

CONSULTATION – The Role of Groups

To Group Secs.

At the recent Area Council meeting, as you may have seen from the minutes, Groups were specifically asked to discuss two issues and respond to me before the next AC meeting on 5th June.

1 Having defined Area Council's role last year, essentially it is to support our Groups, we are trying to clarify the ideal role of Groups. We are working on the attached draft document and would welcome the views of your Group. As you can see, the document is an aspiration of what Groups could do with sufficient volunteers and time - and we acknowledge that neither of which are plentiful enough.

2 The second issue concerns better communication. This is a massive subject, and the Trustees are having a meeting soon specifically to discuss this subject. There are clearly many layers of communication need - between Central Office and Areas/Groups/all members; between Areas and Groups/all members in the Area; between Groups and their members, etc.

To facilitate better communication between Area Council and its 2000+ members we are considering an Area Newsletter, perhaps quarterly. We would want this to be a hard copy, distributed to all members, including the non-walkers. At the recent SYNED AGM we invited Robert Peel, who had a lot to do with setting up the South-East Walker, a newsletter serving several Areas. However, this is distributed via 'Walk' magazine, at no cost. But it is unlikely that Central Office would distribute a second Area newsletter (logistically it's a nightmare for the 'Walk' distributors).

Regarding email, Ramblers have the email addresses of only about 30% of their members. The Chesterfield Group (CNED) distribute an emailed newsletter and ask members to pass it on to the non-email members. How successful is this? And how successful might Groups be if they asked their non-email members with email, to give their email address? (I'll try it in the Doncaster Newsletter going out next month).

If Area Council goes ahead with an Area Newsletter we would hope that

Groups would submit items, such as articles from their own newsletters and mailings that are relevant to the wider walking community, or specific requests for volunteers e.g. for a maintenance team / event, recruiting path wardens. Other articles could be things such as occasional updates from the various forums we are a part of - LAFs, Sheffield Outdoor City, and so on. To avoid creating new work we would leverage existing things as much as possible - it is much more about giving local walking issues a wider audience than creating new content.

**Area Council would greatly appreciate the views
from your Group.**

Regards David Gadd

The Ramblers Local Work

This is an overview of the things Ramblers aspires to do at a local level. How the work is done (by Groups, by Area, by a combination) varies across the organisation - our aspiration is for all the RLW to be done across the United Kingdom (varying as needed in Wales and Scotland).

In an ideal world the Groups and Areas should have a coordinated plan for how we can perform our local work - it is a team effort, and different localities will undoubtedly find different solutions that suit their circumstances - the primary goal is to ensure we do as much as we can, and engage as many of our members and the public as possible in our work.

The following list is not intended to be exhaustive, just some ideas to get started:

Walk Programmes

- Run a led walk programme (for members and potential new members). Ideally we will have a range of walks available everywhere, ranging from 3 to 30 miles and a variety of difficulties. Groups may provide a wide range of walks, or specialise e.g. in short distance, long distance, kid friendly, dog friendly, age specific groups etc.

- Create a community of local walkers - both members and non members - this may include Area-wide walking programmes, joint campaigns, working with independent walkers and non- Ramblers walking groups in a variety of ways
- Recruit new members and hence raise funds for Ramblers local and central work and campaigning.
- Hold walking festivals and other ways of encouraging the public to get walking - coach rambles to walking challenges - whatever gets people walking.

Volunteer Recruitment / Publicity

- Recruit members into volunteering to help Ramblers fulfil our mission.
- Educate members (via walks, talking, Walk magazine etc.) about our path network so they can enjoy it better, and understand the work required to maintain and protect the path network.
- Publicise the work of Ramblers locally via the media, leaflets, shows etc.
- Operate websites and provide publications (newspapers, newsletters, walk leaflets etc.) to help fulfil our mission.
- Walk leaflets / books

Supporting National Campaigns

- Engage with and support the Walking for Health initiative.
- Help with national campaigns - such as PathWatch, fund raising initiatives, national events (such as walking festivals).

Training

- Offer training to volunteers (walk leader training, navigation, first aid, rights of way work etc).

Footpath Work

- Review path orders and planning applications, working with local authorities, to protect the path network.

- Survey the paths, report issues and chase up the local authorities to ensure problems are addressed.
- Path maintenance teams - undergrowth / overgrowth clearance, repairing / replacing stiles and gates and steps, drainage work and bridges (for the more ambitious teams...).
- 2026 path work - seeking out lost ways, both technical omissions due to inaccurate maps, and restoring historic paths to the official record.
- Claim paths using the 20 year rule - a significant portion of our path network is in use but has no official standing and may or may not appear on maps.
- Work with local authorities and other landowners to make sure when they sell land, path additions are considered. Also work on expanding the path network wherever possible and desirable.
- Pursue issues of local interest - whether it is a well known path under threat, funding cuts or the state of the local path network, we need to ensure the local public are aware of walking related issues and support our work, to ensure support from local politicians.

Countryside Work

- Countryside protection - wider issues to do with development - solar and wind farm planning, national grid work, anything that affects our enjoyment of the countryside.
- Engage with forums and consultations about future developments - with local authorities, LAF, CPRW, developers, landowners, local organisations (footpath societies, relevant interest groups etc.) - wherever we can or should be involved

Other

- Operate our local systems (finance, membership, walk finder etc.)
- Operate our local democratic processes