

SOMERSET AREA'S 48th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall Sunday 13th February 2022

36 members appended their names to the attendance sheet, however, the secretary counted 39 at the meeting.

Apologies: -

Bill Tregillus - South Somerset

Maria Lyons - South Somerset

Peter Rossiter - West Somerset

Opening remarks from the chair: -

The chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked members of South Somerset for hosting the venue. He welcomed Ramblers Trustee's Vice President, Ronnie Forbes, and looked forward to him answering any questions from the floor after the AGM.

Minutes of the AGM held on Sunday 14th February 2021 held via zoom due to Covid 19 lockdown

The minutes were presented and approved.

Proposed by Mike Plaskitt and seconded by Jim Turner

Matters Arising: -

There were no matter arising.

Chairman's Annual Report: -

It has been another disrupted and difficult year, with greatly reduced face-to-face activity. In my own case, virtually no such activity on Ramblers' business.

So, I have been wondering what to say to this AGM that could be of relevance and interest!

During 2021, we have again seen much promotion of the benefits of walking, and generally enjoying the open air – where of course, the risks of Covid transmission are, in any case, low.

Linked to that, there have been quite a number of 30-minute TV programmes about walking, many set in the North of England. It was nice to see some places filmed that I remember walking in, back in the 1990s.

Although Group walking activity has been at a reduced level for much of the year, many of us will have got out and walked on our own, or with friends. In my own case, I have been lucky enough to walk in parts of the county I had never really explored before. Like west Mendip. Linked to this has been a pleasant investigation of some of the local licensed premises!

Changes to the Highway Code

There has been a predictable backlash from some newspapers to the Government's changes to the Highway Code. Let's remember that non-motorised users of the 'Queens Highway' – walkers, horse riders and cyclists - have been around for much longer than motor vehicles, something that headline-grabbing commentators in the media seem to have forgotten!

The first so-called ‘safety bicycle’ – two wheels and chain drive – was built in 1876 by Harry John Lawson, although in fact John Humber built something similar in 1868.

The first motor car is generally credited to Karl Benz in 1885, but widespread access to cars in the UK did not really begin until the 1950s... so the bicycle actually had more than half a century’s head start. (With horses, even Archbishop James Ussher, 17th century Primate of Ireland, would have conceded that they had been around since 4004 BC.)

Within Europe, we tend to think of cycling as more of a Dutch than a British speciality, but in truth this is only because of the neglect of cycling in Britain as a mode of transport after 1945. Cyclists are not, in my view, being unreasonable in wanting 50 years of lost ground to be made up!

Changes in the Highways Code, emphasising the need to give way to pedestrians seeking to cross the road, may also make it more likely that we will see better provision in future for those walking in and around towns and villages.

There has been an unwillingness to permit the widespread use of zebra crossings (without belisha beacons) that can be seen in other western countries. A signal-controlled pedestrian crossing costs, I was told, £70,000, plus there are ongoing maintenance costs. That’s one reason why there aren’t really very many of them, so there are often not enough opportunities for people on foot to cross the road.

While there are some points of contention, ultimately, I think we all benefit from improvements that raise the profile of the non-motorised means of ‘getting about’.

New advice to land managers in the Countryside Code prepared by Natural England, includes:

Ask visitors if they are lost (in my experience, most landowners are helpful, and it’s only an awkward minority we have to worry about);

and goes on to point out that... *visitors rarely mean to trespass*.

Putting in more accessible gates rather than stiles (hear, hear, and thankfully we are seeing more of these).

Keeping land free from rubbish that could encourage fly tipping (again, most landowners do their best, while still trying to earn a living, but I guess we can all think of some locations where a lot of detritus has accumulated).

I do think that in return, there is a need for walkers to respond sensibly. Early in 2021, conditions near me were so wet that there were problems on well-used routes with ‘path spreading’. Not everyone recognised the damage that was being done to the land. In one case, some people using a right of way were clearly ignoring a landowner’s informal diversion to a field edge – which given the conditions, I thought was fair enough – and instead were just walking straight through the mud over some recently planted crops. Not a good image for walkers, and it doesn’t help Ramblers when we need co-operation from landowners to improve facilities.

Ramblers’ new logo

Speaking personally, I actually quite like it. I wasn't entirely keen on the old one! Let's hope that, like the British Rail logo of 1964, the new one lasts for a long time. Too frequent re-branding doesn't inspire confidence. With British Rail, it was said that the organisational aim should be to '...be the island of stability in a sea of change.' Certainly, I think we'd like to be the 'go to' organisation on rights of way.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the Area Committee for their comradeship and support in 2021, and wish my successors, and all Somerset members of Ramblers, the best in the coming years.

Receipt and adoption of the audited statement of accounts: -

The Treasurer presented the audited accounts, copy attached below.

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Mike Plaskitt and seconded by Jim Turner. The accounts were carried unanimously.

Election of Honorary Officers:

Before the election of honorary members, the chairman advised the floor that he and the secretary would be standing down and is therefore seeking a new Chair and Secretary at this AGM

The following put their names forward for nomination:

Chair: Jim Turner -South Somerset. Proposed by Les Stather and seconded by David Fawthrop. Appointment carried unanimously.

Secretary: Mike Plaskitt – Mendips. Proposed by Brian Lucas and seconded by Stuart Thomson. Appointment carried unanimously.

Treasurer: Robin Downton – proposed by Sandy Swayne and second by Jim Turner. Appointment carried unanimously.

Footpath Secretary: Les Stather.

Membership Secretary Les Stather.

Webmaster Les Stather.

There were no other nominations.

Appointment of an independent examiner.

Ed Levy - Sedgemoor.

Nominations to General Council 2022 at the NEC Birmingham on Saturday 9th April 2022

The General Council is the ruling body of the ramblers and every area is allowed to send voting representatives to the annual meeting. Numbers of voting members depend on the size of the area, with a minimum of 2. Observers can also be sent but cannot vote on the motions or speak. It elects the trustees, Chairman and Treasurer. The trustees can decide not to proceed with passed motions but have to explain why to the next General unopposed. The two Somerset representatives for 2022 are Robin Downton and David Thompson.

Directions to Area Council

There were no directions to Area Council, however, the representatives have said that in light of recent activities within Ramblers it could be an interesting General Council. Robin and David will report back to the Area Committee.

Discussion with the Ramblers vice Chair, Ronnie Forbes.

On completion of the formal aspects of the meeting there followed a question and answer session with Ronnie Forbes. A large part of the discussion involved the use of the Risk Assessment forms. The majority of members attending the AGM did not agree with the way risk assessments are being handled by Ramblers. Ronnie tried to explain the reason behind them but it was widely felt that Ramblers has gone about this process wrongly.

Further discussions about Ramblers 'Assemble' which is the programme to identify volunteers within the Ramblers. This package is an 'off the shelf' programme which is not really fit for purpose with Ramblers volunteers. Further improvements are expected.

There followed a presentation on identifying and claiming 'Lost Rights of Way' prior to the 2026 deadline.

Post minute note: As these minutes are being produced the Government has scrapped the 2026 deadline.

Somerset Area AGM 2023

The host for the 2023 AGM will be Taunton Dean. The date and venue to be decided.

David Thompson
Area Secretary.

RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION SOMERSET AREA

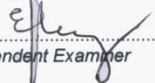
ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

	2020/21	2019/20
INCOME	£	£
Funding From Central Office	1800.00	2000.00
Return of funds from Group	0.00	0.00
Donations	0.00	0.00
Area Holiday	0.00	2215.00
Publications/Goods Sales	23.08	35.49
Hall Hire deposit refund	0.00	0.00
Memorial Donations	300.00	0.00
Total	£2,123.08	£ 4,250.49
EXPENDITURE		
To Groups-Budget Funding	2110.24	2499.10
To Group (other)	0.00	0.00
Newsletter (Postage, Stationery & Printing)	0.00	19.77
Campaigns/casework	55.08	0.00
Practical Work	30.80	0.00
Meetings(inc AGM)	0.00	0.00
Contribution to production of Wessex Wanderer	0.00	0.00
Area Holidays	248.80	3420.66
Cheque Deposit charges	0.30	3.30
Memorial bench	350.00	0.00
Admin	0.00	80.25
Total	£2,795.22	£6,023.08
Surplus/Deficit	-£672.14	-£1,772.59
Balance in Hand 30/9/20		3136.51
Assets		0.00
Current Account		£3,136.51
Deduct outstanding payments		0.00
Income + balance brought forward from 30/9/20		5259.59
Expenditure		2795.22
Balance		£2,464.37

I certify that the above accounts have been prepared in accordance with Ramblers Association guidelines, that they reflect accurately the transactions of the Area during the financial year show the state of affairs as at 30th September 2021 that the above records have been properly kept and all payments authorised by the committee.

Signed: R. A. Downton Date: 16-10-21

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area independent examination guidelines I consider that the Somerset / accounts to 30th September 2020 have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year 30th September 2021.

Signed:  Date: 23/10/2021
Independent Examiner