

Minutes of the 50th Annual General Meeting Dorset Area of the Ramblers' Association

**Held at Broadmayne Village Hall, Cowleaze Road, Broadmayne, DT2 8EW on
Saturday 30th November 2024 at 11.00 am**

Ramblers' Association is a registered charity (England & Wales no 1093577, Scotland no SC039799) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (no 4458492). Registered office: c/o Bates Wells, 10 Queen St Place, London EC4R 1BE

1 Introduction

The meeting was opened and chaired by the Area President, Laurie Fairhurst. He welcomed the members present, the guest speakers Lucy Robinson, Chair of the Ramblers' Board of Trustees, and Terry Sweeney, retired Dorset (County) Council Countryside Service Manager, now Planning Consultant for the SWCPA.

2 Present

a) There were 24 members and two guests present.

b) Apologies for absence had been received from Mike Beams, Margaret Kettlewell, Mike Heckford and Gordon Denney.

3 Minutes of the 49th AGM

These had been circulated at the start of the meeting. It was agreed by all present that these were a true record of the 49th AGM and they were duly signed by the President.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4 Annual Report and Statement of Accounts

a) Annual report

Laurie Fairhurst introduced the 50th Annual Report for the Ramblers' Association Dorset Area, covering the period 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024, which had been circulated to all members in advance of the meeting. He asked if any of the contributors wished to add anything to their reports and if there were any comments or matters arising. Sylvia Popham (Wessex Wanderer Walks (WWW) coordinator) gave an update, reporting that numbers on the walks in the past year were the highest since 2019, and that the coming year would be the 30th anniversary of the WWW. There were plans to produce a souvenir programme, towards which Dorset Area had contributed £250, for which they were thanked. Sylvia thanked all WWW walk leaders, and would welcome more offering walks for the coming season.

b) Income and Expenditure Accounts

The accounts for the year to 30th September 2024 had been circulated to all members in advance of the meeting.

It was proposed by Kate Gocher and seconded by Doug Pigg that the accounts should be approved. This was agreed by all present.

5 Election of Members and Officers

a) In accordance with the Constitution all posts are open to nomination at the Annual General Meeting.

By convention the Area Chair retires after five years continuous service, thus Kate Gocher stood down. One nomination had been received for the post, that being Janet Davis.

It was proposed by Sarah Moyle and seconded by Susan Blake that Janet Davis be elected Chair. All agreed.

The following persons had advised their willingness to continue in office, and there were no other nominations

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconded
Secretary	David Coleman	Doug Pigg	Janet Davis
Treasurer	Mike Heckford	Gill Hale	Roger Eede
Footpath Secretary	Jan Wardell	Jill Vines	Heather Giles
Countryside Secretary ++	Janet Davis	Chris Moyle	Kate Gocher
Newsletter Editor++	Doug Pigg	Chris Moyle	Heather Giles
Membership Secretary ++	Margaret Kettlewell	Roger Eede	Gill Hale
Access Officer*++	Mike Beams	Janet Davis	Susan Blake
Webmaster ++	Margaret Kettlewell	Gill Hale	Chris Moyle
Vice Chair	Jan Wardell	Sarah Moyle	Jackie Down

(++ Officers who are not necessarily required to be members of Area Council, but are entitled to vote if they attend Area Council meetings.)

There were no nominations or volunteers for the post of Area Publicity Officer so that remains vacant.

There was one volunteer willing to sit on Area Council as an individual member. There remain two vacancies for those places.

It was proposed by Jackie Down and seconded by Sarah Moyle that Kate Gocher be elected as an individual member. All agreed.

b) Representative of the Affiliated Clubs

Jan Wardell reported that there were no Affiliated Club representatives present. Susan Blake advised that she was a member of an affiliated club, but not a representative.

c) Area Delegates to General Council 2025

The West Dorset Ramblers had been invited to nominate a delegate and Jill Vines volunteered. David Coleman volunteered to go as the other Area delegate. Both were thanked.

6 Appointments

a) Martin Forde-Horne had agreed to continue as Independent Examiner and as there were no objections or alternative proposals he was appointed.

b) Laurie Fairhurst agreed to continue as President and this was agreed unanimously. There were no nominations for Vice Presidents.

7 Motions

No motions had been received.

8 50th Anniversary Event

Members had been sent details of two proposed projects to celebrate/commemorate the 50th anniversary. Following discussion about these, the options were put to members for a vote, with the results as follows:

Option 1. 50 Favourite Walks in Dorset chosen by members

Groups and individual members will be asked to nominate their favourite walks in Dorset. (Each Group will be invited to submit up to 20 walks) From these a shortlist of 50 will be chosen by a 'panel' of members, and these will be published either online or in print. **16 votes**

Option 2. Walk 50 Dorset 'Bottoms' from a compiled list

A list of 100 plus 'Bottoms' in Dorset has been compiled, with grid references, and the area in which they fall. The 'target'* will be to walk 50 of these (or as close to the location as possible) up to October 2025, taking photographs as evidence. **4 votes**

Option 1 was therefore the project which will be taken forward, but it was suggested that elements from the 'Bottom' list, the Wessex Wanderer Walks and the Jubilee Trail might be included in the final 50 chosen walks.

9 Guest Speakers

a) Lucy Robinson – Chair of the Ramblers Board of Trustees

Lucy introduced herself, saying that she was relatively new to the Ramblers, had been on the Board of Trustees for 3 years, and had been elected Chair at the AGM of General Council 2024. She thanked everyone for the work done for the Ramblers, and explained briefly the governance system within the Ramblers.

Lucy felt that the 'refreshed' strategy was the topic that had provoked the most debate recently, and felt that it did reflect the Ramblers charitable objectives. It sought to address the inequalities within the socio-economic system, and she hoped it would encourage work with those most disadvantaged.

The second 'hot topic' was the risk management on walks, and she admitted that Ramblers had 'got it wrong' Work is being done to address this.

Looking ahead: the website would benefit from further work, but funding was an issue. There is work starting on a governance review, for example one member/one vote, and also looking at the Area/Group structure. A consultation on the latter is planned to seek members' views.

Question and comments from the floor

Chris Moyle had submitted a question in advance, which he summarised. Ramblers appears to be suffering from a serious decline in volunteers, exacerbated by the pandemic but already underway before then. Also affected has been the level of responsibility that people are willing to undertake and increased bureaucracy threatens the flow of new walk leaders. Following lengthy guidance produced, which was withdrawn following feedback, it is now compulsory for any potential new walk leader to complete an on-line training course before they can be registered as a walk leader. Chris gave examples of irrelevant material, which tends to put off potential volunteers. Also the responsibility for safeguarding is not cross-referenced. Chris' question was:

How much serious effort is Ramblers spending on simplifying our processes and paperwork to make it a better environment for volunteers and, specifically for walk leaders, why don't we have a simpler mandatory training course with additional modules for those who offer serious mountain (technical) or short well-being walks?

Lucy explained the background to the volunteering process, and the need for all to be aware of safeguarding issues, but she agreed to take Chris's points back to those who had prepared the guidance

b) Terry Sweeney retired Dorset (County) Council Countryside Service Manager, now Planning Consultant for the SWCPA

Terry summarised his work from his early days at DCC, through to his present work on behalf of the SWCPA. He recounted anecdotes, and was particularly pleased with the work he had been involved with on the coast, despite the fact that several paths he had helped 'furnish' in the early days, were no longer on the ground, having been consumed by coastal erosion.

There were no questions from the floor.

10 Vote of thanks

The President thanked Lucy Robinson and Terry Sweeney for their presentations, and everyone involved in the organisation of the AGM. Lucy Robinson and Terry Sweeney were presented with a copy each of the Jubilee Trail Guidebook.

Laurie invited everyone to stay for lunch and a chat with the guest speakers, Area Officers, and fellow-members, after the close of the meeting, and reminded everyone that the Anniversary Cake would be cut before lunch.

Kate Gocher, retiring Area Chairman, thanked everyone for attending the AGM and Jan Wardell for her work for Area. Jan was presented with a token of appreciation, for which she thanked everyone.

11 The meeting closed at 12.30 pm

Signed

Date.....