

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 20TH JANUARY 2026**

Minutes

Present Alex Ellis (Area Chair), Judith Anson (Area Secretary), Neil Stafford (Area Treasurer), Chris Thompson (Area Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer), Dave Johnson (Robin Hood Way Flexi Group), Mike Stock (Rushcliffe), Thelma Ward (Worksop), Yinka Soetan (One Step Walkers), Dave Hobson (Vale of Belvoir), Elaine Hobson (Vale of Belvoir), Jim Sinclair (Southwell), Jacobs (Broxtowe), Kevin Rowbotham (Notts & Derbys Walkers), Martyn Gill (Mansfield & Sherwood), John Alvey (Mansfield & Sherwood)

1. Apologies: Adrian Amer (Area Vice-Chair), Diana Munro (Area Membership Secretary and Worksop), Brian Tuffnell (Area Webmaster and Mansfield & Sherwood), Alan Burrell (Newark), Linda Honey (Nottingham),

- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2025 were approved

Proposed: Mike Stock

Seconded: Thelma Ward

- 3 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 **Special Area Council on 18th November** This had been arranged to consider the Motions to be presented to the Extraordinary General Council (EGC) on 6th December 2025 to advise the Area delegates how they should vote. Judith Anson reported the Board of Trustees had cancelled the EGM and the date had been used for a Conference (see 4.2). A booking had been made at Bilsthorpe but had been cancelled with no charge.

- 4 Area Officers Reports

- 4.1 **Area Chair's Report**

Alex Ellis apologised for not submitting a report.

- 4.2 **Area Secretary** Appendix II & IIa

Judith spoke to the report of the General Council (GC) Conference on 6th December attended by herself and Neil Stafford as the Area GC delegates for 2025. A majority of the Areas present had not been supportive of the One Members One Vote (OMOV) proposals. The Board continued to state there was demand for a more democratic voting system but no evidence was provided, despite requests. It was particularly disappointing there was no mention of the charitable aims of Ramblers in the protection and creation of rights of way, protection of the countryside and the environment. The removal of General Council meant the Board could no longer be held to account although there was a suggestion the Ramblers AGM would be required to discuss a proposal if put forward by 100 members. Neil added that the costs of the proposed changes had not been made available (again, despite requests) but the delegates were being asked for their views on how funds should be spent. In answer to a question, Judith confirmed that the Memorandum & Articles of Association could only be changed by a 75% vote in favour at the April GC (now apparently referred to by the Board as an AGM). Neil felt the Board would need to consider carefully how the Motions were presented to GC. While the

change to Trustee numbers and selection was likely to be supported, OMOV was more controversial. There would probably be a number of Motions.

Judith confirmed the next GC was on 25th April and the Motions would be discussed at Area Council on 21st April. The GC delegates would be elected at the Area AGM on 1st February.

The Nottinghamshire County Show would be held on 9th May at Newark Show Ground and Area had been offered a free pitch. Judith asked whether Groups were willing to support the Show by providing members to set up the equipment in advance and on the day. As there was no support in the meeting Area Council agreed not to have a stand at the Show in 2026. Judith confirmed the Area equipment would be loaned to the Robin Hood Way Association if it decided to take up a pitch. Post Meeting Note: the Collingham Group did subsequently offer to help on the Show day.

4.3 **Area Treasurer** Appendix III

Neil reported the Quarter 2 payments had not been received from Ramblers. Jim Sinclair asked about first aid training and whether this was allowed for in the budget pack from Central Office. Neil replied that all Groups were entitled to a basic allocation but if they wanted additional funding they should use the form with the annual budget pack. Area would support reasonable requests. Dave Johnson and Yinka Soetan asked if additional funding was available in year, rather than just in the annual budget. Neil said that any request should be made to Area for consideration. Elaine Hobson asked about first aid training provided by the Red Cross and referenced by Central Office. Neil responded that the Group Budgeting Guidance 2025/26 issued by Central Office Finance in May last year contained a section on First Aid Training, with a link to the Ramblers website. Post Meeting Note: link is as follows:

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/first-aid-group-walks> Within this link, if you click on "Take a Look" it brings up a document about the main first aid providers and the discounts that have been secured.

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

Waterside Bridge in Nottingham Jim Sinclair suggested there should be a Ramblers walk organised to include the bridge when it opened to celebrate the new access. Members agreed this was a good idea and Jim agreed to make the arrangements. The bridge was due to open late Spring/early June. Judith agreed to circulate details of the walk. Trent Hills ROW/3263224 Kneeton FPs 10 & 11, Flintham FP7- this DMMO claim had been ongoing for 20 years and had finally reached a Public Inquiry on 20th January. Ramblers had employed a consultant to present the case. Chris Thompson had attended but the Inquiry had been delayed at the last minute due to errors in the evidence.

4.5 **Area Membership Secretary** Appendix V

The increase in membership numbers of the Notts & Derbys Group was noted. Kevin Rowbotham explained they had a presence on Instagram and Facebook. The walks programme was being reenergised with the inclusion of women only walks following comments from female members. Kevin added the Group was now moving forward. Dave Hobson commented the Vale of Belvoir did not have a conurbation to draw new members from and members wishing to join were often allocated to Rushcliffe by Central Office. Dave Johnson questioned the large number of members allocated to the Area Only category. Neil responded that Diana Munro had contacted all those members by email or post encouraging them to join a Group but very few had done so. The members

from the closed Ravenshead & Hucknall Group had remained as Area only members despite encouragement to move. Judith explained that one of the new governance proposals was to force all members to be part of a Group against their wishes. Unfortunately, there was a danger these members would leave as they supported Ramblers as a charity and did not want to be involved with a Group. Other members chose not to be part of a Group to ensure impartiality such as the Area Secretary and Area President.

4.5 **Tourism & Heritage Paths Officer**

Chris asked members to send walks to be included in the Notts Guided Walks Programme for 2026. These walks would also be on the Group walks programme so could attract potential new members. In response to a question from Dave Johnson about the length of walks, Chris said there was no specific length.

Chris wanted to attract walkers to the County by providing self guided walks on the Area website and including interesting stories about Nottinghamshire. A Publicity Officer was required to assist and Chris encouraged members to come forward for the role.

Chris also reported on the visit to the Great Central Railway by The Flying Scotsman in June. It was possible to book the train and do a walk.

5. Group Reports Appendix VII

Yinka asked whether Groups could see who had completed the walk leader training. Judith confirmed the information was available on the Membership Database and the authorised person in each Group could view it. If any Group had a problem they should contact Judith who could see details for all Groups.

6. Robin Hood Way – Wardens Needed

Dave Johnson, speaking for the Robin Hood Way Association asked members to volunteer as wardens for the Robin Hood Way. There was a Warden's Handbook to assist and the main role was to monitor a specific section of the Way and replace missing way markers. If anyone was interested they should contact Dave or Chris Thompson.

7. January Discussion Topic – Risk Management and Reporting

Dave Hobson introduced the discussion topic. The starting point for this session is **not** that Ramblers' formal Risk Assessment processes (as discussed in previous Area Meetings) is inadequate, but that the reporting of incidents is. For example, I have not attended any Ramblers' meeting at any level, even Vale of Belvoir's (VBR) own meetings, where Health & Safety has been on the agenda and so we have no idea whether the management part of the process is working or not and whether improvements are needed. Now statistics are available which show that slips, trips and falls on level ground are the major cause of injury, especially for the over 60s it is my belief that these incidents are being under-reported by Groups, or not reported at all. Stiles also are a major hazard and certainly discourage members from coming on walks and perhaps not enough is being done to improve or even eliminate them.

The end-point I would like to aim for is for all Groups to feel they are able to critically assess their walking experiences in a non-judgmental way, if only to determine "near misses" or "what could we have been done better". How and how far up the Ramblers organisation to report on this; how to review the data; and how to feed back the information to members was the subject of four break-out sessions.

Group 1 -Review your Group's experiences and whether you could have done things better.

- One Group reported they had a near miss with a car. The Group had agreed in future that roads should be crossed in small groups and the walk leader should decide on the recce where it was best to cross a road.
- Another Group had a member fall and was injured.
- Both these incidents could be used as examples to brief walk leaders on how things could be done differently.

Group 2 - How and how much to record at Group level. Should it be a meetings' agenda item? Should we have an identified Safety Officer?

- An incident report form should be completed.
- All incidents or accidents should be discussed at the Committee.
- There should not be a Safety Officer because it was everyone's job and people should take individual responsibility.
- A risk assessment should be completed but needed to be flexible according to the conditions on the day

Group 3 - Whether and how to report up to Area and whether and how to feed back information to Groups and members.

- Are there statistics held at Central Office?
- Incidents, potential incidents and near misses should be included in the Area Group Reports even if these could be seen as negative for the Group
- The walk leader is 'in charge' of the walkers on the day and should try to prevent incidents (this was an example of walkers being told not to cross the road but doing it anyway)

Group 4 - What should Central Office be doing?

- They should collate the incident report forms but can only take action on the forms received
- The lessons should be fed back via the training
- There used to be a card available to walk leaders to use as a checklist
- Everyone should be encouraged to carry their ICE card.

Discussion Following Report Back

In general, all groups were of the opinion that a Ramblers Group's approach to Health & Safety (H&S) should be challenged on a regular basis and improvements sought where necessary. For example, VBR has recently reviewed its own approach to dealing with walkers with even minor injuries; easier access to an individual's ICE cards; adding H&S to every Committee Agenda. A simple H&S Agenda item would include;

- Incidents since last meeting
- Near misses and what we learned
- Route issues (e.g., dodgy stiles, erosion, blocked paths)
- Equipment checks (first-aid kits, phones, participants' footwear)
- Communication issues

- Training needs for walk leaders.
- Reporting back to Group members.

Reporting up to Area was also considered important, both good and bad practices, but must be done so as not to identify individual members. Data should be collected and summarised and fed back to Groups after discussion at Area meetings. Nottinghamshire Area should decide whether/how to report to Ramblers Central Office. A comment was also made that those members who do the training are those that don't need it and the people who actually need the training don't do it.

Dave was thanked for organising and leading the session.

8. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 21st April 2026, 6.30PM at Bilsthorpe.