

RAMBLERS SCOTLAND STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
Minute of meeting held on Tuesday 13 May 2025, 7:30- 8:45pm
Meeting held online via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

RSSC

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith	Convener
Beth Dickson	Vice Convener
Mike Gray	Treasurer
Sue Thomas	Ordinary Member
Jarka Polednova	Ordinary Member
Terry Robinson	Ordinary Member

Staff

Brendan Paddy	Director, Ramblers Scotland
Claire Exley	Support Co-Ordinator (minute taker)

Apologies

Mike Dales	Ordinary Member
Andrew Bachell	Ordinary Member
Karl-Erik Wilson	Ordinary Member
Jacqui Thomson	Ordinary Member

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Convener opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and noted the apologies.

The meeting was held online and is shorter to accommodate key volunteers who had participated in the earlier Governance Review focus group session from 5:45 to 7:00pm. Brendan will compile and distribute the notes from that session.

The Convener confirmed that Adri Hortobagyi has been co-opted to this committee and will join our next meeting. The Committee were delighted that treasurer, Mike Gray will be standing for a second term.

The Convener reminded everyone of the organisation's values, the code of conduct, and the importance of updating the register of interests when necessary.

APPROVAL OF MINUTE FROM RSSC NOVEMBER 2024 MEETING

The Committee noted App 01a: the draft minute of the meeting held on the 18 February 2025. The minute was approved as an accurate record with one minor correction at the Finance Update, the last sentence on page 1 should read, "The Committee inquired about the purpose of the healthy bank balance, and it was clarified that it will be used to subsidise next year's event *as well as any 60th anniversary celebration activities this year*".

The Committee noted App 01b: all action points were complete.

There were two updates to App 01c- the Standard register of interest: Mal Dingwall-Smith is now the CEO of Bowls Scotland and Sue Thomas now also volunteers with the Woodlands Trust.

MATTERS ARISING/ ACTION POINTS FROM RSSC FEBRUARY 2025 MEETING

There were no matters arising.

The Director provided an update on the action points, Terry was connected with colleagues from GB to discuss the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) projects Terry's keen to support. Now that a key contact has left the Ramblers, the Director plans to follow up to keep things moving. Claire shared the skills criteria with the committee and encouraged members to share it within their networks.

FINANCE UPDATE

The Committee noted App 02a: the RSSC Accounts, the Treasurer highlighted that the report covered a period slightly longer than the second quarter.

The Committee reviewed App 02b: the Q2 Finance Report. The Director highlighted several key points: Scottish Council operated slightly under budget; the rent for the co-working office decreased significantly due to a new membership option; and Scottish Government funding for the Community Outreach project increased to £80,000. This amount is fixed and does not account for annual inflation adjustments. This additional funding will support the recruitment of a temporary, 0.5 FTE development role, aimed at engaging a Community Champion who Angela is working with and is a pathway to working in the outdoors. Efforts are ongoing to secure further external funding to supplement this for future years.

BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

The Committee noted App 03a: The Director spoke to the Q2 Business Plan update, highlighting the amber indicator at point 1.1 was due to a delayed recruitment for the GB Campaigns Manager. Rachel Mulrenan is now in post, she is based in Scotland.

On track for engaging the major political parties in Scotland in supporting manifesto drafting. Gavin is leading on this – and RSSC will be updated as things progress.

To clarify the acronyms on paper App 03a SOAN & SORA are Scottish Outdoor Access Network (they gather information on Access Officers & make sure Access stays on the agenda) & Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance (Ramblers were instrumental in setting this up).

The Committee queried why the Out There Award Ambassador Scheme was not going ahead in 2025. They felt this was an important part of the next steps of the Out There Award in Scotland. The Director updated on the expansion of the core Out There Award course across GB meant there was no capacity to continue with the next steps courses: Out There Award plus and the Ambassador Scheme. The GB Team hope to restart the Ambassador Scheme in 2026.

The Director highlighted the work referred to in point 2.2 – the work being done with communities in the lowest SIMD areas. There is much to learn but some opportunities have been identified, and clear goals developed including a working on a funding proposal we hope to submit in the autumn. More on this will be discussed at the Business Planning workshop in June when Jeannie will attend.

The Committee discussed if it would be helpful for them to engage with the excluded communities we are approaching for instance, to go on the walks. The director felt that from experience communities usually preferred to build relationships and trust with familiar contacts over time. When relationships are more established this may be more appropriate. The director confirmed that we will not be setting up a stall at the Refugee Walking Festival.

UPDATE: as part of the Refugee Walking Festival Angela and the Community Champions hope to lead two walks, one in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Committee noted App 03b the membership update. The Director highlighted that membership is steadily increasing although slightly slower in the last quarter compared to the same period last year but this is not a cause for concern.

SCOTTISH COUNCIL 2025 & MOTIONS

The Scottish Council Sub-Committee recently met to reflect on the 2025 event and review the evaluation survey results. Overall, the feedback was very positive. Attendees appreciated the event's content, particularly the emphasis on group achievements and insights into various group activities. There was a consensus that incorporating more of these elements in future events would be better. Members valued the Director's update; however, some felt that featuring two external speakers might have been excessive. Additionally, the business segment of the AGM was perceived as overly bureaucratic and less engaging.

The walks were a highlight of the day; however, the primary concern was the venue's limited size, which restricted movement within the room.

There were three motions submitted and passed by the Scottish Council. Sue took the motion on Climate Change to General Council on behalf of Ramblers Scotland, there was a good debate and the motion was passed very comfortably. The Board of Trustees will now determine how to implement the motion. It was proposed that the Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee (RSSC) explore potential activities within Scotland. The Convener will keep the RSSC informed about the outcomes of the Board of Trustees' discussions.

AP 02

SUB COMMITTEES / WORKING GROUPS

Claire will share the membership details of the sub-committees, and members were invited to inform her if they wish to join any particular committee.

AP 03

Board of Trustees update

The Convener announced that he would be continuing for another year as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, with formal approval expected in June.

Main agenda points from the Board of Trustees (BoT) meeting in February were the governance review, this continues and will lead to proposals for changes to our governance structure by the end of the year.

Until GB's proposals are known, we will follow their lead and hold a discussion on the Scottish context based on that.

The Director provided the committee with an update on the reporting aspect of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives. The primary emphasis is on community engagement within the Ramblers. Gail, our Community Engagement Manager based in London, and the EDI working group has come up with a strategy on how to approach communities. Terry volunteered to support the ongoing EDI work.

The Convener updated the committee on the motions that were presented to General Council and how binding these are. The function of motions will be considered as part of the governance review.

The Committee pointed out that not all Board of Trustees members were introduced or visible at the General Council and suggested that this would be helpful for attendees. The Convener would feed this back.

AP 04

The next Board meeting is on 17 June.

Access Subcommittee

The Committee noted App 06, the draft note of the Access Sub Committee meeting on Tues 11 February.

The Gathering update

Sue, who was a member of the organising committee for the Gathering 2025, reported that despite a few challenges along the way, the event was a great success. Tunnocks kindly provided caramel wafers for the event and there was a celebration cake to mark The Gatherings 35th anniversary. Feedback from attendees and comments on social media were highly positive, with heartfelt thanks extended to the organising committee for their dedication and hard work.

60th Birthday working group

The Vice Convener reported that the next meeting is scheduled for this week. The Convener remarked on the positive reception of the 60th anniversary celebration at Scottish Council, where a commemorative cake was a nice touch. The Committee thanked the organising committee for their hard work.

Search/ Co-option Sub Committee

The Convener noted that several RSSC committee members are expected to step down next March. To ensure continuity, we are seeking to co-opt new individuals onto the committee who would be willing to stand for election next year. An open call for expressions of interest will be shared in the upcoming Volunteer newsletter.

BUSINESS PLANNING WORKSHOP

RSSC will meet on Sunday 15 June at 11:30am at the Royal George Hotel in Perth. Lunch will be provided, and we will have a walk in the afternoon. Topics for discussion will be around Jeannie's update on the Community Engagement work, the manifesto work ahead of the General Election and the business plan for the coming year. An agenda will be circulated.

DATES OF NEXT RSSC MEETINGS

Formal meeting: Tuesday 26 August 5:45-8:45pm, The Melting Pot

Informal meeting: Tuesday 23 September 6-7pm online

AOCB / ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

None

Minute taken by: Claire Exley, Support Co-Ordinator, 13 May 2025

ACTION POINTS

- AP01** The director to follow up with the Walking Experience team regarding Terry's offer to support the EDI work
- AP02** RSSC members to explore potential activities within Scotland to align with the GB response to the motion on the Biodiversity and Climate Emergencies
- AP03** Claire will distribute the sub-committee remits. RSSC members are requested to indicate their preferred committee.
- AP04** The Convener will relay feedback to the Board of Trustees regarding the proposal for the General Council to introduce all Board members to the Council.



Signed..... Date: 28/05/2025

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, Convener, Ramblers Scotland