

**THE RAMBLERS – TENDRING GROUP
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON SATURDAY 4th NOVEMBER 2023
AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH HALL, GREAT BENTLEY**

1 Opening by Chairman

Ronnie welcomed 17 members to the meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Brenda Moorecroft, Terry Brooker and Paul Fieldsend.

3 Approval of AGM 2022 Minutes

The Minutes of the 2022 AGM meeting were examined. The minutes were approved as a correct record, as proposed by Maggie, seconded by June and signed by the Chairman.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Dave had two matters to discuss but he dealt with these in his report below.

5 Chairman's Annual Report

Ronnie reported that this has been a positive year for the Tendring Ramblers with several new members. We have managed to provide a full programme of long walks on Thursdays, but unfortunately, the number of Sunday walks has dwindled due to lack of leaders.

Thankfully we have had no issues with any of our new walkers this year, although we now have a revised Walking Etiquette in place, to help us to deal with any issues, should they arise in the future

6 Presentation of the Accounts by the Treasurer

Alison gave the following report -

- We started the year with an opening balance of £1135.40 and ended the year with a balance of £1140.56.
- We have donated £50 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 £289 only slightly less than last year when we received £293. We also received £60 from Ramblers Holidays as commission for members taking holidays with them.
- We spent £131 to help towards P3 work by our volunteers and provided a post digger and spares for equipment already purchased.
- There have been no social activities requiring funding. All our social activities are self-funded.
- After advice from Area, we purchased some flowers for Stevie who was unfortunate enough to fall on one of our icy walks and broke her shoulder.

7 Membership Secretary's Report

Ronnie stated that membership is 177 as of 1st November. There are 6 affiliate members and 9 new members.

8 Footpath Secretary's Report

John gave the following report-

My role involves liaison between Essex Highways and both Tendring and Essex Ramblers, regarding our Public Rights of Way (PRoW), their condition, repair and changes.

Current Paradigm

Much as per last year, the present state of our footpaths is variable, there are acknowledged issues with the Essex Highways (EH) Issues database, as well as funding challenges for EH. I believe however that things are improving and that there is now a better sense of collaboration between us, the Ramblers locally and our contacts in EH.

So, what has been going on in Tendring over the last year?

a) Parish Path Adoption.

As most of you will know, Parish Path Adoption (PPA) is an Essex wide initiative, enabling Ramblers to record holistically, a view of the state of our footpaths and also importantly to prove that they are used. The Parish role involves, ideally, the annual checking of a parish's paths by local adopters.

A PPA spreadsheet has been designed and is maintained county-wide by Ian Glen. It offers a repository for information collected, detailing the condition of our footpaths and if appropriate reported EH Issue and defect numbers.

Currently 17 of our 25 Parishes have local adopters (PPAs), however Alresford, Elmstead Market, Frating, Great Bromley, Great Clacton, Harwich, Weeley and Wix are presently unadopted. I would strongly encourage anyone interested in adopting one of the Parishes to have a word with me, any newcomer would be very welcome indeed.

In an attempt to plug our local deficit of Parish Path Adopters, a group of volunteers has recently walked all of the Wix & Elmstead Market footpaths, We're looking to do the same at Weeley next Saturday. Following Weeley I will attempt to continue the exercise with other of our unadopted parishes.

b) Essex Highways Issues Database – data cleanse activity

As part of a trial activity within Essex, attempting to improve the quality of the data held within the Essex Highways Issues database, within Tendring we completed a data cleanse exercise. This resulted in 176 historically recorded footpath and bridleway issues being investigated using PPA data in part. Of these, 128 of the recorded EH issues were found to no longer reflect a current problem. These non-existent issues were subsequently removed from the EH database and such it was 'cleansed'.

Data such as this, is of course forever changing and as such, a repeat data cleanse exercise is being conducted once again this year (2023/4).

With the evidence provided by this initiative, I believe that have now proved beyond doubt, that the PPA spreadsheet for Tendring offers a far more accurate view of the state of our own Tendring paths, i.e. rather than Essex Highway's own Issues database.

I believe that EH would concur with this view, for those areas where PPA is in place.

- c) **Parish focus for Public Rights of Way issues and repairs**
Another initiative derived from PPA, is an attempt to improve our collective efficiency in Public Rights of Way (PRoW) repair and maintenance. The objective being to focus collectively on issues associated with individual parishes and to do this collaboratively, with Essex Highways.

This approach adopts best practice derived from the Uttlesford area of Essex. It involves checking all footpaths in an area, reporting issues where appropriate and so deriving localised work packages for both EH and Michael Talbot's local P3 (Path Maintenance) group. On completion of doing all that we can in an individual parish, we then move onto the next.

- d) **Other bits and pieces**
With the ongoing volume of construction work ongoing across Tendring, there has continued to be a significant number of planning applications and path diversions affecting the area's footpaths.

Looking forward to next year

We are looking to carry on doing what we have already started, but also we are looking to move on to:

- i) **Coastal Path**

Work with Essex Highways in the development the long-awaited Tendring Section of the Coastal Path initiative, something that is still presently being held-up by funding challenges.

- ii) **ESSEX Highways PROW Cutting Programme**

Assist Essex Highways in the policing of their Contractors PROW Cutting Programme. EH will give us visibility of its cutting programme for 2024 together with the dates during which Footpaths are scheduled to be cleared its contractors. As an aside, two of these contractors were dismissed this year for not doing their job properly.

- iii) **A new Ramblers / EH Hub for fault resolution**

Communicate more effectively with EH and so to highlight and address faults identified within local areas, like our own Tendring.

Finally

Finally, thank you to the many people within this room who have supported me throughout the year.

9 Ramblers Secretaries' Reports

June as Thursday walks' Secretary gave the following report-

Thursday Walk Report 2023

Thank you to all of our 16 walk leaders who have provided a total of 66 walks this year, taking time to plan, walk out (sometimes more than once) and then lead their walks.

Dee and Alan have been responsible for 14/15 short walks; without them the short walk programme would be virtually empty. We need to encourage more leaders to volunteer; how are we going to attract new members if there isn't anything on the website to tempt them?

We have had a full programme of long walks with 14 leaders. More than half of the walks led by just 4 leaders – Dave 6, Ronnie and Heather 7 each and Jeff 8.

When we had a paper programme it covered 4 months at a time. Now that we publish straight onto the website, dates are booked only two or three weeks in advance. For example, November 23rd is still vacant as is most of December.

The new system allows leaders to enter their walk details, it's quite straightforward and helps to eliminate copying errors; a couple of leaders have already done this. If you do put your walk onto the system, then you still need to book a date with me but then let me know when the details are ready so that I can proofread them and publish.

Sunday Walk Report 2023

Maggie, as Sunday walks' secretary, gave the following report –

The past year has continued much in the same vein as last year in so much that walks have been quite sparse. 19 walks in total.

We currently have only 4 leaders and a full programme is just not possible.

I would like to thank Heather, Brian, Margaret & Denis and Paul & June for their continued support. I know their walks have been very much appreciated.

Walks Manager on Ramblers Assemble website has made the publication of future walks much easier and I am sure the Web Master will touch on this in his report.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have led Sunday walks over the last few years and as I am sure you already know I am today stepping down as Sunday Walks Secretary. I feel it is time to hand over to someone who can give the role a fresh approach and hope one of our members will volunteer. I would be more than happy to help whoever comes forward.

10 Social Secretary

Isabel gave the following report –

Since last year's AGM we have enjoyed a number of social events, some were repeats of previous activities, but we also had one completely new one and have another planned for two weeks' time.

Our Christmas lunch was well supported again. This was held at the Crown, Stoke by Nayland, for the second year running. Although most people appeared to enjoy the food and atmosphere, there were a few minor niggles regarding the levying of the service charge and the lack of coffee/tea after the meal. Therefore, we decided to try another venue for this year's lunch, and I have booked the Bull at Brantham. Thirty- seven people have paid their deposits and I hope this will be an enjoyable event for everyone.

We repeated our Ten Pin Bowling evening back in March. Again, this was held at the Pavilion in Clacton followed by a meal at Armstrongs, the restaurant next door. Having been pipped at the post last year, Ronnie was our overall winner showing a real prowess for the game.

In April we held Walk Ely. Sixteen ramblers made the journey to Ely and there enjoyed a walk heading west along the River Great Ouse and then through surrounding villages and countryside back to the city. We ate our picnic in the Cathedral grounds and then completed the walk with a loop to the east of the city. Before heading home, we enjoyed tea and cake at the Almondry Restaurant. We were joined on our walk by Laura, a former member of Tendring ramblers who has now moved to Cambridge.

In early July we organised a second Midsummer Meal, again at the Brasserie, Wivenhoe House Hotel. We enjoyed the opportunity to eat, drink and catch up with friends. The atmosphere was so convivial that people were reluctant to leave while all around us the staff were discreetly trying to prepare for the next day's breakfast.

Our Garden party was held in August. This year Stevie and John welcomed us to their house and garden in Wivenhoe. Everyone arrived laden with contributions of food and drink, parasols and garden chairs. The weather was very kind to us with sun all afternoon and we enjoyed a splendid spread. I think we managed the quantities better this year because there were fewer doggie bags or perhaps, we just had bigger appetites!

To complete our programme of events for the year, later this month we are holding A Rumble and Crumble. We must thank Heather for the idea although unfortunately she is unable to join us on the day. It involves a shortish walk, followed by hot soup and fruit crumble. So far nineteen people have signed up including some of our short walkers. This is particularly pleasing as we want to try to be inclusive.

All in all, it has been a really positive year. I would like to thank all the ramblers who have supported the events I have organised, and I look forward to receiving lots of new ideas for next year.

11 P3 Report

Michael gave the following report -

Either as a group or individually we have completed maintenance work throughout our area including - Ardleigh, Wix, Beaumont, Dovercourt, Harwich, Frinton, Walton, Brightlingsea, Kirby-le-soken, Thorpe-le-soken, Weeley and Great Holland.

During the summer our work was mostly concentrated on footpath clearance following PPA comments or EH referrals.

Positives –

- We have acquired a second hedge trimmer and a post-hole spade (spoon)
- We have been able to maintain our storage depot despite the closure of Park fruit Farm.
- We have installed many new yellow footpath directional arrows.
- We have cleared the overgrowth from a number of "hidden" footbridges.
- The use of a six man work-party, two hedge trimmers and four batteries means that we can complete a number of tasks in one go which were previously multi-personnel individual jobs.

Negatives –

- It's clear we can't address maintenance issues on urban footpaths linked to the disposal of debris.
- It is sometimes difficult to arrange work-parties which do not clash with other activities. Saturday seems to be a good day.
- EH have a low priority when it comes to replacing way-markers and their prior approval is a long process.

I would like to thank the dedicated members of the work-parties who have made a difference to the quality of our footpaths in the Tendring Area.

12 Web Master's Report

Dave Cornell, our Webmaster, gave the following report-

Since the 2022 AGM there have been changes to the use, layout and content of the websites:

- The new Ramblers national website originally expected to be implemented back in early 2022 and the associated new Walks Manager system for registering and managing walk details went live on 1st June 2023.
- Apart from the regular updating of information content, events, photographs and walks, there has been no structural change to our Tendring District Group website since the 2022 AGM.

Other items:

- Following a question raised by Jeff Coe at the 2022 AGM under Item 12, a document has been produced and lodged with the Secretary which provides full details of our website management and relevant passwords.
- Following a point raised by Heather Blackwood at the 2022 AGM under Item 19, the *Home* page and the Walking Etiquette document on our website have been amended to require owners of assistance dogs to contact the leader ahead of the walk to check for suitability.
- The number of subscribers to our mailing list fluctuates although has grown over the past two years from 140 to 159 and now to 168.
- A Ramblers App is available for use on smartphones and enables full access to the catalogue of registered walks. It is available to walk leaders to take a register of walkers, if required.

13 Area Council Representative's Report

Ian was not present. See attached update.

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 Jeff and seconded by Heather. Ronnie took over as Chair of the meeting.

15 Election of Officers

There being no other candidates, the committee was voted in en bloc as follows -

❖ Treasurer	Alison Kennedy
❖ Secretary	Isabel Barton
❖ Membership Secretary	Ronnie Hannan
❖ Sunday Rambles Secretary	Vacant
❖ Thursday Rambles Secretary	June Fieldsend
❖ Social Secretary	Isabel Barton
❖ P3 Co-ordinator	Michael Talbot
❖ Web Master	David Cornell
❖ Publicity Secretary	Vacant
❖ Area Council Representative	Ian Glen

16 Election of Committee Members

Chris Palmer and Maggie Beresford volunteered to remain as committee members. They were unanimously re-elected.

17 Representatives to attend Area meetings

Ian Glen is to be asked if he is prepared to continue to be our representative at these meetings.

18 Vote of Thanks to Retiring Officers

Ronnie proposed a vote of thanks to Maggie for all her work as Sunday walks' secretary.

19 Any Other Business

Heather asked if a walk leader still needs to take a register at the beginning of a walk. There was some discussion. The conclusion of this was that a register is recommended either on the Ramblers' app or on paper, but it is no longer mandatory.

Keith asked for all ramblers to be reminded of the need to check for people behind when turning off a path. This could be done at the beginning of a walk. Dave is also to add it to our Walking Etiquette document.

Ronnie declared the meeting closed at 3.20pm.

Appendix – Report from Ian Glen and Alan Goffee

Over the last couple of years Essex Area has found it increasing difficult to meet its expected range of functions. Lack of volunteers, increasing HQ requests, and restrictions on contacting members have, among other things, brought about this situation, and caused the Area Executive Committee to review its position.

One area of continued success and support has been that of Footpath Maintenance, safeguarding ROW and the progress in our working relationship with Essex Highways. It was felt that this success should be built on and not worked away from.

To this end the Executive Committee has been working towards setting aside all other work to concentrate on creating a ROW Hub.

The Hub would be a forum to discuss ROW issues, the PPA project, Work Party operation, safeguarding the path network, involvement with major infrastructure projects and DLYW. The importance of the Hub is that it will be driven by the needs of yourselves as volunteers dealing with ROW issues, and wanting help, support and someone to speak for them with Essex Highways.

The Executive Committee believe that the Hub will address the future and is putting together a “Manifesto” outlining the objectives and the general terms of operation. This will be circulated over the next few weeks.