

Minutes of Wiltshire & Swindon Ramblers Area Committee Meeting 1 June 2026 on Zoom

Present: David Trease, Sarah Bailey, Keith Grimes, Charles Penn, Maurice Eveleigh, Carolyn Bouckley, Sally Whiston, Dee Tod (Part time)

Apologies: Tim Lewis, Barry Cox, Sally Webber, Peter Gallagher.

Sally Webber has had to resign from Area meetings as she is unable to receive Zoom.

Resignation of Publicity Officer

David recorded that Barry Cox had resigned from the Area Committee and Publicity Officer position, which was unfortunate as he was efficiently filling gaps between group newsletters and national publications. David had found that Barry's Write of Way was very useful to demonstrate to new Group 96 members what the geographical groups were doing.

David explained that the meeting was held six weeks after the last one to conduct reporting from the General Council. Charles noted that area reports were missing from the agenda and expressed disappointment about the limited number of reports received at the previous meeting. He expressed support for including group reports in area meetings to share challenges and successes across different groups. Areas should serve as a clearinghouse for sharing best practices and avoiding repeated issues across overlapping territories. David stated that only two people are actively involved in the Swindon & Northeast Wilts committee, with limited activity beyond social media and a small footpath working party. They are desperately short of leaders, having lost half their leaders since COVID.

Young Walkers Group Proposal Discussion

The group discussed a proposal to set up a young walkers group in South Wiltshire after receiving an email from someone in Hampshire interested in leading walks for younger participants. Charles suggested starting with a few targeted walks within existing groups rather than creating a separate new group, as the median age of current members is already high. The group agreed that Charles would contact the proposer to discuss how to integrate young walkers into existing walks and structures, with the option to create a separate group if sufficient interest develops.

General Council Discussion

David reported on the three motions at General Council, noting that the Area's motion on closing Area Groups 96 was successful. The second motion regarding increasing the walk leader to walker proportions listed in the Walkers Handbook was defeated because central office considered the existing recommendations non-mandatory. The third motion, requesting guidance on addressing complaints of unacceptable behaviour and sexual harassment on group walks, was passed.

The main topic was the governance review itself, which had failed to reach the required 75% votes. David and Peter recently received survey questions from the head of trustees on feedback from General Council on the Governance Review. These proposals included company member involvement in AGMs and trustee

board composition, with a proposed reduced structure of 8-12 trustees where members would elect 6 trustees while the board would propose the remaining 6 positions, including the chair and treasurer. David explained the trustee selection process where candidates provided videos and CVs, making it difficult to choose only three representatives from the available eleven candidates.

Member Forums

The group expressed concerns about the proposed member forums, with David and Maurice agreeing that regional forums might not be effective due to large geographical areas and diverse interests within regions like the southwest. As Areas were being maintained, unlike earlier proposals, the alternative was to maintain the current system with area representatives at general council meetings rather than implementing the new regional forum approach.

Charles emphasized the need to be convinced that these forums would effectively give members a voice before supporting the proposal. For our response to the survey, Charles discussed the importance of requesting clear details about how regional forums would operate and ensure member representation, emphasizing the need for specific mechanisms for proposal submission and issue raising..

He noted that current proposals lack clarity and confidence, making it difficult for members to support the ideas. Charles suggested that the reply submission should include a detailed narrative requesting how the regional forums would differ from existing models and how they would effectively involve members that could improve the proposal's reception.

Maurice noted challenges in getting people to attend committees, while David expressed surprise at the proposal being voted on as a single package rather than separate components.

Area Group References Removal Discussion

Following our successful motion to remove Area Groups 96, Peter Gallagher and David proposed writing to the membership department to ask to remove area group references from application forms, particularly regarding the Wiltshire & Swindon, Oxfordshire, and Gloucestershire Area Groups that are offered to new members despite being irrelevant to their locations

Annual General Meeting Planning Updates

The meeting agreed to book Great Green Bedwyn as a speaker for the upcoming Annual General Meeting on February 6th, with the meeting running from 9:30-4:00 and expected to attract 40-50 attendees.

AOB

Charles presented a new dog policy for walks that emphasizes walk leaders' responsibilities in managing dogs, including requirements for short leads and proper control, which will be finalized and shared with other groups.

Sally Whiston stated that Mid Wilts' Don't Lose Your Way group was no longer active. This is probably similar to other DLYW groups where they are often composed of non-Ramblers members.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for October 5th, with Charles agreeing to chair the Zoom if the regular chair cannot attend.

Actions

Charles

- [Contact the individual interested in setting up a young walkers group, discuss possibilities, and report back to the committee and walk program coordinators about how South Wilts could support or facilitate walks for younger members.](#)
- [Upon finalization of the South Wilts dog policy, share the policy with other Wiltshire groups for reference and possible adoption/adaptation.](#)
- [Chair the next meeting on 5th October if the current Chair is unavailable due to travel.](#)

David

- [Write to the Ramblers membership department \(Central Office\) to request that new members are no longer offered the option to join the Wiltshire Area Group 96, referencing the relevant General Council motion and previous correspondence.](#)

Tim Lewis

- [Proceed with booking the speaker from Great Green Bedwyn for the Area Annual General Meeting.](#)

Collaboration

- [David and Peter Gallagher: When completing the governance review survey from the Ramblers trustees, use the narrative box to provide detailed feedback on the proposed regional forums, including suggestions for how member representation and decision-making could be improved.](#)
-

