



2023 MOTIONS: MID-YEAR REPORT TO GENERAL COUNCIL

Dear Council members,

I am delighted to share the board's informal mid-year update on the seven motions passed or remitted at the General Council annual general meeting (AGM) in April 2023. This report reflects the board's initial review of the motions.

A full update on all open motions will be published in March 2024 in the papers for next year's General Council AGM.

Next year's General Council AGM will take place on Saturday 20 April 2024 at the Birmingham NEC. The board discussed the motion passed in April, and reviewed plans for next year's AGM. It agreed to follow a similar one-day format as this year, as the most appropriate option. Further information about the board's response can be found in this report.

The programme and timings for next year's General Council AGM will be shared later in the year on our General Council webpage at www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/general-council.

I look forward to seeing many of you next month at the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) in Manchester on Saturday 25 November, where I hope that together, Council members will be able to agree a new strategy that builds on the Ramblers' success and its mission to open the way for everyone to enjoy the simple pleasures of walking.

Further information about arrangements for the EGM can be found on our General Council webpage at www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/general-council

As we look forward collectively as the Ramblers, I hope we can start to address the stark inequalities that still exist and support those who face the greatest barriers to getting out and going walking.

With best wishes
Rebecca Dawson
Chair, board of trustees

2023 MOTIONS

2022 [1]	Board of trustees elections
2022 [3]	General Council format
2022 [4]	Campaign with respect of the Public Rights of Way network
2022 [5]	Wild camping and opportunities for public access to nature and green spaces for everyone
2022 [6]	Leisure walking in London and other urban areas
2022 [7]	Staff understanding of Area and Group activities
2022 [9]	Return to member activities alongside volunteer activities (<i>remitted to the board</i>)

2023 [1] BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTIONS

This General Council considers that the Ramblers should move towards implementing a democratic voting system for future elections to the board of trustees. Council therefore asks the board to review alternative approaches, including one member one vote, and bring proposals for consideration by the 2025 Annual General Meeting of General Council.

October 2023 update

The board supports this motion, but also believes there is an opportunity to look not just at this specific issue, but at our overall governance structure and operating model, to ensure that it is fit for purpose and is enabling the Ramblers to deliver its charitable objectives in the context of the proposed new strategy.

2023 [3] GENERAL COUNCIL FORMAT

This General Council accepts the necessity of the changes to the format of the Annual General Meeting of General Council caused by the covid pandemic, but urges the board of trustees to change the format back to the two day format (including provision for visitors) that was previously normal now that it is safe and legal to do so.

October 2023 update

In coming to the decision about the 2024 General Council AGM, the board of trustees has discussed the motion passed at the 2023 AGM.

The board has agreed to retain a similar one-day format for 2024 and to hold the meeting at Birmingham NEC once more. The meeting will once again only be open only to Council members, who are those members entitled to attend and vote at meetings of General Council.

The elements which the motion called for – a longer residential weekend with additional events and activities – are not a formal part of the AGM. The board's position remains that it does not believe that the

financial cost of delivering the additional conference and fringe elements around the AGM to a relatively small audience is the best use of the organisation's resources.

While the board recognises the value of members from across the organisation being able to meet each other and share best practice, and will continue to develop opportunities for this, it does not believe that the traditional weekend conference around the AGM is the best way to achieve this.

2023 [4] CAMPAIGN WITH RESPECT OF THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

This General Council calls upon the board of trustees to lobby the governments in England and Wales to provide adequate financial and technical support to local authorities to enable them to honour their legal obligations in respect of the preservation and protection of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network.

Specifically the emphasis should be on:

- ensuring PRoWs are kept clear and safe to walk at all times, unless subject to any legal restriction;
- to ensure landowners and tenants honour their specific obligations relating to those aspects of PRoW under their control with particular emphasis on ploughing and cropping;
- to ensure safety aspects of PRoW preservation are enforced with particular emphasis on the use of barbed wire and electric fences;
- to promote the use of guidance given in BS5709 Gaps Gates and Stiles wherever appropriate.

October 2023 update

The protection, improvement and expansion of our public rights of way network is vital part of the Ramblers mission. We have recently published extensive research, commissioned from the New Economics Foundation, on the provision of public rights of way and barriers to use of the network. The research finds that our path network in England and Wales adds over 3,000 healthy years of life to the nation, worth an estimated wellbeing value of £2billion, over £33 per person in England and Wales.

The findings in this research, alongside polling from YouGov and research commissioned on the economic value of the network, will enable us to make the case for greater attention and resources to support the path network. This research will support our advocacy to central, devolved and regional government, as we continue to press for additional resource and support for local authorities to undertake their statutory functions in respect to public rights of way.

Our national lobbying is underpinned by the work of our 4,500 path volunteers on the ground. We have a renewed support approach for these volunteers including regular 'Footpath Forums' and a suite of new guidance and training (including new guidance on recording paths based on user and historical evidence; responding to application for new solar farms; and both basic and intermediate rights of way training sessions). We are also in the process of commissioning the new, 5th edition, of "Rights Of Way: A Guide to Law and Practice" (the Blue Book).

The Ramblers undertakes regular legal action to ensure that local authorities are taking their duties to assert and protect the rights of the public seriously. We are undertaking a review of our approach to legal action to ensure that this important part of path protection work is having the most impact.

2023 [5] WILD CAMPING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO NATURE AND GREEN SPACES FOR EVERYONE

This General Council deplores the outcome of the recent high court case which is that there is no right to wild camping on common land in the Dartmoor National Park. Council fears that this decision will be a deterrent to wild camping across England and Wales. Council calls on the board of trustees to support the campaign to restore the right to wild camping on Dartmoor, and to explore how the same right might best be extended to other suitable areas in England and Wales to improve the opportunities for public access to nature and green spaces for everyone.

October 2023 update

We have been supportive of the campaign to restore the right to wild camp on Dartmoor and publicly celebrated the successful legal appeal in July.

Recently the Labour party has committed to legislate so that people visiting national parks have the right to wild camp, as well as expanding public access to woodlands and waterways. We continue to advocate for extending the right to roam, and this will remain a public affairs priority up until the next general election.

2023 [6] LEISURE WALKING IN LONDON AND OTHER URBAN AREAS

This General Council welcomes the publication of the London Leisure Walking Plan and notes that the large proportion of the general population, and of Ramblers' members, lives and walks in urban areas. To build upon the string of successes in London, Manchester and other urban areas, Council calls upon the board of trustees to invest the necessary focus and resources in urban walking in line with the organisational strategy. Council further calls upon the board to ensure resources are invested:

- in the implementation of the London Leisure Walking Plan through the London Leisure Walking Forum;
- in ensuring that the strategy is emulated in towns and cities across Great Britain;
- in seeking fundraising opportunities for urban walking in the future;
- in publicising these projects, locally and, if necessary, nationally, as well as across various social media platforms where appropriate;
- in reporting back, next year, to Council, on the progress on these initiatives

October 2023 update

In November 2022, London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner and Transport for London published the first ever Leisure Walking Plan. The plan sets out how they will improve, expand and promote the city's network of leisure walking routes (e.g. the London Loop) so that more people can experience the joys of walking on their doorstep.

Ramblers' volunteers and staff campaigned successfully for this strategy over several years. We are supporting the Plan's implementation, including the designation of a new long distance leisure route that links up green spaces and quieter streets in an area of 'green deprivation'. The route is being enhanced with green/natural features, signage and safer crossings, funded by a grant from London's 'green new deal' programme.

Staff and volunteers in London and Greater Manchester are working together to develop campaigns for the 2024 Metro Mayor elections. Staff are providing advice and support, including to develop manifestos and other campaign materials.

2023 [7] STAFF UNDERSTANDING OF AREA AND GROUP ACTIVITIES

This General Council is concerned that Areas and Groups do not always receive the quality of support they need and expect from members of staff. Council also considers that Area and Group officer workloads are often already high, and may reduce officers' willingness to continue in their roles. Council therefore calls upon the board of trustees to ensure that members of staff undertake an induction process which should ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the work and processes in Areas and Groups that might be impacted.

October 2023 update

There has been a renewed effort in recent years to engage with our Area and Groups through a variety of formats, including Area clusters, user groups, webinars, visits and case studies. These forums provide opportunities for staff and volunteers to better understand and work together.

While many staff do join a walk or volunteer activity during their induction, this is optional and will become mandatory as part of our review of induction and onboarding for staff. Opportunities throughout the year will also be shaped to ensure that colleagues appreciate and understand the work of Areas and Groups.

2023 [9] RETURN TO MEMBER ACTIVITIES ALONGSIDE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

This General Council calls upon the board of trustees to:

- return to member activities alongside volunteer activities so that members do not need to register as volunteers;
- make information for both accessible on the website;
- remove 'volunteer' from member role descriptions where it is not required.

This motion was remitted to the board of trustees.

October 2023 update

We have over 100,000 members, as well as many thousands of donors and supporters. Some supporters donate to us financially, some campaign for us, and some give their time to support our cause and purpose.

There are several roles classified as volunteers. We classify a volunteer as someone who acts 'on behalf of the Ramblers' in a specific role. For example, this could be a group chair, secretary or walk leader. When someone acts 'on behalf of' the Ramblers they fall under certain insurances and our duty of care. This is a legal responsibility for the Ramblers.

Someone, who acts 'in aid of us' – for example, they sign a petition or organise some fundraising and the proceeds are donated to the Ramblers - doesn't fall under the same legal requirements. In this instance, we

would give them all the support and encouragement they need to help our cause. Some members may volunteer for us, but not all volunteers have to be members.

In total, we have over 25,000 volunteers. The majority of these are walk leaders who enable many members and wellbeing walkers to experience the joy of walking regularly throughout Great Britain, but also include area or group administrative roles, rights of way experts and path maintenance volunteers.

Without our network of local volunteers, we would not be able to have the impact we do. We support volunteers with training, guidance and importantly, insurance, to carry out their specific roles. We continually review how members or volunteers can easily access the necessary guidance and support relevant to them.

We continue to value and support the contribution made by members and volunteers. We understand our work would not be possible without them. Now the new website has been launched we will seek to make relevant information accessible to all. However, there are some activities that volunteers will, for the time being, still need to access via Assemble, such as e-learning and volunteer recruitment.