

Dorset Footnotes

September 2026

I hope that everyone has had a good summer of walking despite the heat. This edition of Footnotes takes us straight into autumn and winter with formal notice of the AGM in November. Please do come along and meet the Area Officers and old friends from across the county. We've moved location this year over to Bournemouth with East Dorset Group hosting the event. If you are travelling by car please do try to arrange car-sharing (there is free off-road parking at the hall). Or you can get the train to Bournemouth from where several bus routes will bring you to the location (please check numbers and times before travelling).

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF THE 52nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF RAMBLERS DORSET AREA

This will be held at 11.00 am on SATURDAY THE 28TH NOVEMBER 2026 at the Moordown Community Centre, 21 Coronation Avenue, Bournemouth, BH9 1TW

**(OS Grid Reference: SZ 08946 94524;
what3words: ///often.tracks.jabs)**

The business to be conducted will be as stated in Clause 12 of the Dorset Area Constitution. Each individual member of the Area and one representative of each affiliated local organisation in membership of the Area is entitled to attend and vote.

After the formal business there will be a talk by Mr Stephen Brown of Butterfly Conservation Dorset and then there will be an opportunity for socialising over lunch (please bring a plate of either savoury or sweet food for sharing).

Area vacancies

A number of Area posts are presently vacant and there will be formal elections/appointment to the following posts at the AGM in November: Footnotes Editor, Publicity Officer, Access Officer (The Access Officer

keeps an eye on both coastal access issues and those relating to inland open access land), and a **webmaster**. (This is a job which can be done from the comfort of your own home). In addition, our **Area Footpath Secretary** will be looking to retire, possibly at the AGM in 2027, so anyone interested in this post is encouraged to consider 'shadowing' her over the coming year. Please contact the Area Chair, Janet Davis (janetbdavis1955@outlook.com) if you are interested in any of these posts.

Dorset Council Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan

After a wait of over five years since the original information gathering exercise, Dorset Council is finally consulting on the draft **Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2026 – 2036**. You can read it here: [Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan \(ROWIP\) Consultation - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](#). The Area Footpath Committee will be preparing Dorset Ramblers formal response but that doesn't preclude individual members from responding in a private capacity. The closing date for comments is 12th October.

Dorset Local Access Forum

The Dorset Local Access Forum now has its own Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1KRnYZbyM8/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

Please do have a look.

Governance review

As previously reported, the General Council vote on changes to the Ramblers governance was lost. The Board of Trustees has now put forward a number of refinements to the proposals intended, they believe, to strengthen member influence, improve transparency and provide greater confidence that any future governance arrangements would be both democratic and effective. In brief they are proposing the following

- An increase the number of Great Britain-wide elected trustees to seven, rather than the six proposed in April. Under the revised proposal, there will be seven elected trustees in total (five elected by members across Great Britain, together with the two elected trustees for Scotland and Wales), bringing the total number of trustees on the Board to 13.
- The selection process for the four appointed trustees would involve a Ramblers member who is neither a trustee nor a member of staff to bring an independent member perspective to recruitment decisions.

- *A Ramblers member who is neither a trustee nor a member of staff in the recruitment process would also be involved in the recruitment of the Chair and Treasurer, subject to member ratification at the AGM.*
- *Much clarification on the planning for, and organisation of, the member forums (of which there will be four in England) has been provided. In particular, a mechanism by which agreed forum proposals would be formally submitted to the Board using a standard reporting format. The Board would be required to consider each proposal and publish a written response setting out its decision and the reasons for that decision.*
- *The Board has clarified the proposed timetable for implementing the new Forum structure. If the new system is approved by General Council members, the first cycle of Member Forums is expected to take place in autumn 2027, with the first National Forum taking place in 2028,*

You can read the detailed proposals here:

[2026 07 20 Governance reforms pack no email .pdf](#)

General Council members have been consulted about these revised proposals. If the feedback from the consultation suggests a broad consensus then the Board plans to hold another Extraordinary General Council meeting in London on 21st November to vote on the amended proposals. Our existing General Council members, David Coleman and Julla Miller, will be invited to attend.

Britain's Favourite Path

A section of the Strawberry Line path near Winscombe in North Somerset has won the title of Britain's Favourite Path 2026. The winning path follows the route of a Great Western Railway branch line that ran from Witham Junction to Yatton via Shepton Mallet, Wells and Cheddar transporting locally grown strawberries until the late 1960s. Thanks to the work of local volunteers, the old railway line has been transformed into a 20+ mile-long path to be enjoyed by walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users, mobility scooters, and on some sections, equestrians. The path won the accolade following a vote amongst Ramblers members. The runner-up was the Buttermere Circular Path in the Lake District. You can read more about the vote here: [The South West's Strawberry Line Path named Britain's Favourite Path 2026 - Ramblers](#)

Dorset High Sheriff's County Lines Walk

Very big thanks are due to five of our members, Heather Giles (WDG), Andrews Lakeman (NDG), Alison Ridge (EDG), Jill Vines (WDG) and Jan Wardell (SDG) for the huge amount of work they have done in helping the High Sheriff of Dorset devise the route for a walk around the county, the aim of which is to shine a light on county lines exploitation—where vulnerable children and adults are drawn into drug networks, violence and are coerced and controlled by criminal gangs. The High Sheriff, Helena Conibear, is raising money to support charities which work to help the young people caught up in these networks. You can read more about it here: <https://www.facebook.com/dorsethighsheriff/>

Replacement bridge on the Jubilee Trail near Broadmayne

Dorset Ramblers was pleased to be able to make a contribution towards the cost of a replacement footbridge and kissing gate on the Jubilee Trail on the boundary between Broadmayne and West Knighton. Dorset Council had removed the bridge when it was deemed dangerous earlier this year. The contribution helped to speed up the provision of the new bridge, made of recycled plastic which should last for many years to come.

Changes to rights of way

Confirmed Orders since May Footnotes

Beaminster FP79 (part): Extinguishment (S118 Highways Act 1980)(Confirmed by PINS)

Beaminster BR80 (part): Diversion (S119 Highways Act 1980) (Confirmed by PINS)

Bridport FP91 (part) & FP96: Extinguishment (S118 Highways Act 1980)

East Orchard FP6 (part): Diversion (S119 Highways Act 1980)

Ferndown FPs 60[#] & 61[#]: Modification to add footpaths.

Ferndown FP59[#]: Modification to add footpath.

Gillingham FP34 (part): Diversion (S257 TCPA 1990) \$

Gillingham FP33 (part) & FP78: Diversion (S257 TCPA 1990) \$

Holwell FP12: Diversion (S119 Highways Act 1980)

Stalbridge FP9: Diversion (S257 TCPA 1990) \$

Thorncombe FP48 (part): Diversion (S119 Highways Act 1980)

Yetminster FP11 (part): Diversion (S257 TCPA 1990)

New number

\$ Whilst these Orders are confirmed they are not yet operational, by virtue of Article 2 of the order.

PINS: Planning Inspectorate

[If you have any queries about these changes please contact Jan Wardell, Area Footpath Secretary]

Next issue of Footnotes

Please can you send items for the next issue of Footnotes to me by 31st December.

Janet Davis
Area Chair