



Ramblers Scotland

Annual Report

2024-25

(October 2024 – September 2025)

Our vision is a future where anyone can enjoy walking outdoors.

Ramblers Scotland

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The Ramblers' Association is a registered charity (England & Wales no 1093577, Scotland no SC039799) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (no 4458492). Registered office: 1 Clink Street, 3rd Floor, London, SE1 9DG.



Who we are (as of 30 September 2025)

Honorary officers:

President	Zahrah Mahmood
Vice Presidents	Dennis Canavan, Ben Dolphin, Andrew Murray, Alistair Cant, Kate Ashbrook, Lucy Wallace
Convener	Malcolm Dingwall-Smith
Vice Convener	Beth Dickson
Honorary Treasurer	Mike Gray

Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee:

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith* (convener)	Convener
Mike Gray (treasurer)	Treasurer
Beth Dickson (vice-convener)	Vice Convener
Terry Robinson	Ordinary Member
Sue Thomas	Ordinary Member (resigned Sept 2025)
Andrew Bachell	Ordinary Member
Jacqui Thomson	Ordinary Member
Mike Dales	Ordinary member
Jarka Polednova	Ordinary Member
Karl Erik Wilson	Ordinary Member
Adrienn Hortobagyi	Co-opted Member (appointed June 2025)
John Russell	Co-opted Member (appointed August 2025)
Navid Foroutan	Co-opted Member (appointed August 2025)
*Also on GB Board of Trustees	

Motions committee:

Alison Mitchell
Liz Hunt
Barry Pottle
Malcolm Dingwall-Smith (Ex officio)
Mike Gray (RSSC representative)

Members of staff:

Director	Brendan Paddy
Policy & Public Affairs Manager	Gavin Corbett
Communications Manager	Danny Carden
Community Development Officer	Jeannie Cranfield
Support Co-ordinator	Claire Exley
Community Outreach Officer	Angela James
Community Outreach Trainee	Min Leng

Our groups:

Clydesdale to Solway area* Biggar Clyde Valley Dumfries and District South Lanarkshire Walkers	South West Scotland area* Cunninghame Kilmarnock & Loudoun Wigtownshire	Highland & Islands area* Badenoch & Strathspey Inverness Inverness Young Walkers Lochaber & Lorn
Lothian & Borders area* Balerno Edinburgh Edinburgh Young Walkers Eildon Linlithgow Livingston Midlothian East Lothian Ramblers and Hillwalkers Tweeddale	Forth Valley, Fife & Tayside area Blairgowrie & District Brechin Dalgety Bay & District Dundee & District Dunfermline & West Fife Fife Young Walkers Forfar & District Forth Valley Ramblers Forth Valley Young Walkers Glenrothes Kinross & Ochil Kirkcaldy Perth & District St Andrews & North East Fife Strathtay Tayside Young Walkers	Renfrewshire, Cowal & Bute area* Eastwood Inverclyde Isle of Bute Paisley
Grampian area Aberdeen Aberdeen Young Walkers Inverurie Moray Stonehaven		North Strathclyde area Bearsden & Milngavie Cumbernauld & Kilsyth Glasgow Glasgow Young Walkers Helensburgh & West Dunbartonshire Mid Argyll & Kintyre Monklands Strathkelvin

*Indicates areas in abeyance during the period

Organisations affiliated to Scottish Council:

Red Rope Scotland
 Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society (SCOTWAYS)

Organisations Ramblers Scotland is affiliated to:

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	Scotland's Landscape Alliance
Scottish Outdoor Access Network	Cairngorms Campaign
Scottish Campaign for National Parks	Transform Scotland
Scottish Environment LINK	Voluntary Health Scotland
Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance	North East Mountain Trust
Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society	Hostelling Scotland
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations	
Who Owns Scotland	

Convener's Foreword

This year Ramblers Scotland celebrated its 60th year. It is my privilege to serve as Convener as we reach this milestone, which reminds us of both our proud history and the thousands of people whose lives have been enriched through walking, learning, campaigning and volunteering with the Ramblers. As we look ahead, I hope you share my pride in being part of such a passionate and purposeful community.

This report highlights our achievements in 2024–25 - a year in which our movement continued to grow stronger. Our membership has continued to grow, reflecting the value people place on being welcomed into supportive walking communities and on standing together for Scotland's world-renowned access rights.

Across Scotland, our 53 groups delivered a remarkable programme of led walks, supported entirely by the commitment, expertise and kindness of our volunteers. Whether leading walks, supporting new members, improving local access, or representing walkers' interests, volunteers remain the beating heart of everything we do. My sincere thanks go to every one of you.

Our staff-led programmes have also continued to flourish. The Out There Award remains an inspiring entry point for young adults in Scotland, equipping 18 to 26-year olds with the skills and confidence to enjoy the outdoors independently. The Equalities Outreach Programme - now securely funded by the Scottish Government - continues to build confidence among walkers from communities traditionally underrepresented outdoors, and it is encouraging to see more participants beginning to make the transition into our groups.

We also strengthened our campaigning voice, continuing to emphasise that Scotland's world-leading access rights must be properly supported. Investment in access officers, active local access forums, well-maintained paths, clear signage and knowledgeable on-the-ground staff remains essential. We will keep making this case, constructively and persistently, on behalf of all who enjoy Scotland's paths, hills and wild places.

This is my third and final foreword to a Ramblers Scotland annual report, as my term as Convener comes to an end in March 2026. I am immensely grateful for the commitment and enthusiasm I have witnessed across our membership, volunteer network and staff team. Everything we achieve, we achieve together. And together, we enable people to live healthier, more connected and more fulfilling lives through walking.

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith

Convener, Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee



Access & Paths

Changing policy and law

As part of a progressive coalition on the **Land Reform (Scotland) Bill** we successfully lobbied for amendments to the Bill to ensure that new Land Management Plans will have to be prepared by more landowners. This is important as these plans will require landowners to show how they uphold our access rights and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

It's been a busy year for legislation with evidence submitted to the National Environment Bill on changing the aims and some powers of the national parks and to the Crofting and Scottish Land Court Bill on shifting access cases from Sheriff Court to Land Court.

Ramblers Scotland is an active participant in the National Access Forum, this year, chairing the resources sub-group, contributing to a refresh of access guidance and, most significantly, playing a key role in drafting a new agreement between Network Rail and access authorities on the use of private level crossings.

The prolonged dry weather of much of 2025 meant that camping in hotspots and wildfires have been frequent topics. We attended the wildfires summit and took part in the fire messaging framework and play an active role in the Visitor Management groups convened by Visit Scotland NatureScot.

Making access rights a priority

With Scottish Parliament elections in 2026 and local authorities in 2027, it is time to get walking up the political agenda. Over the last year we have led a coalition of outdoor recreation organisations in preparing a **manifesto for 2026** and beyond. At its heart is the case for £50m investment in paths, with other actions on local authority capacity, education on access rights and responsibilities, mapping, and help to ensure access is a reality for everyone. As part of the roll out of those messages we have been attending political party conferences and engaging with individual elected representatives.

Through the Scottish Outdoor Access Network (SOAN) we have led on auditing where local authorities are placed with capacity, funding and use of powers.

Intervening in high profile areas

Daily we provide advice to members and the public on tackling problems they encounter, with some instances gaining higher profile. We are guided by the experience and insight of our Access Sub Committee (ASC) who both bring cases to our attention and provide feedback on how to address issues raised. These include longstanding cases like Radical Road in Edinburgh (inching towards partial re-opening in early 2026) and Dalwhinnie level crossing (within our wider work in NAF above). New or resurgent cases include Centerparcs near Hawick with potential gains for walking in the area and North Chesthill Estate in Glen Lyon. A big disappointment this year was the shelving of plans for a Galloway National Park and we have fed that experience into our lobbying on the Natural Environment Bill (above). ASC members also gave valuable feedback to the National Lynx discussion report published in May 2025.

Confidence & knowledge to walk outdoors

Scottish Walk Leadership Project

Our *Next Steps* training offer continues to provide new and experienced walk leaders the chance to refresh and enhance their skills through practical, in-person sessions delivered by our dedicated volunteer trainers. This year we delivered 16 courses across Scotland for 58 walk leaders. We also recruited and inducted three excellent new volunteer walk leadership trainers to expand our reach and capacity.

As a result of our training 72% of participants felt they would lead more walks and 95% would recommend the course to others. Overall course rating by participants of 4.8 out of 5.

"I thought Stewart delivered a brilliant course. He is what I would consider to be a role model in every respect. I've been involved in training delivery for the vast majority of my working life and his

demeanour of calm collectedness, professional knowledge, simplicity of explanation and accurately responding to student queries were some of the things that stood out to me as exemplary. Great course, much appreciated.”

“Thoroughly enjoyed the entire day, George was friendly and welcoming. The content and level was appropriate for someone new to walk leadership, navigation etc . A very informative and educational day all round. I will certainly recommend it to my fellow walkers.”

“Jim Donaldson was a great instructor and made sure to cover all aspects of walk leading. He gave great advice/tips on leading groups based on his own experience as an outdoor instructor.”

Our *Next Steps* offer has been designed to sit alongside the excellent online training package that in recent years has been made available to all Ramblers walk leaders. These online courses and resources were built with support from Ramblers Scotland, based on our years of experience working with and learning from our walk leaders. Completing this online training, or demonstrating an equivalent level of experience or training, has now been made a requirement for all Ramblers walk leaders. Due to our years of investment in training, Ramblers Scotland volunteers have had a considerable headstart in this process, and a substantial majority of our active walk leaders have already completed the training, well ahead of the deadline on 31 December.

Together, these initiatives will ensure that all our walk leaders continue to have the skills and confidence to provide safe and enjoyable experiences for everyone joining our walks.

Participation of communities with least access to the outdoors

Community Outreach Project

We have worked with over 100 participants from six new community groups — Care for Calais, Edinburgh City Mission, Refugee Sanctuary Glasgow, Yahyah’s Hub Aberdeen, Inverness Refugee Resettlement, and Pilton Community Health Project — while deepening relationships with three existing partners: The Welcoming, Connect Outdoors, and the Scottish Refugee Council. We held nine introductory partnership meetings and led 20 inspirational local walks in lowland and parkland environments.

Through the pilot Community Champion Scheme, three aspiring leaders from two community groups gained skills, confidence, and formal qualifications, completing Outdoor First Aid and Lowland Leader Training and leading their own community walks. The scheme’s success inspired the creation of a paid Community Outreach Trainee role, filled by a Community Champion graduate, who has been developing new partnerships and leading walks across west Edinburgh. The intention behind the creation of the trainee role is not just to increase our capacity and engagement with communities but also to develop a pathway into careers in the outdoor sector for people from under-represented communities.

“It helped me discover new places, engage in meaningful conversation and feel more rooted in the local community.

Most importantly, it reminds me of home. The walking routes and scenery are often like those in my home country, providing me with a comforting sense of belonging. I hope to help others stay active through my role as a Community Champion, and I am so grateful for this opportunity to give back to my local community.”

Polly, Ramblers Scotland Community Champion

Engaging less well-off communities

Our area of focus for the last year has been Greater Glasgow and Clyde. We have developed relationships with 15 community-based organisations to start to understand community needs and aspirations, and to begin to explore how these could be addressed and realised. Six community

activities were delivered, including three community walks, two community surveys and the creation of a community walking offer, in partnership with Inverclyde Ramblers, for Oak Tree Housing Association in Greenock. Partnership developed with Drumchapel Community Council to explore development of adventure walking group in Drumchapel.

We've also developed a partnership with a wide range of stakeholders across Glasgow City Council to improve a community route in Drumchapel in the northwest of Glasgow and are currently exploring funding opportunities to support the development of the route.

Young Adult Development Project

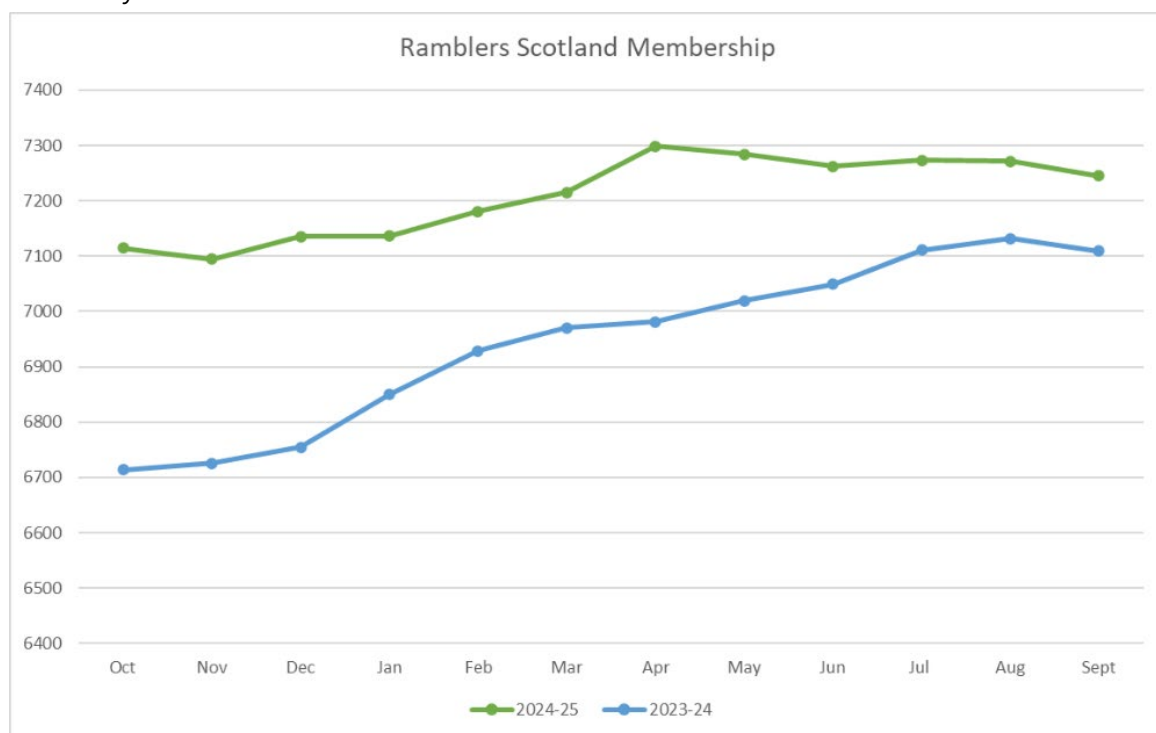
In 2025 we ran 10 Out There Award courses in five cities across Scotland for 41 participants. We unfortunately had to cancel six further courses that would have included two further locations due to extreme weather or low sign-ups or high withdrawals. The Award continues to engage a wide variety of participants, helping us meet our project KPIs for participation:

- 100% of participants said they enjoyed the course, that it increased their skills and that they now wanted to plan more walks with friends
- 22% came from global majority background
- 31% were LGBTQI+,
- 19% consider themselves to have a disability,
- 36% from 1-5 SIMD
- 61% female

Support for the Ramblers

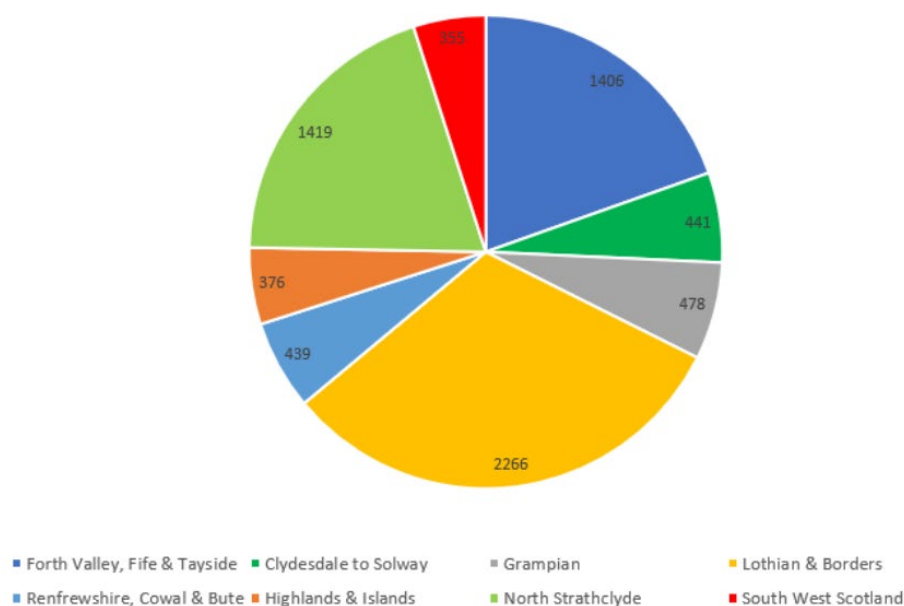
Membership

Ramblers Scotland's membership grew by 2% in the year, standing at 7,245 by the end of September 2025. Although detailed membership figures are not easily available for earlier years, we are confident that this is the highest figure for at least 15 years, although we could not match the very strong growth seen last year.



Although the majority of areas saw reported membership growth, including strong growth in some areas such as Grampian we did see small drops in others.

Area Membership 2025



Group Updates

Thank you to everyone who helped make 2025 a special year!

Across the country, groups marked Ramblers Scotland's diamond jubilee in a variety of wonderful ways — from themed walks and litter picks to social gatherings and dances that celebrated friendship and community. Many also enjoyed delicious creative cakes that helped them mark the milestone and share in the celebrations.

We love hearing about your group's successes and activities, but we can only share them if you let us know! Please do keep us updated by emailing scotland@ramblers.org.uk — we're always delighted to hear what you've been up to.

Cunninghame Ramblers

The Group Access Officer successfully persuaded the local council and a local landowner to repair stiles and secure a gate, improving safety and access. They are now leading a joint initiative with several public and private organisations to map and improve extensive deer fencing that impacts local walking routes.

The group also provides opportunities for volunteers to shadow more experienced members, which is proving highly effective in developing and sustaining future Walk Leaders.

Well done, Cunninghame Ramblers!

Kilmarnock & Loudoun Ramblers

In September, the group marked its 35th anniversary in style, celebrating with laughter, friendship, and a lively ceilidh. They also retraced the route of their very first walk from all those years ago — a wonderful way to honour their beginnings. Congratulations to everyone involved!

East Lothian Ramblers

The East Lothian Ramblers have been busy and made a big impact at this year's East Lothian Walkfest with their five-day, 50-mile cross-county challenge from the Firth of Forth to the Lammermuir Hills—one of the first events to fully book up. Designed to be inclusive and showcase the areas stunning variety of landscapes, it was a true highlight of the festival. In addition, several members of the group have been helping with the Marine Conservation beach clean and funded signage for a local route, activities that go above and beyond.

Balerno Ramblers

In January 2025, the group hosted the second Members Day for members across the Lothian and Borders area. The event featured a full day of walks and talks, including a post-lunch presentation by

Andrew Marsden, Chair of Friends of the Pentlands. The day was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

Walking Events

The Gathering 2025

Made up of volunteers from across Scotland, the Gathering Committee did a superb job organising the 2025 Gathering in Rhu this April. Over 100 people attended, and 10 organised walks took place over the weekend. A big thank you goes to the committee and to all the volunteers who helped recce and lead walks, making the event such a success despite the weather.

This year's Gathering also featured a celebratory cake marking Ramblers Scotland's Diamond Jubilee, adding a special touch to the occasion.

Anyone interested in finding out more or getting involved in future Gatherings is warmly invited to email rscotgathering@gmail.com.

Online engagement

We have seen a 3% increase in Facebook followers and 25% increase in Instagram followers. The demise of Twitter/X has led us to diversify our platforms, making more use of LinkedIn and launching a presence on Threads and – most successfully – Bluesky, where we now have 2,200 followers. Thanks to this diversification, we gained 1.7million impressions of our unpaid social media content during the year.

Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee (RSSC)

The Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee (RSSC) provides oversight and governance for our work in Scotland, ensuring that our strategy is delivered effectively and that our vision for walking—accessible, enjoyable, and open to all—remains central to everything we do. The committee helps keep our long-term priorities on course, rather than focusing on day to day operations.

At their quarterly meetings, the committee considers key issues, while more detailed work is carried out by our sub-committees and working groups - which focus on issues and activities including access, succession planning and the Gathering. RSSC have also played an important role in the recent governance review for the charity.

We'd like to express our sincere thanks to the members of the committee who are standing down for their dedicated service and valuable contributions to our shared mission.

We are now seeking new members to join the RSSC in 2026. If you're passionate about walking, access, and supporting the delivery of our strategic ambitions, we'd love to hear from you at scotland@ramblers.org.uk

Scottish Council 2025

The Scottish Council 2025 took place at The Merchant's House of Glasgow, where volunteers from the Glasgow Group and Glasgow Young Walkers helped make the event a great success, including organising an excellent programme of local walks. Director Brendan Paddy reflected on the past year, and delegates joined in celebrating 60 years of Ramblers Scotland — complete with a special anniversary cake!

The AGM business was successfully concluded before delegates enjoyed our Group Success sessions, featuring Irene McGugan (Brechtin Ramblers) on local access forums, David Czechowski (Aberdeen Young Walkers) on fundraising, and Natalie Corner (Livingston Ramblers) on running successful evening walks. We then welcomed guest speakers Chris Paul Lawler and Alan Rowan, rounding off a truly inspiring and enjoyable event.

This ends the annual report.