

Annual General Meeting 2023

All members and representatives of affiliated organisations are invited to join us
In the Coal Aston Village Hall on Saturday January 28th 2023 starting at 2pm
or via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88346996691?pwd=UG03VWEyRm5VejVlV3NzUDdsa3p1UT09>

Meeting ID: 883 4699 6691 Passcode: 052941

AGENDA

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence
- 2a. Chairman' welcome and opening remarks
- b. Appointment of Tellers (or Zoom Co Hosts)
- c. Remembering Area Members who have died during the last twelve months
3. President' Address
4. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting
5. Any Matters Arising from the Minutes.
6. Annual Report for 2021/2022
7. Financial statement – Accounts for year ending September 30th 2022
8. Appointment of Area President and Vice Presidents
9. Election of Officers and Council Members:
Area Chairman Area Secretary Area Treasurer
Area Access Officer Area Footpath Officer
Area Webmaster, Area Membership Sec
Area Publicity & Social Media Officers
- 10a. Two Members' Representatives on the Area Council
(we already have two names but other nominations will be welcome at the meeting
but helpful if notified beforehand, with written agreement of nominees if unable to attend.)
- 10b. Group Secretaries should also provide details of up to 2 representatives
of their Group appointed at their AGM to sit on the Area Council
- 10c. Two Representatives from the 3 walking groups affiliated to the AC
11. Appointment of Independent Examiner (Treasurer to Nominate)
12. Affiliation to like minded organisations
13. Appointment of Area Delegates to 2023 General Council on April 1st at NEC
14. Motions to General Council and for Consideration by the SYNED AGM
(see next sheet)
15. Any Other Business / Notices (Please inform Chair/Secretary prior to start of AGM)

After the formal meeting and a short break:-

RICHARD MAY of the Ramblers Board of Trustees
and **Claire Watkins** (CO Regional Engagement Officer Midlands & East)
will speak on current Ramblers concerns, activities & campaigns

**Please indicate to Chair or Secretary if you have any other AGM business
you wish to discuss asap (and prior to the start of the Meeting)**

Please Note: This SYNED Area AGM will be Recorded

The Ramblers Association is a Registered Charity (England & Wales no 1093577, Scotland SC039799
And a Company limited by Guarantee, registered in England & Wales 4458492
Registered Office: The Ramblers, 3rd Floor, 1 Clink Street, London SE1 9DG

Motions for Consideration at the 2023 SYNED Area AGM

1. Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Area Committee would like to propose the following for presentation at the General Council meeting.

“That Central Office lobbies the government to ensure that County and District Councils honour their legal obligations with respect to the preservation and protection of the National footpath network.

Specifically the emphasis should be on:-

Ensuring PRow’s, Public Rights of Way, are kept clear and safe to walk at all reasonable times.

To ensure landowners and tenants honour their specific obligations relating to that aspect 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.

To promote the use of guidance given in BS5709 Gaps Gates and Stiles wherever appropriate.”

2. Access to Riverside, Lakes & Woodlands

“That the SYNED Area pursue a campaign for greater access to Riversides, Lakes and Woodlands, within our area. We ask local groups to proceed immediately with a Audit of suitable locations to start this campaign for greater access to the countryside”.

Proposed by Les Seaman, Area Access Officer

Seconded by Terry Howard

3. Motion of Information to the SYNED Area AGM Jan 28th 2023

"At the last Area Council meeting it was agreed that we should undertake a consultation with all our Groups to find a more inclusive way of involving all our Groups in the democratic running of the Area and Area Council meetings. As part of this review we would want to consider, the how, the where and when Area Councils will be held".

The preamble/justification of this item:-

The number of Groups in our Area has steadily increased and since the recent pandemic new technologies have come along. So, it is always good practice to update our procedures. We want to encourage all Groups to be involved in meetings and the management of our Area and we believe this can be best done by trying to accommodate their needs.

Moved by Terry Howard and Cath MacKay

Minutes of the SYNED Ramblers Area AGM 2022

Held at Crookes Social Club, Sheffield S10 1TD on Saturday January 29th 2022

2022AGM.01a: Present: David Blunkett, Area President; Allen Pestell, Area Chair; Gavin Johns, Area Treasurer; Malcolm Dixon, Area Secretary; Terry Howard (VP); Dave Jefferies; Val Coleman; Judy Gathercole; Jez Kenyon (Vice Chair); David Gadd (VP); Nicki Speakman, Sara Whitby, Cath Hillier, Matt Byford, Simon Ogden (S&PRT guest speaker) and _____ other members in the room.
On Zoom: Ian Yearwood; Cath MacKay (VP); Isobel McCormick; Les Seaman; Jim Conibear; Helen Barker; David Moore and Mark Chung (BoT).

2022AGM.01b: Apologies for Absence: Sheila Verity, Roly Smith (VP) and Jerry Bennett.

2022AGM.02a: The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting (although no one had appeared on the Zoom link at this point). He pointed out where the exits and toilets were.

2022AGM.02b: Appointment of Tellers: JG and TH

2022AGM.03: A **Minute's Silence** was held for those Area Members who had died during the last twelve months. This included Geoff Woolhouse of the CHA whose funeral would be held the following week.

2022AGM.04: Lord David Blunkett - President' Address

Thanked us for the invitation and very happy to be present. Grateful for information provided in the Annual Report, which described the commendable efforts by everyone in all our local Groups to maintain their membership through the Covid pandemic and the ensuing restrictions, and in now getting people back out walking together in groups. Realised this would be difficult persuading people to come out. But we had to tell them what they were missing and help build their confidence up again. We were part of the broad conservation movement keeping the countryside open and accessible. Helping people restore their health and wellbeing.

Our other task was to tell the people who represented us at national level that this was a voluntary organisation. Members joined to enjoy being part of a community endeavour and meet fellow walkers, not to be part of a bureaucracy.

DB was thanked for his speech.

TH asked about DB's interest in Edward Carpenter in Holmsfield. Early ramblers would gather annually to celebrate him and his inspiration to the early trespass movement.

DB felt we should celebrate our local history and characters like Carpenter more.

2022AGM.05b: Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

Secretary reported that these had been distributed via email but it hadn't been possible to post them out due to weight restrictions. They were displayed on the screen to members in the room.

Proposed that they be accepted: Moved: TH, seconded: JG

CARRIED

2022AGM.05b: No Matters Arising from the Minutes.

2022AGM.06. Annual Report for 2020/2021 which had been posted to all members in the SYNED Area other than those we had email details for who had received a PDF version that way. Copies also available. Chair thanked the Groups for their detailed reports.

Proposed that the Area Annual Report be accepted: Moved: JK, seconded: TH

CARRIED

2022AGM.07. Financial statement – Accounts for year ending September 30th 2021

GJ had distributed a detailed report :-

Most of this financial year had been held under Covid restrictions, so the Area had not required its full allocation from CO and had had to distribute less than planned to Groups.

During the year the Area had received £3,750 from Central Office and distributed £4,651 to Groups in the Area. The Area had spent c£538 during the year on administering the Area, including for the production and distribution of the Area Annual Report.

We had allocated £16,861 from the Ivy Cowen Trust Legacy Fund towards the 5 year Ivy Cowen Project to support the Area and Groups to meet the Ramblers charitable objectives.
 However we had not spent any funds from it this year. GJ asked that Groups come forward if they had any particular project in mind. We should be spending this money not saving it.
 CO would be asking for it if it wasn't spent. No Clarion Call books had been sold during the year.
 The Bradfield Ancient Ways Initiative (BAWI) balance of £9,989 would be carried forward for Phase 2 of the project, although we hadn't decided where this would be used yet.
 The various local Groups had asked the Area for approx. £4,048 funding in total for the coming year
 We would be contributing £91 from our own funds in line with The Rambler's Reserve policy towards our budget of £5,691 and would therefore be asking Central Office for £5,600.

GJ moved a vote of thanks to our independent examiner, Ms Lorraine Watson. CARRIED
 TH supported the call to spend the money rather than making or saving it. We had started a riverside walks project which some of our money could be used for. We needed to be more imaginative.
 DB also suggested we involve schools in some of these projects.

2022AGM.08.

Appointment of Area President - David Blunkett was asked to stay on as President for another year. CARRIED
 Vice Presidents: David Gadd, Terry Howard, Helen Jackson, Cath MacKay, Mike Pye, Roly Smith,
 would be voted in 'en bloc' proposed by JK, sec: TH CARRIED

2022AGM.09. Election of Officers and Council Members:

Area Chairman:	Allen Pestell	m: TH
Area Secretary:	Malcolm Dixon	m: JG
Area Treasurer:	Gavin Johns	m: JK
Area Access Officer:	Les Seaman	m: TH
Area Footpath Officer:	remains 'vacant'	
Area Webmaster:	Johnathan Revell	m: MD
(note news items should be sent to the Webmaster for posting)		
Area Membership Sec:	Judy Gathercole	m: MD
Area Publicity Officer:	remains 'vacant'	
Social Media Officer:	remains 'vacant'	

voted in 'en bloc' proposed by JK, sec: TH CARRIED

2022AGM.010a. Two Members' Representatives on the Area Council

Terry Howard and Cath MacKay moved by AP, seconded by MD CARRIED

2022AGM.010b. Group Secretaries were asked to provide details of up to 2 representatives of their Group appointed at their AGM to sit on the Area Council on their behalf.

2022AGM.010c. Two Representatives from the 7 walking groups affiliated to the AC

2022AGM.011. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Lorraine Watson had agreed to continue as Independent Examiner moved GJ, sec MD CARRIED

2022AGM.012. Affiliation to like minded organisations

CPRE, PNFS, and OSS moved by LS, sec MD CARRIED

2022AGM.013. Appointment of Area Delegates to 2022 General Council on April 9th at NEC

Allen Pestell and Nicki Speakman moved CM seconded MD

2022AGM.014. Motion to General Council :- None

2022AGM.015. Any Other Business / Notices :- None

The formal meeting was closed at **14:50**. There was then a short break.

SIMON OGDEN of the Sheaf & Porter Rivers Trust gave a talk on “**Riverside Trails and what they do for our Wellbeing, Habitat, Heritage and Climate Change Resilience**”.

SO had trained as a Town Planner, and worked in planning and regeneration latterly in Rotherham and Sheffield. He had been part of the movement that helped bring about the restoration and regeneration of the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal and the Victoria Quays canal basin. He had also been the founder and a trustee of the Five Weirs Trust.

He had retired in 2020 but retained his interest in our local rivers by continuing to convene the Council's Waterways Strategy Group, and helped to set up the Sheaf and Porter Rivers Trust and to relaunch the Upper Don Trail Trust.

SO felt there were five reasons why this was a particularly critical time to be talking about rivers.

Well, unsurprising to an audience of outdoor enthusiasts perhaps, number one was Climate Change which was already regularly bringing us extreme weather – both flood and drought - both of which put inaccessible, neglected, canalised or culverted rivers in a very bad situation

Two was bio-diversity – we were facing a world wide collapse of wildlife populations and one of the fastest ways to redress that in an urban environment was to restore rivers – nature's trunk roads - back to health.

This was now supported by a massive increase in the public's awareness of water quality issues

Three was health and wellbeing – perhaps a cliché during the recent lockdown but still true – rivers were also ideal routers for active travel, particularly in a hilly city - level, safe, beautiful – although surprisingly not all agreed with this idea including, unfortunately, our local Transport Planners

Four was the repopulation of the inner city – many more people now lived in the centre of Sheffield again and were wanting and needed access to green spaces and to explore the inner city and its sometimes surprising natural environment

Five was opportunity - as happened previously on the Lower Don in 80s and 90s the last decade had seen the grip of industry loosened on the Upper Don, Lower Sheaf and Porter and the opportunities to restore and reclaim our river banks were coming forward all the time now – a once in a generation opportunity Perhaps because of this combination of circumstances we had seen a lot of progress particularly on these rivers over the last three years despite the obvious difficulties with the pandemic.

On the Upper Don Trail, SO reported that when the trust was first set up 20 years ago the ambition had been for a route from Ladys Bridge to Oughtibridge Village. A substantial good quality and well-used section was built through Beeley Woods by the City Council along with key sections from Ladys Bridge to Kelham Island as part of redevelopments. Then progress had stalled mainly around the ill-fated Brooklyn Bridge. However in 2019 the Trust had been relaunched and our ambition was effectively doubled to go right up the Little Don to Langsett and the Peak Park and along the main river to Penistone and Dunford Bridge. The trail also embraced a wider range of users including cyclists, kayakers, horse riders, rock climbers, anglers. He could also report that progress had continued due to a number of fortuitous opportunities and developments. This meant that of the 22.52 km planned – 8.2km had been completed. 9.3km already had funding, leaving 3.5km useable but needing improvement and a further 2.5km still needed funded and planning through what were some of the most difficult sections with a number of obstructions and engineering issues.

But the UDT Trust would persevere and had support from FoPS, FoWEC, Sustrans, local MPs and others.

SO outlined the work that continued on decultivating the lower sections of the Sheaf and Porter rivers, although it had required additional campaigning activity by local residents, businesses and councillors to change the minds and plans of developers. Local support for clean ups and litter picks had helped empower people to take ownership of the routes. They also highlighted issues around plastics and other less visible forms of pollution. A longer term river stewardship scheme was being planned.

The last 1.5km of culverts through which the Sheaf flowed, virtually invisibly until it reached the Don at Castlegate proved a greater challenge but had also provided an opportunity for the Trust to raise funds. Bringing in qualified caving guides it had organised 'tours' of the river for over 2,000 people and raised over £20,000 for the project and captured the imaginations of young city dwellers, kayakers, extreme sports fans and urban explorers. One of which was the proposal to install a 'lightwell' on Platform 5 of Sheffield Station roughly over where the Porter joined the Don.

Meanwhile the Council, urged on by the Trust and others, had put in a successful bid to the Government's 'Levelling Up Fund' for the Castle Market site which had brought in up to £15m to be spent on restoring the Castle site including the daylighting of the River Sheaf for around 400 metres and the creation of a new park appropriately known as the Sheaf Field. There were a whole lot of detailed questions still to be resolved including how improved passage and habitat for fish and mammals could be combined with access for human enjoyment in canoes, wakeboards, etc and how we preserve the dark habitat of a protected colony of bats, but the Trust were hopeful that these issues could be settled through consultation and using the great store of local knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm which already existed for this project.

There remained a number of Challenges

1 Differences over policy on off-road routes between SCC and others over the use and priorities for active travel routes within the City.

2 Challenge over wayfinding and signage – conflicting naming and routing issues remained.

Careful consultation and hierarchy and consistent approach was needed to overcome this.

3 The ever reducing resources available to public authorities making any ambitious scheme, however desirable, less likely.

But against those were the many and great works by other voluntary groups and public authorities on the Limb Brook, the Loxley, the Rivelin, the Moss, the Kirkbridge Dyke, the Rother, the Carbrook and elsewhere. SO welcomed the SYNED's own river-focussed campaign and looked forward to find ways to work together to achieve our shared dreams!

MARK CHUNG of the Ramblers Board of Trustees then shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining some highlights from the previous year as well as what to look forward to 2022:-

He began by introducing himself. He became a Trustee at the previous April's GC. He was on the Committee of the Burnley & Pendle Ramblers in Lancashire Area and had been their Footpath Officer for 10 years.

The Board had 12 Trustees who were all volunteers and fully paid-up members. There was currently a vacancy which would be filled at the forthcoming GC. Most of the current Trustees came from the South and East, which he felt should be rebalanced. They were elected at GC each year for either 3, 2 or 1 year terms and could be re-elected for a second term.

The posts were open to all Ramblers and no special skills or qualifications were required, other than having a passion for walking and the Ramblers. Their responsibilities were strategic rather than operational. They didn't tell staff or volunteers or fellow members what to do. Their main role was in governance according to the Articles of Association. They made sure the Ramblers were accountable to the Charity Commissioners, the Public as well as its members. They made sure the charity's resources were managed properly and used to provide public benefit, not just for its members. They had to act with reasonable care and skill and to act in the Charity's best interest.

He did want to place on record on behalf of the Board and staff a big "thank-you" for the hard work done by all our members and volunteers at all levels.

He then presented a review of the past year and how the organisation was working hard to come out from under the various restrictions brought in by the last two years of the Covid pandemic.

Importantly 14,888 new members had joined in the last 12 months – a total of 101,130 Ramblers members. Our average age remained high at 67 and he felt we must make more effort to recruit younger members.

- Over 25,000 group walks had been organised and led by our members and he hoped this good work would continue.

We had continued to move forward with developments in technology, especially with mobile phones.

There had been over 3.8 million views of the Go Walking webpages

- Over 38,600 people had downloaded the Ramblers App and over 28,000 Ramblers Routes had been downloaded for selfguided walks.

- Don't Lose Your Way – we're helping to preserve lost rights of way in England & Wales, with volunteers working to save 23,308 paths (over 7,000 miles) so far. Now moving to the background research phase which would involve lots more people and people hours of work.

- Mapping Scotland's paths - over 180 volunteers had audited and recorded new hidden paths.

- Paths to Wellbeing - Ramblers Cymru secured £1.2m funding to improve access to nature and to protect and enhance paths
- Over 2,000 volunteers had taken up training opportunities including:-
- over 1,000 people had completed the Walk Leader e-learning foundation course and over 200 people had been involved in Area Leadership sessions
- Our campaigning In England.... had prevented National Rail from closing 16 level crossings
- We've helped reform the Highway Code putting walkers and other more vulnerable road users first
- Our Green Routes campaign – working with Transport for London to develop a new leisure walking strategy and new routes. Now working for similar success in Manchester.
- In Scotland... we had successfully lobbied for a 10 year visitor management strategy with funding
- Our Wild Camping Campaign had raised awareness of responsible wild camping
- In Wales....Our lobbying helped secure £1.35m funding for Rights of Way improvement plans
- The Big Welsh Walk – celebrated 50th anniversary of Offa's Dyke Path becoming a National Trail

During the year ahead (2022) we would be launching our new brand identity and a new website Raising awareness of the Ramblers and the work it does not just organising walks but also protecting rights of way. The aim was to reach out to new and more supporters. Generate more members and generate more funds and new funding streams. The new branding was to show we were "Opening The Way"

Promoting our values: – We were inclusive across communities and age groups – We were Inspiring – We were Empowering – We were Responsible, Sustainable and Caring.

The new website had been launched in a beta version and hoped to be fully available from March Constructive feedback was welcome. Brand guidelines were available from the Assemble website. Walking For Health would be re-launched as Ramblers Wellbeing Walks once the new website was up and running.

MC finished by saying he felt there had been a lot of progress and good news for the Ramblers. MC was "Thanked" for his informative talk & presentation.

QandA

JC - asked whether there were any plans to redress the N/S imbalance on the Board and levelling up. MC replied that the Board couldn't stipulate where Trustees came from. Members put themselves forward and were voted on accordingly. Issues facing Ramblers were the same across the country. The new diversity and inclusivity committee now looked not only at those issues but also equality, age and geography issues. Why had the new office been opened in London rather than further north? We had recruited support officers for the north. But would take our concerns back to the Board.

SW - pointed out that there was no ethnic diversity shown in our videos and publicity materials. Younger people didn't seem represented either. If people didn't see themselves represented they wouldn't join the organisation but would go to other groups and there were a lot of other groups out there. Ramblers didn't seem to have any plan or strategy to recruit these younger people. You say you want them to join but didn't say how you were going to do it. MC replied that Board were considering co-opting representatives of the younger groups on the Board to give them input. They were also consulting on greater inclusivity. Agree there needed to be greater work done on this as younger people were the future of the Ramblers.

IM - Ramblers talked of inclusivity but were increasingly putting stuff online often involving form filling which made it harder for many non-white, non-middle class, non mobile phone owning members to become involved in and contribute to the organisation. We were losing many of our older active members and not replacing them with younger members. Assemble had created a two tier system where some members (volunteers) were more equal than others (members).

People who didn't have access to the internet were being left behind and had to rely on others doing stuff for them. People were not just being left behind – they were leaving. They had stopped leading walks. They didn't want or need the additional bureaucracy with risk assessments and form filling. Yes, we were happy to have the insurance but it should be for everyone on a walk.

MC accepted that doing risk assessments remained a big issue across the country but they were becoming a feature in other groups and at walking festivals. The Board was collecting feedback for their own meetings and deliberations.

IM – felt this was just putting more work on ever fewer volunteers. It was hard enough recruiting them in the first place. It also discriminated against people who didn't have English as a first language, or had poor literacy or IT skills. Ramblers had come out of a working class movement and we seemed to have moved away from that heritage which was bad. It also worked against our values of being open and inclusive. We no longer seemed to be.

CM - suggested that Ramblers were becoming more bureaucratic which our members didn't want. For most of them it was just a leisure activity. Why couldn't it all be simplified with a standard list of risks that everyone could use - covering every aspect of walking and walk leading which was, after all, usually a safe and enjoyable recreational activity?

DJ - also suggested that the current risk assessment system had at least a couple of problems. The instructions were just to fill it in and file it for three years. It doesn't say where and nobody else would know or see it. This was a waste of time and wouldn't be any use for insurance claims. The first duty of anyone doing a walk recce and finding some form of hazard would be to then inform anyone coming on a walk about it. But there's nothing on the form to say this should be done. It may be obvious that it should be done, but it doesn't say so. A very bad omission. The risk assessment didn't do the job it supposedly was designed to do. It wasn't fit for purpose.

Additionally we didn't like being treated like employees - we were members.

DC agreed and promised to take our comments back to the Board.
He was thanked again for his presentation and comments.

Chair thanked DJ, JG and VC for the morning walk.
He then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and staying despite the technical issues.

Our apologies for the various Zoom related technical problems and issues which affected the AGM.

Please Note: This SYNED Area AGM was Recorded

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