

**THE RAMBLERS – TENDRING GROUP
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON SATURDAY 2nd NOVEMBER 2024
AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH HALL, GREAT BENTLEY**

1 Opening by Chairman

Ronnie welcomed 21 members to the meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Kennedy and Dave Cornell.

3 Approval of AGM 2023 Minutes

The Minutes of the 2023 AGM meeting were examined. The minutes were approved as a correct record – proposed by Heather, seconded by Maggie and signed by the Chairman.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were none.

5 Chairman's Annual Report

Ronnie gave the following report –

"I think we can all agree that it's been a reasonable year in that we have enjoyed a steady availability of walks and most have been well attended.

However, the weather has been a little erratic this year which has made some walks somewhat difficult and some have been cancelled, (all mine!) but hopefully this will not be repeated in the future.

The difficulty of attracting volunteers to come forward as walk leaders remains a perennial problem even though the Ramblers in general and we in particular are doing all we can to encourage people to do so.

Another problem was highlighted this year when a certain couple were abusing the system and joining walks while not being members. It just reminds us to be vigilant.

Let me also remind you of an incident that occurred recently. A few walkers at the rear of the group missed a turning thus becoming separated. After a few attempts at finding the correct route, contact had to be made with the main group who sent a member to lead the separated walkers back. This will be taken up again in more detail in AOB.

I'd like to finish by thanking all the other members of the committee for their time and hard work in keeping the group functioning."

6 Presentation of the Accounts by the Treasurer

In Alison's absence Isabel read a summary of her Treasurer's report. The full report is to be found in Appendix 1 which follows these minutes.

"We started the year with an opening balance of £1140.56 and ended the year with a balance of £ 994.39.

We have donated £40 to various church and village halls for the use of their car parks throughout the year for our walks.

We received funding from Area to the tune of £265.00, only slightly less than last year when we received £289.00. We also received £80.00 from Ramblers Holidays as commission for members taking holidays with them.

We spent £400.47 to help towards P3 work by our volunteers and provided a hedge and brush cutter, safety knee pads and spares for equipment already purchased.

There have been no social activities requiring funding, our social activities all being self-funded."

Jeff asked whether we get interest on our bank account. John advised that this was unlikely as we have a current account.

The question was asked as to why we received less from Ramblers this year when we have more members.

7 Membership Secretary's Report

"Ronnie stated that membership is 180 as of 1st November. There are 7 affiliate members and 13 new members since 29/07/24

He asked whether these new members are actually walking. Only a few new people have joined our walks."

8 Footpath Secretary's Report

John gave the following report-

A) Essex Area feedback

"There have been changes at Area level. My current Footpath Secretary role is an Essex Area rather than solely a local Tendring role, hence I'll attempt to provide you with an area update.

- 1) Essex is the third largest Ramblers Area in the country with > 4K members across the county.
- 1) 79% support was received for evolution from the former Area/County arrangement to an Area Hub.
 - With the change, there will be a focus on targeting generic issues affecting footpaths with the new Area Hub involving Footpath Secretaries, that is rather than a representing a management layer between National and local areas like Tendring
 - Other areas (e.g. Counties) will wait for results of the Essex Hub experiment before potentially committing to similar change
- 2) The old Area Finance function will be continued within the new Area Hub set-up. The Area membership role is however being discontinued and other area functions have been streamlined
- 3) There are new Area Hub vacancies for a Publicity Officer and Chairman (e.g. David Radford the current Chairman is retiring)
- 4) Nationally some Rambler Areas/Counties are folding e.g. the Cambridge Area

5) Coastal Path update

- There are still funding issues
- The intended National 2024 path completion date will be missed
- Locally there is no planned date completion available for the Manningtree – Suffolk section of the Coastal Path. Other Tendring elements are still scheduled for completion during the financial year 2024/5

6) Don't Lose Your Way

- Katherine Evans, our Hub lead, has advised that the end date to claim old paths has been extended to 2031
- Locally, a local Great Oakley claim (supported by evidence) has been declined

7) Essex Highway (EH) update, from Shirley Anglin at the Essex AGM.

- 50% reduction in EH staff since 2021 together with a reduction in the number of gangs 4->3, however there's been no capital budget reduction. Work is increasingly being outsourced.
- 89% of all Essex footpaths will not be inspected by EH Inspectors in the future, hence the importance of EH working together with the Ramblers e.g. for inspection purposes
- New strategy of priorities (1 Essex Way, 2 Urban areas, 3 Rural areas). Risk Assessment e.g. is there a way around a path defect, if there is lower priority is given to the defect
- Also new timescales are given to defect resolution e.g. ranging from 2 to 20 working days for Priority 1 (e.g. Essex Way) faults. Rural path defects have significantly longer repair times.
- Photos and locations (What Three Words), needed with defects
- Accessibility – greater focus on this and hence the removal of stiles

8) First Area Hub held in April and a second in September.

- The format was as agreed at the AGM and the first meeting was held virtually using Zoom and the second face to face. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first meeting was better attended.
- There has been a particular focus on how the County's individual areas are performing practically with the PPA & P3 functions. While there many gaps here county-wide, Tendring is generally doing ok.

A) Parish Path Adoption (PPA) and Parish focus days

- 1) Parish Path Adoption involves walking all of the PRoW within a parish, ideally over 12-month periods. Notes are then made within a PPA spreadsheet and faults reported to EH. This both provides an audit on the condition of RoW and proves that paths are used.
- 1) 12 of our 25 Tendring Parishes are currently unadopted and 7 of our Tendring Parishes have never been adopted, namely: Alresford, Elmstead Market, Frating, Great Bromley, Great Clacton, Weeley and Wix.

- 2) Since COVID times we now have 5 fewer adopted Tendring parishes, so if anyone is interested in adopting a parish, then please do let me know.

My response to our unadopted Tendring parishes has been to attempt fill in the gaps by holding parish focus days, where over a single morning all a parish's rights of way are walked and issues noted and then afterwards the PPA spreadsheet is updated and defects reported to Essex Highways.

Initially I've targeted parishes that have never been adopted, but obviously with time I'll go beyond these to include parishes that have not been inspected recently. Then working with Michael Talbot we've attempted to address some of the issue identified locally.

I've been very grateful for all the support offered by both the Parish Adopters, as well as those who have helped with parish focus days. Thank you!

John Starkey who leads many of our short walks made a point that footpaths that are regularly used are usually in a good condition. However, paths that used infrequently are not cared for in the same way. This has hampered him in his walk planning.

John encouraged John S to report all the faults he encounters on the EH website and offered his personal assistance in doing this."

9 Rambles Secretary's Report

June gave the following report-

"Thank you to all of our walk leaders who give up their time to plan and check their routes. The winter and spring months brought extra challenges as there was so much rain that several walks had to be rerouted, postponed or cancelled. The programme hadn't seen so much last-minute rearranging for a number of years. There has been a total of 85 walks this year provided by 16 leaders.

Ramblers have removed the need for a written risk assessment but suggest that there should be a 1:10 ratio of leaders, middle and back markers.

Should a leader need to claim compensation for injury it would be wise to have photographic evidence.

New leaders now have to complete online training before they can be added to our list.

Sunday

There have been just four Sunday walks this year.

Thursday Short

Yet again, thank you to John S. (21 walks) and Dee and Alan (10 walks) who have provided a fairly full programme during the spring, summer and autumn.

Thursday Long

There has been a full Thursday programme this year. Most walks tend to be published only two or three weeks in advance; for example, the programme is empty from 14th November onwards. Half of these walks have been provided by four leaders, Ronnie, Heather, Maggie and Dave."

There followed some discussion about the lack of new leaders.

Do people lack the confidence to lead?

Do people not want to commit themselves?

Heather said the OS App is useful when it comes to planning / leading a walk. She would be happy to mentor any prospective leaders, helping them to plan and even doing a recce with them.

John S. will continue to encourage new people to lead.

Margaret asked what the online training involves. Might this put people off?

Information for possible starting points is available to anyone wishing to lead a walk. Isabel has an updated list.

10 Social Secretary

Isabel gave the following report –

"Our social events have been successful again this year.

We started off back in March with our Ten Pin Bowling evening followed by a meal at the Pavilion. We had more bowlers than in previous years and were able to buy small prizes for the winners of each lane, Michael T., Barbora and Kevin.

Walk Bury St Edmunds took place in April. Gavin kindly planned and led this and took eighteen of us on a walk in and around Bury on a very cold and windy day. I think the inclement weather prevented us from seeing the city at its best, but those who attended enjoyed the walk.

Our Midsummer Meal at the Flag proved to be very successful and was enjoyed by all those who attended. We were so impressed that we considered this as a venue for the Christmas Lunch. However, shortly afterwards we were shocked and very disappointed to hear that the Flag has since had to close.

The Garden Party in August was most enjoyable. I would like to thank Alison and Kevin for their hospitality. Once again, we had a good array of food but this year we managed quantities much better, so no one had to go home with a doggie bag.

Looking forward to 2025, Penny has already volunteered her garden for next year's event.

Last year our Christmas Lunch was held at the Bull in Brantham. Everyone enjoyed the food and atmosphere, so we decided to go back there for this year's meal on 12th December. Thirty-seven members will be attending, which is very pleasing.

Today's Rumble and Crumble has been an experiment to entice more people to attend the AGM. Last year we only had seventeen people at the meeting so we seem to have been successful in boosting numbers although we would like to attract even more people in the future. I would be interested in your feedback as regards today's event to see if it is something we should look to repeat next year.

On behalf of everyone here I would like to thank Ronnie, Hilary and June for making the delicious soup and Maggie for her crumble and for helping me to prepare the hall this morning.

All in all, it has been another positive year. I want to thank all the ramblers who have supported the events I organised. I would also like to thank Dave Cornell for publicising events on the website.

As always, I would welcome any ideas for new and exciting activities for next year. Please don't be shy! I am sure there must be lots of brilliant ideas out there!"

11 P3 Report

Michael gave the following report -

"The P3 group of volunteers clear overgrown undergrowth & replace missing or damaged Way-markers etc on footpaths within the Tendring area subject to Essex Highways guidelines: we avoid work on urban footpaths linked to the issue of debris disposal etc.

Our work is developed from -

- Delegated tasks from EH like in Little Clacton, Walton on the Naze, Mistley
- Referrals from PPAs
- Issues highlighted by our PPA walk-outs in Great Bromley/Clacton etc

We have secured from the new owners the ongoing use of Park Fruit Farm as our depot.

We have purchased a Replacement electric hedge-trimmer, a new electric Strimmer, 3 knee protectors & 2 additional batteries for a cost of say £500 all of which will make our work parties more effective & safer. I would like to thank all the loyal & hard-working members of our P3 Team

Please see me after this meeting if you would like a re-supply of Yellow Direction Discs."

12 Web Master's Report

In Dave's absence Ronnie read the Webmaster's report –

"Since the 2023 AGM there have been some changes to the layout and content of websites:

- The new Ramblers national site and the associated new Walks Manager system for registering and managing walk details went live in 2023. The separate Assemble website has been phased out with all of its relevant features moved across to the volunteering page on Ramblers national site.
- Apart from the regular updating of information content, events, photographs and walks, there has been no significant visible structural change to our Tendring District Group website since the 2023 AGM. The new Ramblers national site and the associated new Walks Manager system for registering and managing walk details went live in 2023. The separate Assemble website has been phased out with all of its relevant features moved across to the volunteering page on Ramblers national site.
- Apart from the regular updating of information content, events, photographs and walks, there has been no significant visible structural change to our Tendring District Group website since the 2023 AGM. Behind the scenes, recently the software used to organise, publish and maintain all of the web content, as well as managing user access controls, has been upgraded to the latest version.

Other items:

- Following on from an AGM question raised last year by Keith Ling under *Item 19 Any Other Business* in which he asked for all ramblers to be reminded of the need to check for people behind when turning off a path, Dave has updated our website Walking Etiquette document to reflect this requirement.
- The number of subscribers to our mailing list fluctuates although has grown over the past few years from 140, to 159, to 168 and now to 177.
- The Ramblers App remains available for use on smartphones and provides access to the catalogue of registered walks. It is available for walk leaders to take a register of walkers, if so required."

14 Election of Chairman

Ronnie agreed to continue in the role of Chairman. There being no other candidate, he was elected having been proposed by Paul and seconded by Jeff. Ronnie took over as Chair of the meeting.

15 Election of Officers

There being no other candidates, having been proposed by Ronnie and seconded by Jeff, the committee was voted in en bloc as follows -

❖ Treasurer	Alison Kennedy
❖ Secretary	Isabel Barton
❖ Membership Secretary	Ronnie Hannan
❖ Rambles Secretary	June Fieldsend
❖ Social Secretary	Isabel Barton
❖ P3 Co-ordinator	Michael Talbot
❖ Web Master	David Cornell
❖ Publicity Secretary	Vacant

16 Election of Committee Members

Chris Palmer and Maggie Beresford volunteered to remain as committee members. They were unanimously re-elected having been proposed by John and seconded by June.

17 Any Other Business

- We returned to the topic of ensuring the group remains together. All walkers must look out for each other and check behind them when turning off a path etc. The leader and back marker should ensure that they have each other's phone number.
- Jeff proposed that we should increase the donation we give to Churches etc for use of their car parks. This has remained at £10 for a number of years, and it was agreed following a vote, that it should be increased to £15. It appears that currently the short walkers do not make such a donation when parking at similar locations.
- Isabel has received a pack of flyers to advertise Ramblers. She asked for volunteers to distribute them to try to encourage more people to join.

Jeff thanked everyone on the Committee for all their hard work.

Ronnie declared the meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Appendix 1

Tendring Ramblers' Financial Report 01.10.23 – 30.09.24

Tendring Ramblers do not hold cash. All financial transactions are made through the bank, and I am pleased to report that we have not incurred any bank charges or usage fees as a result.

Last year's accounts were successfully audited and the agreed brought forward balance on 1 October 2023 was **£1179.26**

Receipts

The Ramblers Area payments for the year total	£ 265.00
We received commission from RWH Travel	£ 80.00
This increased the Tendring Ramblers fund to	£1524.26

Outgoings

We purchased a Brush/Hedge strimmer for P3 work	£ 264.00
Parts/spares and cost of further batteries	£ 136.47
AGM expenses (hall hire)	£ 30.00
Car parking (for walks) donations to local churches/village halls	£ 40.00
Committee expenses for travel to/from meetings	£ 59.40
Total outgoings	£ 529.87
Bank balance at 30 th September 2024	£ 994.39

Observations

The Ramblers Association allows a fair degree of branch autonomy however once the local branch accounts have been audited (For Charity Commissioners purposes), the overriding computer-based system is then "Finalised". This locks the closing Bank balance and that then becomes the new opening balance for the current year. We then receive new accounting documentation to record current year activity.

The accounting spreadsheet has many "write protected fields". This means data entered is limited to inputting just income and expenditure. The system automatically recalculates the balance held at Bank and this then has to agree with the Branch Bank account.

If there is a variance or discrepancy, it will require rectification or a note to the accounts. A variance did occur last year when we made a reserve for travel expenses incurred (but not yet cleared) on the branch bank statement. This amounted to £38.70

Alison Kennedy

Treasurer

28 October 2024