



Group Newsletter – May 2026

Survey of Path Furniture – Volunteers Needed

Wiltshire Council, who are responsible for over 6000 kilometers of Public Rights of Way in the county, do not have an accurate record of all the path furniture on these PRowS. To better understand what is 'out there' on the network they have launched a new Public Rights of Way asset collection tool.

This is a web-based system which connects to a map on your smart phone or tablet and will allow you to walk the rights of way in your area, mark the location of any stiles, gates, bridges, signposts etc you come across and log it onto the map with a photo.

The Council's Rights of Way Team are hoping that the data gathered will help plan maintenance work and identify areas for improvement to the path network. They are seeking volunteers who would like to get out into the wider Wiltshire countryside to walk a specific route or area to help collect this information. If you would be interested in getting involved in the project please contact vicky.roscoe@wiltshire.gov.uk as soon as possible and preferably by 5th May. Full training will be provided.

When contacting Vicky, please tell her which parish(es) you would be willing to survey. (As this is a Wiltshire Council initiative, parishes in Swindon Borough are excluded from the exercise). If, following the training, you do take part in the survey it would be helpful if you could let me know which parish(es) you are surveying.

General Council 2026

David Trease and I attended the Ramblers General Council meeting in Birmingham on 25 April. The Board of Trustees had put forward a special resolution to change the charity's constitution. The main changes proposed, aimed at increasing democracy within the organisation, were:

- Replacing General Council (the body to which all Areas are able to send representatives with voting rights) with a Company AGM (held online) which all members with at least one year's membership would be able to attend
- For the first time, enabling all members to take part in elections for a proportion of the trustees (4 trustees for members in England)
- Replacing the current right of Areas to put forward policy proposals at General Council with regional forums to which all members would be able to submit issues for discussion and be able to attend subject to limits on capacity of the venue; one forum would be held each year in each region and a GB-wide forum less frequently

A constitutional change of this nature requires a 75% majority of those attending to succeed. Unfortunately, it fell just short; only 72.5% of General Council members voted in favour. There appeared to be little objection to the principle of one member one vote but there was some

opposition to parts of the proposals. We wait to see whether any revised proposals will be brought forward.

General Council also received the annual report and accounts for the year ending 30 September 2025. Key points included:

- An operating surplus of £0.85m, achieved through an increase in income of £1m compared with 2023/24 and a reduction in expenditure
- 40,000 led walks and 16,000 wellbeing walks in which 640,000 people took part
- Examples of initiatives in support of Ramblers' objective of enabling groups of people to go walking who are disadvantaged from doing so, whether through poverty, ethnicity, mental health issues or neurodiversity

In common with many other Areas, Wiltshire & Swindon Area has experienced a significant increase in new members joining the "Area group" in recent years. These members do not receive any information about local group activities, are less likely to volunteer and more likely not to renew their membership. We submitted a motion requesting the removal of this option from the membership scheme upon request from an Area; it was carried overwhelmingly. Another successful motion, from Merseyside & West Cheshire, called for guidance to be provided on how to deal with incidents of sexual harassment and other unacceptable behaviour. It was carried nem con. A motion calling for changes in the advisory leader to walker ratio on group walks was defeated.

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