li></ul> <p><u>Staff in attendance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ross Maloney, Chief Executive</li><li>• Ros Fane, Chief of Staff</li><li>• Tom Platt, Chief Programmes and Delivery Officer</li><li>• Glen Walker, Chief People Officer</li><li>• Clare Jenkins, Chief Finance Officer</li><li>• Samir Afhim, Chief Commercial Officer</li><li>• Simon Kellas, Head of Governance</li><li>• Becky Birrane, Head of Programmes <i>items 9 and 10 only</i></li></ul> <p><b>Conflicts of interest</b> None declared.</p> <p><b>Announcements</b> Lucy welcomed to Samir to his first full Board meeting.</p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>BOARD MEETINGS</b></p> <p>The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting held on 28 October 2025, with one redaction to the public version as proposed by Lucy.</p>

The Board noted the action status report and the forward planner.

#### Area AGMs

Lucy thanked trustees for volunteering to attend Area AGMs, noting that a final allocation list was now available on the trustee intranet. There are still a few AGMs where no trustee has yet been allocated, including two new AGMs which had been confirmed only that morning.

**Action: Trustees to review and confirm final allocations; Simon to put trustees in touch with Area contacts (as per the agreed process).**

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### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Lucy presented her quarterly report, summarising activities and meetings in which she had been involved since the last Board meeting.

She reported that she had carried out the Chief Executive's annual review with Ross, which had been informed by a 360-degree feedback exercise to which some trustees had contributed. She said she was pleased with the progress we have made over the last year across the organisation as a whole, and with the leadership role that Ross has played to deliver this. A new set of objectives for the coming year were agreed with Ross which include adding a more outward focussed objective on influencing public policy.

Lucy also brought two decisions of the Nominations and Governance Committee to the Board's attention, which will be implemented in January:

- The Trustee Register of Interests will be published on the trustee intranet to make it more visible to trustees as a further safeguard to support good decision-making.
- A few small updates were made to the Trustee Code of Conduct (available on the trustee intranet) and it was agreed that all trustees should reaffirm their commitment to the Code once a year after the AGM to ensure that it continues to be a live document supporting our work as a Board.

The Board supported both these committee decisions.

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### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Ross presented, and the Board discussed, his quarterly update report. He said it had been another positive period and, overall, across delivery, finance, people, policy and governance it genuinely feels like the organisation in a good position. He highlighted a number of items:

- Work continues on our Great Britain-wide campaign to mobilise support from members and the public. The Board noted progress on our priority campaign to secure an Access to Nature Bill by 2026. While the refreshed Environmental Improvement Plan signals intent, actual commitments and timescales to achieve real change through legislative change in this Parliament are vague, and we need to maintain momentum on seeking to influence and change.

The Board recognised the need to broaden the organisation's policy, advocacy, and campaign engagement beyond the traditional focus on major political parties, to include emerging parties such as Reform, recognising their growing influence in local and devolved government and potential future role at UK level.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ross met with our Long-Term Partnerships Advisor at People’s Postcode Lottery.</li><li>• Preliminary results of our nine top-line impact measures for 2024/25 were shared with the Board at the September 2025 meeting. We now have the final results for 2024/25 and these were shared with the Strategy and Delivery Committee at its November 2025 meeting and are available on the trustee intranet. Following review of our targets for 2025/26 in light of these results it is proposed to change one of the top line measures for outcome two of the strategy from ‘50k more walk leaders’ to ‘50k more walk leaders <i>trained</i>’ on the basis that we are using walk leaders trained as the means of measurement and, for transparency, that is what we ought to be reporting – essentially aligning the top line measure with what we’re actually counting. The Board approved this recommendation with immediate effect.</li></ul> <p><b>Action: Ros to update business plan.</b></p> <p>Lucy thanked Ross for his report and expressed appreciation to the staff team for their significant efforts to date and the work still ahead.</p>
5	<p><b>BOARD MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE: Q3 DASHBOARD</b></p> <p>Simon presented the Q3 dashboard comprising key compliance-related data designed to support the Board in fulfilling its monitoring responsibilities. There were no significant variances or matters of concern to highlight, but the following was briefly discussed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reportable events: The Board noted an update on a recent event involving a member who had been expelled in September, and was satisfied with the action being taken to manage it.</li><li>• Group walks incidents: The Board noted that most incidents on group walks were due to typical slips, trips, and falls, and that the small increase in reported incidents likely reflects improved reporting following the success of recent safety training.</li><li>• Volunteers recorded on Insight Hub: The Board noted a slight reduction in volunteer numbers, likely linked to recent data cleansing and updates following the introduction of mandatory walk leader training, which is expected to continue influencing current volunteer figures.</li></ul>
6	<p><b>GOVERNANCE REVIEW: OUTCOMES OF CONFERENCE</b></p> <p>Lucy thanked trustees and staff who had contributed to a successful conference, both in preparation in the weeks before and on the day itself. She presented a summary of feedback reported by the workshop facilitators.</p> <p>Overall there was broad support for gatherings (although not that name) with helpful input that focused on ensuring member-involvement and the events being as participative as possible.</p> <p>Overall there was also broad support for the processes around trustee nominations and elections, but with some ongoing fairness concerns about voting rights across nations and whether England should have a dedicated trustee role(s).</p> <p>Trustees discussed the summary report and what they had heard personally at the conference, noting that workshop flipcharts and notes would also be reviewed for additional insight.</p>

	<p>Following discussion, the Board agreed the following in relation to the governance reform proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change to the proposal that four trustees will be elected by all members.</li><li>• No change to the proposal that of the 12 trustees, six will be elected by members, four appointed by the Board, and two selected by the Board and appointed subject to ratification by members at the Annual General Meeting .</li><li>• Gatherings will be renamed Forums, with formal processes for agenda-setting, debate processes established in the Standing Orders.</li><li>• The threshold for proposing a formal resolution or calling a general meeting will be 100 members (not 5% of voting rights).</li></ul> <p>Lucy confirmed she will send an update to Council members before Christmas summarising the conference outcomes and next steps.</p> <p><b>Action: Lucy / Ros / Simon to prepare Council member update based on the Board summary, additional insights from the workshop papers.</b></p> <p>The Board note the outline timeline and next steps to the Annual General Meeting in April, noting that more detail would be added to confirm the timescales and trustee decision points for the remaining review process.</p>
7	<p><b>ANNUAL REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK</b></p> <p>Kelly presented the Board’s annual review of strategic risk, noting that risk management is a core governance function for the Board, and trustees must take ultimate responsibility for ensuring a comprehensive approach to risk is embedded across the organisation.</p> <p>The Board reviewed the current strategic risk register and considered where there were any additional risks that should be included, taking into account the external environment and recent developments, noting in particular the findings of the Charity Commission’s recent Annual Charity Sector Risk Assessment Report.</p> <p>The following was agreed for further review and development of the next iteration of the quarterly risk register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The increasing use of AI tools in charity operations and related risks around misuse, ethical concerns, and compliance. It was noted that an AI ethics and usage policy for staff and volunteers would help to mitigate the risk of reputational damage or data breaches.</li><li>• Changing demographics and generational preferences may lead to a decline in volunteer engagement, particularly if younger generations have different expectations.</li><li>• Investigate the use of Exercise in a Box, a free online resource from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which helps organisations test and practise their response to a cyber-attack.</li><li>• Ensure that risk discussions and mitigation planning remain aligned with strategic priorities and the organisation’s risk appetite, and be alert to the risk of allocating disproportionate attention and resources to low-level risks or areas where risk exposure is reducing.</li></ul>

	<p>Kelly proposed, and it was agreed, that trustees should have a documented set of organisational risk appetites to provide clarity on the level of risk that the Board is willing to accept in pursuit of strategic objectives and help prioritise resources effectively.</p> <p>Following discussion, and subject to the points agreed above, the Board confirmed comfort with current risk position, i.e. that the risks set out in the strategic risk register, and the steps taken or being taken to mitigate them, accurately reflect the organisation's main strategic risks.</p> <p>On the recommendation of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC), the Board renewed the risk management policy for a further twelve months, noting there was one update to include reference to the new issues log.</p> <p><b>Action: ELT to review issues identified by trustees for next iteration of risk register.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Finance, Risk and Audit Committee to discuss organisational risk appetite (date to be confirmed but proposed to be June 2026).</b></p> <p><b>Action: Simon to update risk management policy.</b></p>
8	<p><b>ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING</b></p> <p>Glen presented an update on safeguarding at the Ramblers, with the aim of giving trustees assurance they are successfully discharging their legal duty of care to ensure that the organisation provides a safe environment for all who engage with its activities, including children and adults at risk.</p> <p>The Board noted the progress achieved over the past year and the plans outlined for the coming year. Key developments highlighted included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthening organisational capacity through the appointment of a dedicated Safeguarding Lead, although the individual has since left. Interim responsibility is being managed by Glen and Catherine, our Resolutions Manager, until a replacement is appointed.</li><li>• Development of a Criminal Records Check Policy, aligned with legislation in England, Wales, and Scotland, as a foundation for a forthcoming Standard Operating Procedure for engaging with children and young people, scheduled for completion by March 2026.</li><li>• Plans to improve the visibility of safeguarding information on the organisation's website, ensuring clear reporting routes and practical guidance for Groups.</li><li>• Exploration of a tiered training approach to ensure staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding guidance. Since the launch of Safeguarding Module 1 for volunteers in February 2024, 4,625 volunteers have successfully completed the module. Staff are required to refresh training annually, and trustees will also be asked to do the same.</li></ul> <p>Trustees confirmed that safeguarding arrangements within the organisation are currently robust and effectively managed. They acknowledged the importance of maintaining high standards in this area and noted that safeguarding will continue to attract increasing external scrutiny and regulatory requirements. Trustees agreed that proactive oversight and regular review will remain essential to ensure compliance and best practice, and they</p>

	<p>reaffirmed their commitment to prioritising safeguarding as a core governance responsibility.</p> <p>On the recommendation of the People and Culture Committee, the Board renewed the Safeguarding Policy for a further year (with only minor updates to job titles and references).</p> <p><b>Action: Glen to update policy and publish on the website.</b></p>
9	<p><b>DEEP DIVE STREAMLINED PARTNERSHIPS, PROGRAMMES AND NETWORKS</b></p> <p>Becky presented a deep dive on how our programmes are evolving to better reach people facing the greatest barriers to walking. Looking at case studies, the presentation highlighted progress in adapting delivery models, building community-led approaches, and strengthening partnerships, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training Walk Leaders – tailored workshops for seven community groups and plans for a widely shareable toolkit.</li><li>• Community outreach – engagement with global majority groups in Scotland, introduction of a Champion Scheme, and recruitment of a Community Outreach Trainee.</li><li>• Pathways partnership – collaboration with Carmarthenshire County Council, with 95 volunteers surveying 776km of paths and on track for 1000km by March 2026.</li></ul> <p>The Board noted the importance of robust evidence to demonstrate impact, particularly for underserved communities. Work is underway to improve evaluation through sample-based approaches and enhanced data collection within Wellbeing Walks. These changes aim to better capture health and wellbeing outcomes, strengthen the case for investment, and attract new partners. Trustees discussed what level of evaluation is proportionate and sustainable across programmes.</p> <p>The Board endorsed the continued shift toward, and scaling up of, more targeted, community-led delivery and supported investment in capability, partnerships, and evidence systems to embed this approach.</p>
10	<p><b>SAFETY ON GROUPS WALKS: UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS</b></p> <p>Becky presented an update on the implementation of the minimum standard for walk leaders introduced in 2025, requiring all leaders to complete Ramblers training or self-assess equivalent qualifications by year-end. Progress to date shows strong engagement, with 7,499 group walk leaders and 3,158 Wellbeing Walk leaders certified as of November 2025.</p> <p>Additional support measures we have provided include targeted communications, alternative training formats and admin support for Wellbeing Walks.</p> <p>The Board approved the proposal, which had been supported by the Strategy and Delivery Committee, to set a deadline for walk leaders to become certified by 31 January 2026 and, following a final four week “grace period” to complete the training, to close walk leader roles for anyone not certified by 2 March 2026.</p> <p>The Board noted that if individuals who were not certified continued to lead walks after this deadline, then this would constitute a serious compliance breach; trustees and management would need to be prepared to manage any such incidents.</p> <p><b>Action: Comms team (via Samir) to update the current note on walk leadership / training in the Area AGM briefing note to reflect this decision.</b></p>

11	<b>EMAIL PLATFORM FEASIBILITY REVIEW: UPDATE</b>  Samir gave a verbal update on the review which had been instigated in response to the April 2025 Council motion requesting an email sending solution for Areas and Groups.
12	<b>STARRED ITEMS *</b>  <b>A. NGC DRAFT MINUTES (30 October)</b>  The draft minutes were noted.  <u>Trustee skills audit</u> Lucy thanked trustees for completing the recent trustee skills audit and said that, following initial review with members of the Nominations and Governance Committee, was proposing that the call for nominations for trustee vacancies in January should seek in particular applications from members who have proven skills or experience in the following areas at a professional or executive level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marketing branding and communications</li><li>• Campaigning and advocacy</li><li>• Equity, diversity and inclusion</li><li>• Fundraising and income generation</li></ul> The trustee nomination pack, which will be agreed by the Nominations and Governance Committee and shared with the Board prior to publication, will explain the potential outcome of the governance review on Board composition and any impact there might be on these three vacancies.  <b>B. PCC DRAFT MINUTES (11 November)</b>  The draft minutes were noted.  <b>C. SDC DRAFT MINUTES (18 November)</b>  The draft minutes were noted.  <b>D. FRAC DRAFT MINUTES (25 November)</b>  The draft minutes will be published shortly.  <b>E. SERIOUS INCIDENT POLICY</b>  The Board renewed the Serious Incident Policy for a further year, agreeing one update to emphasise that when a Data Protection Act breach has been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office this would automatically trigger the requirement to submit a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission.  <b>Action: Simon to update Serious Incident Policy.</b>  <b>F. DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>  17 March 2026
13	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>  None.

<b>14</b>	<b>BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW</b>  Lucy presented the outcome of the Board effectiveness review, which comprised questions from the Governance App template based on the Charity Governance Code. The survey had been completed by trustees and members of the Executive Leadership Team. The Board discussed the outcomes of the review.
<b>15</b>	<b>REVIEW OF MEETING EFFECTIVENESS</b>  Trustees and staff each gave short verbal feedback on what went well at the meeting and what could be improved.