



RAMBLERS' GOVERNANCE REVIEW: CONSULTATION

To Council members, Area Chairs, Area Secretaries and Area Treasurers

Dear Friends,

I would like to update you on progress with the governance review and to consult you on the Board's updated proposal for a new governance model for the Ramblers.

Thank you very much to everyone who joined one of the pre-consultation sessions in July and August; and for the valuable input that Areas and Council members provided through the online feedback form.

The online sessions were attended by over 90 people and 60 responses were received, largely on behalf of Areas, through the online feedback form.

We have taken time to review all the feedback that was received. Overall we heard that, while there was broad support for reform, especially reducing bureaucracy and improving flexibility, there was a need for more detail and explanations of how the proposed changes would work in practice.

We heard more specific concerns about the introduction of a network model, noting the current important role of Areas in leading Public Rights of Way work, relationships with local authorities, and campaigning activities. To review this further, a volunteer task and finish group was convened and met on 28 August, to consider and develop an alternative to the network model. Using input from this group, the original network proposal has been updated, and this is set out in detail in the paper.

In this paper we have set out the original thinking as shared in July, a summary of what we heard from your feedback during the pre-consultation sessions, how we have responded to that feedback, and an updated proposal for each of the four main themes: Board of Trustees, Company members and AGM, Member and Volunteer Gatherings, and Areas, Groups and Nations.

Based on this proposal, we are working with the charity's legal advisers on governance matters to draft updated Articles and Standing Orders. As this work is dependent on the proposals, which are of course not yet finalised, this remains a work in progress. However, we will share a draft version of the updated Articles and Standing Orders with you on Monday 29 September.

YOUR FEEDBACK

We would like to invite Council members, Area Chairs, Area Secretaries and Area Treasurers to join one of three **online consultation sessions** in September where Ross Maloney, Chief Executive, and I will explain the thinking behind the updated proposals (as set out in this paper) and hear from you, with an opportunity to further discuss the proposals and ask questions. You can register for these Zoom sessions by using the individual Eventbrite links below.

- Tuesday 16 September, 5.30pm – 6.30pm <https://ramblers-session-16-Sep.eventbrite.co.uk>
- Wednesday 17 September, 5.30pm – 6.30pm <https://ramblers-session-17-Sep.eventbrite.co.uk>
- Wednesday 24 September, 5.30pm – 6.30pm <https://ramblers-session-24-Sep.eventbrite.co.uk>

Following a chance to discuss the proposals at one of the sessions – and with members in your Area – we would then like to invite each Area (via its General Council members or Area Chair/Secretary) to once again provide **written feedback and comments** using an online survey form.

We will share the form by email and publish it at www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/general-council on Monday 29 September, and ask for written feedback by Sunday 12 October.

The feedback you provide during this consultation period will assist the Board in preparing final proposals for decision by Council members at the Extraordinary General Meeting which will take place in London on Saturday 6 December.

Do feel free to share this document and discuss the issues with other Ramblers members if you wish.

If you have any questions about arrangements for the consultation sessions, please contact Simon Kellas, Head of Governance (simon.kellas@ramblers.org.uk).

In advance, a huge thank you for your time and consideration of these important matters.

Best wishes

Lucy Robinson
Chair, Board of Trustees

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The original pre-consultation paper is available at www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/general-council

COMPANY MEMBERS AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

PRE-CONSULTATION THINKING (AS SHARED IN JULY)

- All fully paid-up members of one or more year's standing would become company (i.e. "voting") members of the Ramblers, with the right to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and elect trustees.
- The AGM should focus only on the required formal company law requirements, with the option for the meeting to be held online.
- Elections for trustees would be held online in advance of the AGM, with the results of elections and appointments confirmed at, and taking effect from, the AGM.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD IN THE PRE-CONSULTATION SESSIONS AND FEEDBACK

- The feedback reflects a balance of optimism and caution.
- Many support democratisation and wider member involvement.
- The proposal to open AGM attendance to all members is seen as positive but raises logistical questions about controlling numbers, ensuring representativeness, and providing access for members without internet or email facilities.
- There were concerns about the potential disengagement of active volunteers and risks of factionalism are noted.
- Suggestions include maintaining or introducing forums for policy discussions, such as national or regional gatherings, to replace the broader functions of the General Council.
- Clarification was sought on voting methods for members without online access, such as postal voting options, and detailed procedures for AGM attendance and motions.
- Online voting prior to the AGM is favoured to streamline the process.
- Concerns are raised regarding the risk of low voter turnout, potential domination by members from populous regions, and the possibility of pressure groups skewing votes towards specific agendas not beneficial to the organisation. Safeguards against such risks and clarity on procedures for presenting motions are requested.
- The need for thoughtful, phased implementation with clear communication and support for volunteers is emphasised.
- Consideration should also be given to a hybrid model to offer the opportunity for more interaction (e.g. like Open Spaces Society, National Trust).
- Consideration should be given to extending the AGM as an opportunity to discuss significant organisational issues such as strategy, campaigns and operational matters.
- A comprehensive annual report should be made available to members before the AGM.
- There should be a Q&A session at the AGM.
- The AGM could be made more of an "event" by inviting guest speaker(s).

RESPONSE TO THE FEEDBACK

In response to this feedback we have:

- Provided further clarification of how the expanded election process would run, including confirmation that members without internet access or email would not be excluded from participation.

- Provided further clarification of how the online AGM itself would run, including confirmation that members will have the right under company law to propose resolutions and the power to call an EGM.
- Provided further detail (in the Member and Volunteer Gatherings section) of the mechanism by which members, through the gatherings, will be able to discuss and bring matters of importance to the attention of the Board.

UPDATED PROPOSAL FOLLOWING REVIEW OF PRE-CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

All fully paid-up members of one or more year's standing will become company (i.e. "voting") members of the Ramblers with the right to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and elect trustees.

The existing General Council model will be replaced by a model where the wider membership of Ramblers will hold company law member status and therefore have the powers to select trustees through the election process, approve special resolutions relating to the running of the organisation (such as changes to the Articles or the removal of a trustee) and request convening of Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) for this purpose, and ratification of the auditor.

As a safeguard, it is proposed that to hold company member status (and therefore participate in decision making at a national level), a member should have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months, and not be in financial arrears.

The AGM should focus only on the required formal company law requirements and will be held online.

The AGM will focus only on the business required by formal company law, and a typical agenda might include:

- Opening (including welcome and confirmation of quorum)
- Reports (any items for information of members such as the Annual Report and Accounts)
- Business (including results of trustee selection processes, ratification of Chair and Treasurer, ratification of auditor, and any other resolutions)
- Any other business (including Q&A where this relates to governance business)

The AGM will be held online only. All company members will be able to participate by voting in advance (as set out below in the note on trustee voting).

Members will have the right under company law to propose a resolution for consideration at an AGM, which will be detailed in the governing document. Members will also retain the power to call an EGM.

NB Communication and engagement activities will take place at the proposed members and volunteer gatherings, attended by trustees and senior staff, to enable discussion and debate on key issues, and engagement with the Board. [This is set out in more detail in the Member and Volunteer Gatherings section on page 9.]

Elections for trustees will be held online in advance of the AGM, with the results of elections confirmed at, and taking affect from, the AGM.

A nomination and election process and timetable for the six elected members will be established with voting taking place in advance of the Annual General Meeting, but the terms of office of those elected members starting (and ending) at the date of the Annual General Meeting.

An external provider of hybrid (online and hard copy) electoral services will manage the election process. These providers are well-established and used by many charities, trade and student unions, universities, and other professional organisations and associations. The voting will be independently managed, thus ensuring confidentiality and the integrity of the process.

While online voting would be encouraged, there will always be an option for postal voting.

The content of candidate statements, videos and election material will continue to be developed to provide members with the information they need to make an informed decision.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PRE-CONSULTATION THINKING (AS SHARED IN JULY)

- There should be a maximum of 12 members (trustees) of the Board.
- Two trustees – the Chair and the Honorary Treasurer – would be selected by the Board following a formal process to assess their capabilities against the requirements for the post, and appointed subject to ratification by members.
- One trustee would be elected from Scotland and one trustee from Wales.
- Four trustees would be elected by members on a GB-wide basis.
- Up to four trustees could be appointed by the Board following a formal process to assess their skills and lived experience and designed to deliver an effective and diverse Board.
- All trustee appointments would be for a term of three-years, with trustees eligible to be re-elected or re-appointed for a further three-year term.
- In exceptional cases (for example if a sitting trustee is selected as Chair or Honorary Treasurer at the end of their first term) a third term may be possible, but there would be a cap of a maximum of nine years' service.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD IN THE PRE-CONSULTATION SESSIONS AND FEEDBACK

- There is general support for reducing the Board size to a maximum of 12 trustees, aligning with Charity Commission guidance to ensure effective governance and manageable meetings.
- There is general support for one member, one vote, but with some concerns about the potential reduction in regional or local representation and the risk of centralising power within the Board.
- There is debate over the proportion of trustees elected by members versus appointed by the Board: Some advocate for a majority of trustees to be elected by members while others support a higher proportion of appointed trustees to ensure the Board has the necessary skills and expertise, emphasising the importance of strategic oversight.
- Suggestions include involving member representatives in recruitment panels and conducting board reviews periodically to ensure balance and relevance.
- The importance of geographical representation, especially for Scotland and Wales, is supported due to different legislative and operational contexts, although some view reserved seats for Scotland and Wales as potentially privileging certain members over others.
- There is a call for representation from English regions, possibly by electing trustees from established clusters or regions within England to reflect diverse member experiences.
- Concerns are raised about the equity of voting rights and representation, with some viewing reserved seats for Scotland and Wales as potentially privileging certain members over others.
- Some express concern that the Board might become isolated from grassroots membership and local activities, urging better engagement with members and volunteers.
- Some suggest that six years, rather than nine, should be the maximum trustee term to avoid stagnation and encourage fresh perspectives.
- Worries exist about the potential for the Board to become remote from members and local groups, reducing transparency and accountability.
- Calls for clear communication channels to inform voters about trustee candidates and enable informed elections, including hustings and candidate presentations.
- Suggestions to use regional gatherings before elections to allow candidates to engage with members and improve voter knowledge.

RESPONSE TO THE FEEDBACK

In response to this feedback we have:

- Provided more clarity on the balance between elected and appointed trustees, noting that those trustees elected or ratified by members will always be in the majority.
- Provided more detail about the how the formal processes for appointing trustees would work.

UPDATED PROPOSAL FOLLOWING REVIEW OF PRE-CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

There will be a maximum of 12 trustees (and minimum of 8 trustees) on the Board.

A range of options for Board size and composition were explored, looking at the positives and negatives of greater or smaller numbers of trustees. The Charity Governance Code guidance suggests a number between 5 and 12 trustees. Ultimately the Board agreed a maximum of 12 trustees, recognising the relative complexity of the Ramblers as an organisation. This will ensure the Board is large enough to have the right mix of skills and experience, but small enough to allow for productive meetings and decision-making.

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.

This “6-4-2” model means that Ramblers members will always elect or ratify the majority of trustees. The aim would be to have a core of trustees elected by the membership but also to enable the Board to top these up with additional trustees to ensure the Board has the diverse mix of skills and experience that it needs at any one time.

Although this model includes increased provision to look outside the membership where necessary, it is important to emphasise that, for the appointed and ratified trustee positions, members will also be invited to apply to be appointed as trustees. Any person not a current member will be expected to join by the time of appointment.

Four trustees will be elected by all members.

All members who have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months and are not in financial arrears will be eligible to stand for election as a trustee.

There will no longer be a requirement for trustee candidates to have proposers.

All members who have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months and are not in financial arrears will have the right to vote for these four trustee positions.

Consideration was given to the 2024 General Council motion which asked for care to be taken to ensure balance of representation throughout Great Britain. The possibility of electing trustees from established clusters or regions within England was considered but, on balance, it was felt that applying geographical restrictions alone might impact the ability to ensure the appropriate wider mix of skills and experience required to effectively govern the charity.

However, if following the election of trustees, there is an obvious gap in representation in a particular geographical area, the Board would have the option to seek to fill this gap through the appointed trustee process.

One trustee will be elected by members in Scotland and one trustee will be elected by members in Wales.

Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru will continue to have the right to their own places on the Board, specifically due to different legislative and operational contexts.

All members in Scotland who have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months and are not in financial arrears will be eligible to stand for election as the Scotland trustee, and all members in Wales who have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months and are not in financial arrears will be eligible to stand for election as the Wales trustee.

There will no longer be a requirement for trustee candidates to have proposers.

All members in Scotland who have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months and are not in financial arrears will have the right to vote for the Scotland trustee, and all members in Wales who have held membership of the Ramblers for 12 consecutive months and are not in financial arrears will have the right to vote for the Wales trustee.

The trustees elected in Scotland and Wales would be expected to chair the respective Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru Advisory Groups, thus providing a direct link to the Board. However it is important to emphasise that these two trustees are not elected to represent members in Scotland and Wales, but to bring to the Board specific understanding of the respective unique legislative and operational contexts.

Up to four trustees can be appointed by the Board following a formal process.

It will be open to both Ramblers members and people outside the organisation to apply to be appointed as trustees through this process. Any person not a current member will be expected to join by the time of appointment and, once a member, will hold company member status in their capacity as a trustee from that point.

The Board itself would design and manage the appointment process which will be formal and robust. Trustee vacancies will be openly advertised to ensure that we reach as wide a field of candidates as possible. Candidates will be assessed on defined set of skills, knowledge, background and experience and interviewed by an appointments panel. Creating a diverse Board will be an important factor in trustee appointments, including regional diversity.

The Board already uses a process like this which was used recently for the Treasurer and external committee member appointments.

Provision will be made, where appropriate, to include member voices in the appointment processes.

Two trustees – the Chair and the Treasurer – will be selected by the Board following a formal process to assess their capabilities against the requirements for the post, and appointed subject to ratification by members at the Annual General Meeting.

As with the up to four appointed members, it will be open to both Ramblers members and people outside the organisation to apply to be appointed as Chair and Treasurer through the same robust process (although we would expect any person not a current member to join by the time of appointment).

Provision will be made, where appropriate, to include member voices in the appointment processes.

However, unlike the up to four appointed members, the Board's nominees for the Chair and Treasurer positions would be subject to ratification by members at the Annual General Meeting, thus ensuring that members retain a final say in the appointment of the two trustee officer roles.

To some extent this mirrors the current Treasurer process, where candidates can be sought from outside the organisation (as permitted by the Articles) but must be members at the point of taking office.

There will be specific role descriptions for the Chair and Treasurer, setting out the expectations for these important leadership positions.

Trustee vacancies will be advertised and recruited based on clearly defined skills and experience

We will bring together our existing trustee recruitment processes, including how the Board carries out its trustee skills audits and Board reviews, in a published Trustee Recruitment Process that sets out how we support the identification of the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to balance the existing Board and support the charity's objectives; ensure that we recruit trustees with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to avoid groupthink and improve decision-making; and actively remove barriers to entry that might discourage potential candidates.

All trustee appointments will be for a term of three-years, with trustees eligible to be re-elected or re-appointed for a further three-year term. In exceptional cases (i.e. if a sitting trustee is selected as Chair or Treasurer at the end of their first term) a third term may be possible, but there will be a cap of a maximum of nine years' service.

This closely mirrors the current position, where in almost all situations, a trustee will serve a maximum of two three-year terms. This is extended to a maximum of nine years only when a sitting trustee is elected as Chair. In this proposal this flexibility is extended to the Treasurer position.

As is currently the case, at the end of any maximum term of office as a trustee, a person will only become eligible for election or appointment as a trustee again after having been out of office for at least one year.

Trustee elections and appointments will be on an established rolling cycle.

Similar to the current arrangement, there will be a rolling annual cycle for the election and appointment of trustees for reasons of continuity and to ensure that a large percentage of trustees do not change each year.

This new Board structure and cycle will be phased in over a transition period of 2-3 years.

The appointment process for the up to four appointed trustees could take place at any time in the year when necessary.

The appointment process for the Chair and Treasurer could take place at any time in the year at the discretion of the Board, but the terms of office of those members would start only following ratification by members at the date of the Annual General Meeting.

A nomination and election process and timetable for the six elected members will be established with voting taking place in advance of the Annual General Meeting, but the terms of office of those elected members starting at the date of the Annual General Meeting. [This is set out in more detail in the Company Members and AGM section on page 1.]

Other proposals

There will continue to be a Vice Chair position, to be appointed by the Board from its own number, on the recommendation of the Chair.

MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER GATHERINGS

PRE-CONSULTATION THINKING (AS SHARED IN JULY)

- Gatherings would be held at least annually with members and volunteers, attended by trustees, to enable discussion and debate on key issues, and engagement with the Board.
- The exact form of these could change and develop over time but the feedback from General Council was that we should build on the current cluster model; we are therefore seeking views on holding six annual "gatherings" organised by four English regions and for Scotland and Wales.
- The current motions process would be replaced by a new, formalised process of discussions and debates in these gatherings.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD IN THE PRE-CONSULTATION SESSIONS AND FEEDBACK

- Many see the gatherings as a positive step towards increasing member participation and reducing bureaucratic hurdles. They appreciate the potential for informal discussions, networking, and sharing best practices.
- Some emphasise that gatherings could enable more volunteers to engage directly with trustees and staff, enhancing transparency and collaboration.
- Support for replacing the complex motions process with open discussions that allow a wider range of topics and voices.
- Concern that the proposals are vague, lacking specifics on how gatherings would be organised, who would attend, how agendas would be set, and how outputs would influence national policy. Questions about funding, travel expenses, and the balance between in-person and online formats remain unanswered.
- Apprehension about whether gatherings can adequately represent the diversity of members across urban and rural areas, and whether smaller groups or less active members would have a voice. The risk of regional divisions or inconsistent policy views across clusters is noted.
- Concern that gatherings might become "talking shops" without real decision-making power. The need for a clear pathway to submit formal proposals to the Board of Trustees and ensure accountability, especially where finances are involved, is emphasised.
- Introduce a national gathering or forum to reconcile regional views and ensure coherent organisational policy.
- Gatherings should be held before AGM, so outputs from this can feed into that.

RESPONSE TO THE FEEDBACK

In response to this feedback we have:

- Provided more detail about how gatherings would be organised, planned and supported.
- Added an additional proposal to hold an GB-wide gathering at least every three years.

UPDATED PROPOSAL FOLLOWING REVIEW OF PRE-CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Gatherings will be held at least annually for members and volunteers, attended by trustees and key staff, to enable discussion and debate on key issues, and engagement with the Board.

The exact form of these gatherings could change and develop over time but will start with six one-day gatherings: one in Scotland, one in Wales, and four in England. It is anticipated that they will run close to each other in a “gathering / festival season.”

Attendance at the gatherings will be open to all members (although numbers will be limited by venue capacity) but at least one guaranteed place would be reserved for each Group, with an allocation to the Group budget to cover travel costs. Travel costs for other attendees will be borne either by a Group or by the individual. There will be no charge to attend a gathering. Every effort will be made to also enable online attendance.

The staff team will support each gathering in terms of planning dates, organising venues, registration and the programme / agenda for each. Small planning teams comprising a mixture of members, trustees and staff (to include at least the respective Nation Director) will be convened each year to develop the programme for each event and agree the topics for discussion. Groups will be able to propose topics for discussion and the Board may also propose matters for discussion.

Trustees and staff will attend each gathering to meet and listen to members.

The programme / agenda for a typical gathering might include:

- Discussion of topics proposed by Groups and by the Board
- Workshops for knowledge sharing between Groups
- Opportunities for socialising and informal conversations, including walks

Online clusters meetings and other informal collaboration can continue.

A GB-wide national gathering would take place at least every three years.

In addition to the annual gatherings, a larger GB-wide national event – which might, for example, be called a Festival of Walking – will be held every two to three years. As with gatherings, there will be provision for at least one member of every Group to attend this event.

A planning team comprising a mixture of members, trustees and staff will be convened to develop the programme for this event.

The current motions process would be replaced by a new, formalised process of discussions and debates in these gatherings.

Topics agreed by the planning groups will be debated at the gatherings. The outcome of discussions from each gathering will be recorded on a standardised template, collated and published. The Board will commit to discussing the output of these discussions at the first Board meeting following the final gathering and to reporting back to members by a set date after the conclusion of the “season” with a response and actions to be taken.

AREAS, GROUPS AND NATIONS

PRE-CONSULTATION THINKING (AS SHARED IN JULY)

- Groups should be the primary formal organising unit for the Ramblers with simplified requirements as to their constitution, and direct funding from the Ramblers central funds.
- Areas should transition over time to more flexible networks as best suits local requirements and new networks could form. They would have no formal governance role.
- Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru should remain distinct entities within the organisation with a right to decide their own national level organisational structure.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD IN THE PRE-CONSULTATION SESSIONS AND FEEDBACK

- Some respondents appreciate the reduction in bureaucracy and the focus on Groups, others express concerns about the vagueness of the network model, the loss of formal governance at Area level, and the potential risks to campaigning, footpath maintenance, and relationships with local authorities.
- Many respondents emphasise that Areas provide legitimacy and formal authority to represent Ramblers in public inquiries and consultations, which informal Networks may lack. The risk of fragmentation and loss of expertise, especially in rights of way work, is a recurrent theme.
- Specific concerns include:
 - The potential loss of formal recognition by highway authorities if Areas are abolished.
 - The challenge of maintaining coordinated footpath and access work without Area structures.
 - The risk that Groups may focus solely on walking activities, neglecting campaigning and access work.
- Some suggest a gradual, locally tailored transition where successful Areas can continue, or the creation of “Area-lite” models focusing on campaigning and footpath work without governance roles over Groups.
- The concept of flexible Networks replacing Areas is viewed with scepticism due to lack of clarity on their formation, funding, governance, and authority
- Direct funding of Groups is seen as a positive simplification but raises concerns about the capacity of staff to manage increased financial administration and the processes for budget allocation, auditing, and expense reimbursement.
- Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru are strongly supported to remain as distinct entities.
- The ongoing local government reorganisation in England adds complexity, with calls for structures aligned with new local authorities or unitary councils to maintain effective engagement with highway authorities and planning bodies.

RESPONSE TO THE FEEDBACK

In response to this feedback we have:

- Modified the language and offered greater flexibility for the lead roles in Groups.
- Clarified and offered examples of how aspects such as appointing lead roles and finances could work.
- Replaced the original Network proposal with a Hubs proposal which would cover every part of the country aligned to the strategic tier of local government, and have a primary role in the co-ordination of Public Rights of Way, footpath and access work (e.g. responding to definitive map

modification order applications, planning applications, providing representation at public inquiries, co-ordinating campaigning efforts relating to access issues, etc.).

- Proposed that each Hub would have a lead who would act as the co-ordinator and function as the main point of contact, to be appointed at the annual gathering through an open, fair and transparent process in order to provide legitimacy.

UPDATED PROPOSAL FOLLOWING REVIEW OF PRE-CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Groups should be the primary formal organising unit for the Ramblers with simplified requirements and direct funding from the Ramblers central funds.

Groups will be the primary formal organising construct across all nations, defined in the governing documents.

All Ramblers members would belong to a local Group. By default, this would be their local Group, although they could choose to join a different one.

Groups must fulfil one or more of the Ramblers' charitable purposes e.g. walking opportunities, path improvement and maintenance, campaigning for access.

Groups will be organised by geography (but could have additional Groups in the same geographical area organised by age group/type of walk etc).

Groups will be directly funded (i.e. the relationship exists between the centre and Groups) for running costs and engagement, there will be provision to apply for additional funding for strategy-aligned projects. An annual process of requesting funds would be established.

Groups must appoint three lead roles through an open, fair and transparent process which could take place at the annual gathering: Group Lead(s), Finance Lead(s), and Activities Lead(s) (the latter would relate to the aspects of the Ramblers' charitable purposes the Group undertakes). The titles of these roles could be adapted for local preference. The open, fair and transparent process could be as simple as: people indicating that they want to do a role/be asked to do a role; a simple majority of members who attended the Group's annual gathering confirm that they content that the member takes on the role; the simple process is repeated annually.

Optional additional roles will be at the Group's discretion e.g. Group Walks Lead, Group Path Protection Lead.

No formal Group AGM will be needed but an annual gathering will be highly recommended for sharing, celebrating and appointing the three core lead roles but, if Groups want to use another means to achieve this, that is up to the Group.

Groups will be supported by:

- Digital platform to enable sharing of knowledge, experiences, and resources.
- Staff-supported online networking meetings (akin to current 'cluster groups') and topic-based webinars.
- Improved volunteer experience through better onboarding, training, peer learning, and access to expert help.

Areas will cease to exist and Hubs will be established to cover every part of the country.

Areas as defined in the constitution will cease to exist.

Hubs will be established and will cover every part of the country, with territory aligned to the strategic tier of local government (e.g. Mayoral/Combined Authorities where they exist; County Councils in 'old style' two tier areas; and Unitary Councils everywhere else), acknowledging there may be differences across the three nations the charity operates in. It is also recognised that devolution arrangements are emerging, especially in England, and there needs to be sufficient agility and flexibility built in at this stage to respond as they emerge/firm up.

Hubs will be part of our organisational structure but will have no formal governance role.

The primary role of Hubs is the co-ordination of Public Rights of Way, footpath and access work (e.g. responding to definitive map modification order applications, planning applications, providing representation at public inquiries, co-ordinating campaigning efforts relating to access issues, etc.). There would be flexibility for Hubs to also carry out other activities e.g. co-ordination of training opportunities, sharing best practice, etc. if it was felt there was a need from Groups.

Hubs will have a high degree of locally determined flexibility on how they engage with the strategic tier of local government (acknowledging that no one size fits all and this is better determined locally) and so as to ensure that there is coverage of all Highways Authorities. Additionally, Hubs would liaise between each other to agree a sensible way of dealing with National Parks, Special Landscape Areas, etc. where boundaries don't align neatly.

It would be highly recommended that Hubs will hold an annual gathering (and may apply for central funding to do this) and all members (as opposed to Groups) within the territory of the Hub would be invited to attend.

Each Hub must have a lead role (or a team leadership approach), to be known as the Hub Lead, but could be adapted for local preference and to ensure the role carries sufficient legitimacy and gravitas when dealing with external/partner organisations. The lead would act as the co-ordinator of the wider team of volunteers within the Hub, and function as the main point of contact, to be appointed at the annual gathering through an open, fair and transparent process. The open, fair and transparent process could be as simple as: people indicating that they want to do a role/be asked to do a role; a simple majority of members who attend the Group's annual gathering confirm that they content that the member takes on the role; the simple process is repeated annually.

A Hub may apply for central funding to support its work (so long as it is in line with Ramblers' charitable purposes). Any Hub doing so must have a lead role for finance, to be known as Finance Lead.

There could also be optional additional roles if needed based on the Hub's activities plus the opportunity to create a team of members to undertake one or a number of the functions of the Hub.

Existing Areas, supported by the centre, would support the transition to, and establishment of, Hubs acknowledging that current Area leaders understand the local context so much better and so

the transition needs to be led locally but with sufficient support (which will vary across the three nations the charity operates in).

Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru should remain distinct entities within the organisation each with an Advisory Forum to support the delivery of the charitable objectives in the respective nations.

Constituent parts as defined in the constitution will cease to exist, but Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru will be formally defined in the Articles.

Without a formal governance role, the Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee and the Ramblers Cymru Steering Group will need to evolve. These will become Advisory Forums bringing together members elected by the Groups and individuals selected for their expertise.

Advisory Forums will have no formal governance role but will advise members and staff on the delivery of the charitable objectives in the respective nations.

Model guiding principles for the Advisory Forums will be included in the Standing Orders, setting out the number of members (which will be 50% elected by Groups and 50% appointed by the Forum itself on recommendation of respective Nation Director).

The trustees elected in Scotland and Wales will be the Chairs of the respective Advisory Forums.