

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 15TH JULY 2025**

Minutes

Present Alex Ellis (Area Chair), Judith Anson (Area Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), Brian Tuffnell (Area Webmaster and Mansfield & Sherwood), James McGill (Newark), Alan Burrell (Newark), Caroline Lee (Newark), Dave Johnson (Robin Hood Way Flexi Group), Jim Sinclair (Southwell), Mike Stock (Rushcliffe), Thelma Ward (Worksop), William Bowden (Worksop), Yinka Soetin (One Step Walkers), Lesley Bensley (One Step Walkers), Dave Hobson (Vale of Belvoir), Linda Honey (Nottingham), Debbie Seaborn (Nottingham), Denise Garley (Mansfield & Sherwood), Julie Casey (Mansfield & Sherwood), Mary Whetstone (Mansfield & Sherwood), Jim Baker (Mansfield & Sherwood), Merv Thomas (Mansfield & Sherwood) and Heather Jowett (Mansfield & Sherwood)

1. Apologies: Adrian Amer (Area Vice-Chair), Diana Munro (Area Membership Secretary and Worksop), Keith Jacobs (Broxtowe), Andrew Cowell (Notts & Derbys Walking Group) and Elaine Hobson (Vale of Belvoir),

- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 15th April 2025 were approved with the following amendment:

Minute 5.4 Rights of Way Sub-Committee – next to the last line, sentence to be added/changed as follows: “James Magill asked whether the person had been receiving expenses from Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers. Neil Stafford replied that no expenses had been paid and James agreed he would not raise the issue at future meetings.”

Proposed: Jim Sinclair

Seconded: Thelma Ward

- 3 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

None

- 4 Area Officers Reports

- 4.1 **Area Chair's Report**

Alex Ellis apologised that she had not produced a report due to illness. Mansfield & Sherwood Group had joined a Sparkle Walk for 10K at night on the first anniversary of Sue Rick's death. It was expected to raise £2,000 for the Ashgate Hospice.

- 4.2 **Area Secretary** Appendix II

Walk Leader Training – in answer to a question, Judith Anson explained the established line of communications from Central Office and from Area was always to Group Secretaries as they were the organisers in their Group. The communication from Central Office about the on line events on walk leader training had not been sent to Group Secretaries which meant some Groups had not been aware of it.

Notts Guided Walks Programme – Chris Thompson thanked Judith and Neil Stafford for their support on the Notts Guided Walks Programme.

Communications Group Report – Dave Johnson asked why there was no longer a report from the Communications Group. Judith replied that without a Publicity Officer the only specific event was the Nottinghamshire County Show which had been reported at the last meeting. The funds available for publicity were being carried forward. Details of the

website and Facebook were also being reported. Dave responded that there should be a negative report presented to each Area Council if there had not been any activity.

4.3 **Area Treasurer** Appendix III

Neil presented his report on the current financial position and the Area budget and funding request for 2025-26. The reserves were higher because the number of Area Officer vacancies meant expenditure was significantly below forecast. It was proposed that Area requested only £600 of funding for 2025/26 to reduce reserves in accordance with Central Office and Charity Commission directives.

In response to a question from Jim Sinclair, Neil replied that £1,900 had been requested for 2024/25. Dave Johnson requested a breakdown of the £890 spent on Area Council, Management and Executive Meetings. Neil replied that, including travelling expenses, this was: £370 for the Management Meetings, £420 for Area Council and £180 for the Executive. Dave also requested more details of the £4,150 Rights of Way figure. Neil explained that most of this was the Don't Lose Your Way funds which had originally been classed as restricted funds but this had now been removed. It also included funds from the British Horse Society for DMMO claims. Area Council had agreed in 2021 to allocate funds for the Trent Hills Public Enquiry. The Public Enquiry was being held in January 2026 and was being funded by Central Office. Neil suggested the funds would be paid to Central Office at a future date. Dave also questioned the Other Category of £230. As stated on the budget report, that covered the Area Zoom subscription and the annual subscriptions to PNFS and CPRE. In answer to a question from James Magill, Neil replied money had been set aside to purchase branded clothing which could be used when carrying out path maintenance.

Area Council was asked to approve the 2025/26 Funding Request

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Brian Tuffnell

Vote: all in favour, no abstentions

Area Council was asked to approve the renewal of the Area Subscription to PNFS at a cost of £30

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Dave Hobson

Vote: All in favour, no abstentions

Area Council was asked to approve the renewal of the Area Subscription to CPRE at a cost of £36

Proposed: Neil Stafford

Seconded: Dave Hobson

Vote: all in favour, no abstentions

4.4 **Rights of Way Sub-Committee** Appendix IV

Dave Hobson commented on the new CAMS website which was excellent although there had been problems logging in. Neil responded that this was an introductory phase which was why the site was not being widely publicised. James also commented it was not possible to upload photographs and it was difficult to log a report on a 'phone while out in the field. Judith confirmed these issues would be raised at the meeting with Neil Lewis, NCC.

4.5 **Area Membership Secretary** Appendix V

Dave Johnson asked what the problem had been with the Robin Hood Way Flexi-Group. Judith replied that when she or Diana logged in to the Membership database, they could see all the Groups in Nottinghamshire, whereas Groups could only see their own

information. The Robin Hood Way Flexi-Group had disappeared from that list, although the individual members remained on the overall membership list. Judith had therefore sought the reinstatement of the Flexi-Group. This had now happened, although the reason it had been removed was unclear.

4.5 **Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer** Appendix VI

Chris Thompson apologised to Groups for the problems with the Notts Guided Walks Programme caused by WalkNotts and confirmed a PDF of the walks had now been included on the Area website. Chris thanked Neil for preparing this document. Chris also reported on the Robin Hood Way 40th anniversary walk and event and on the opening of the Trent Vale Trail. Members were encouraged to submit circular walks which could be added to the website. James added the Trent Vale Trail was keen to promote walks accessible to local people for example, pram friendly walks. Neil commented the idea of short local walks had begun in Covid and if members submitted walks with directions, these could be added. Dave Hobson confirmed all the Vale of Belvoir walks were available on the Group's website together with maps.

5. Group Reports and Decision on Whether to Continue with Statistical reporting Appendix VII

Statistical Reporting

At the last meeting it had been agreed each Group report should start with the same information e.g. number of walks held, number of people on each walk, any new members on the walks, etc. This would allow a comparison between Groups and Judith had circulated Jim Sinclair's criteria. It had been agreed to review this in July to see if it was helpful. It was clear from the responses that Groups already collected very different information about their walks. Some Groups already collected this data for their own use and produced it easily. Other Groups did not collect it at all, while others recorded parts. Members discussed whether it was useful. Jim felt it was illustrative of the amount of walking activity across the County and could be used for publicity purposes. Dave Hobson agreed and it would show how many walks there were across the County each year and how many walkers were involved. Worksop added that they logged the data for every walk and it would allow comparison between Groups. Where Groups did not already collect the information such as Newark and Nottingham, it had proved difficult and time consuming. Yinka stated that while the exercise had good intentions, it had not been popular and producing the information had been difficult for some. It was agreed that the exercise would not be repeated. Neil thanked Jim for making the proposal.

In view of time constraints, it was agreed to take the Group Reports as read.

6. Future Discussion Topics

Dave Hobson proposed the discussion topic for October should be Health & Safety linked to risk management. Members agreed and Dave agreed to lead this topic.

7. Discussion Session on Walk Leader Training and Recruitment

Thelma Ward, Worksop Group introduced this session and a full report is attached. Alex thanked Thelma for leading the discussion and members for actively participating.

8. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 21st October 2025, 6.30PM at Bilsthorpe.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS – 15TH JULY 2025
DISCUSSION TOPIC – RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF WALK LEADERS

This session was led by Thelma Ward, Worksop Group. Members were divided into 4 groups and asked to discuss specific aspects of walk leading. This report sets out the results of these discussions and the following report back and comments.

Report Back from Discussion Sessions

1. What difficulties does your Group have in recruiting walk leaders?

- Newark Ramblers organise lots of walks (3 walks a week), therefore not enough leaders to cover this.
- Walkers do not want the additional responsibility.
- Inability to map read.
- Individuals join Ramblers because they want to be led.
- Mixed reactions to the compulsory walk leader training. It is off-putting to some, but Newark group has altered its structure and training and therefore this has built confidence.
- People need support and mentoring, then they can build up their confidence to be a leader.
- Run sessions for walk leaders?
- Fear of responsibility is a barrier for a lot of people.
- Intimidated by their perception of current walk leaders.
- members can only register as a walk leader if they have an email address in their own right – not if they have a shared email.

**2. The Ramblers have tightened up the process for registering new leaders who now have to carry out 3 on line courses: a. Walk Leader Handbook, b. Walk Leader Foundations and c. Preventing and Managing Incidents
What are the Groups feeling on this?**

- If you have a BMC qualification you don't have to do the training.
- Insufficient reasons provided for this training.
- Need to get on with it, it's the way of the future.
- Managing incidents is inherently poor.
- The training is not as onerous as people think.
- Is the training a requirement for insurance purposes?
- Not everyone has the technology finesse although that can be worked round by using text or keeping a written list.
- Will this enable and facilitate confidence?
- This has not been 'sold' to the Ramblers.
- Using the word "course" implies pass or failure
- It will showcase the experience that we have.
- This still leaves room for individuality.
- Training is the foundation, not the whole answer, we should have the ability to measure and learn from mistakes made.
- The admin involved in registering walk leaders is time consuming.
- The training makes it clear what your responsibilities are as a walk leader.
- The Walk Leader Handbook has an unrealistic maximum number for each walk.

- Post meeting Note - Health and Safety will be a topic at the next area council discussion session.

3. What training and support does your Group provide or feel that they should provide and what are the constraints?

Group Provisions/aspirations.

- Walk leader training day – theoretical training, followed by practical.
- Use of Ramblers' app.
- Practical map reading.
- Buddy recces/pairing up to lead.
- On walk support – encouragement, back marking, thank leaders and back markers.
- Car sharing.
- Info on the web site.

Constraints

- Back marker training.
- Access to tech, knowledge and willingness.
- Confidence with tech.
- Navigational skills.
- Knowledge of areas.
- Health and Safety – dealing with an incident.
- Fear of speaking to a group at the start of the walk.
- Not able to drive or not near public transport.
- Time to lead and recce.

4. Have any potential walk leaders been put off taking on the role and why?

- Resistance to doing 5 modules by new walkers taking on the role.
- More mentoring needed for new walk leaders.
- Being put off by First Aid training not being done.
- Map reading.
- Suggest that limit number of walkers initially for new walk leaders by booking.
- Suggest buddying up with walk leaders to gain confidence.
- Modules need shortening as they are putting people off.
- Back marking key so that walkers aren't lost.

Comments from Thelma:

A few common themes that I have extracted are as follows:

Requirement for support and mentoring.
 Ability to deal with an incident (Health and Safety).
 Map reading/navigational skills.
 Mixed reactions to the compulsory walk leader training,

Other Issues from report back

The deadline for existing walk leaders to self certify or undertake the training is the end of December. If current walk leaders do not all do the training and are taken off the system, will Groups have enough walk leaders?

One person in each Group having a coordinating role for walk leaders and having a good relationship with them is key to encouraging others.

There was a suggestion that a Group could ask other Groups to provide walk leaders if it was struggling to find leaders. Others thought members want to be in a Group to know people and don't want to lead for people they don't know.

There was a discussion on how far in advance Groups planned their walks. This varied from a year to 1 month, 3 months and 6 months, illustrating the differences between Groups in how they work.

Thelma Ward, Worksop Group
Supplementary additions by Judith Anson