

THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION

WEST HERTS GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD at 1pm ON SUNDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2025
AT
THE BOXMOOR TRUST CENTRE**

Apologies for Absence: Mike and Sue Esten, Lynda Thomas, Ruth Gungadoo, Grete Turner.

Reports from the officers were submitted in advance and sent out to members.

Minutes of the 2024 AGM and Matters Arising

The Minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed by Ann Lee and seconded by Rose Allen

The Chair's Report – Marion Adams

Marion reported that the group has had another successful year with weekly walks on Sundays and Tuesdays and an Amble once a month. We have been able to offer a variety of interesting walks including one to the 3 Brewers Festival, support for the Chilterns Walking Festival and the Area Walks Fest and a coach walk to Ely. We also had 2 excellent holidays, one to Harrogate and the other to Milford On Sea in the New Forest.

The Christmas 2024 lunch at Redbourn Golf Club was very successful and we have booked to go there again this year. A number of walks have included pub or café stops.

We rely on a small number of leaders to deliver the programme but have welcomed a few new leaders and continue to offer training and support including in the use of the Ordnance Survey App.

Our website is a great source of information and we are lucky to have expert volunteers to maintain this.

Ramblers are currently consulting on a restructure of Governance and this is likely to affect our group roles and ways of working. More will be known about this in December but changes to groups will probably still be some way off.

We will run another first aid course which will take place on 27th January 2026.

Marion concluded by saying that we have a very hardworking, competent and enthusiastic committee and she thanked them for their continuing support.

The Treasurer's Report – John Drake

The balance carried forward in the main account 2024/25 is £1,058.95

The balance carried forward in the social account 2024/25 is £3,714.40

These balances with future planned actions are within the guidelines set by Ramblers. We disclaimed our allowance from central office this year in order to reduce reserves.

We have spent more on meetings this year with more expensive venues for the AGM and Volunteer Evening. Other than this our main expenses were walk leader training and walk related issues. We continue to pay public liability insurance.

Though most items of expenditure are relatively small, £20,000 goes through the books annually largely due to the holidays.

John thanked Matthew Handford for his role as independent examiner.

The accounts were unanimously accepted by the members. Proposed by Gordon Munro and seconded by Ian Brander.

The Membership Secretary's Report – Chris Abbott

We have had an overall drop of 2.1% in the last 12 months. One other group in the Area has also had a reduced membership, though most, notably Stag Walkers have had an increase. There has been an annual increase in both area and national membership. National membership has increased by about 2,000.

The number of members in the Area not assigned to a group has increased by 19.1%. We lose capitation as a result of this. Central Office is looking at this issue and may make changes.

In a discussion from the floor, it was pointed out that some people join the Ramblers because of its campaigning activities and they do not wish to walk with a group. We could emphasise that members can walk with any group and are therefore not restricted if they are assigned to a particular group.

Based on titles and first names, West Herts Ramblers members are estimated to be 43% men, 56% woman and 1% unknown.

Chris has started to contact members who have left the group to ask if they would be prepared to tell us why.

The Walk Organiser's Report – Ian Brander

We have run a full programme of walks this year with walks on almost every Sunday, most Tuesdays and an Amble on the first Thursday of each month. When a walk did not take place, this was mostly due to events such as the group holidays and the Area Walking Fest which was held on a Saturday.

Several walks were cancelled towards the end of 2024 due to bad weather. Our walks continue to be well attended.

There was a total of 111 walks between October 2024 and September 2025. The average number of people on each walk was 15. 18 people led a walk and some of our more recent leaders have made a significant contribution to the programme. We are often joined by fellow ramblers from other groups.

Ramblers have changed their Walk Leader Guidance policy and now insist that our leaders either certify that they have led a set minimum of walks in the last 3 years or complete the Ramblers training course. This will be enforced on 31st December and those who do not comply will not be able to lead walks for us. 31 people are registered with us as walk leaders at the moment but many of these are no longer active. The new policy is likely to reduce our total of active leaders from 18 to 16.

We need to encourage both new and existing leaders in order to have a full programme. We have added a page to our website listing experienced walk leaders who are willing to help with recces. The OS app training course is available to all leaders.

Holidays – Gordon Munro

Gordon has organised 15 holidays for the group, all of which have been successful. He is concerned, however that numbers are down for the latest one which is to Weymouth. He thinks that this may be because September is a popular time for members to go away on holiday and some had already booked before getting news of the WHR trip. Numbers on our trips tend to go up if there are activities for non-walkers but this is not always possible. People prefer having 4 rather than 3 nights away.

Gordon appealed for someone to shadow him who could then benefit from the expertise he has been able to build up.

He suggested that Southend would make a good venue for our coach walk in 2026.

The Footpaths Officers Report – John Rowe

The upgrading of Hemel Hempstead footpaths 20 and 90 to restricted byways has been confirmed. The green lane joining the old A5 to Windmill Road in Dunstable as a public right of way has been recently accepted.

Part of Kings Langley footpath 17 was affected by a planning application and there was an order to delete part of this path. As this short section ran close to an existing footpath we decided not to object.

There were one or two reports of obstructed footpaths but those on the definitive map were dealt with quickly by Clayton Rae, the Dacorum footpath officer. The blocked path near Wilstone Reservoir is not a definitive right of way so nothing could be done.

The vacancies for parish footpath secretaries in Berkhamsted and Bovingdon have been filled but Tring Rural and Tring Urban are still vacant.

The Northern Chiltern Path Maintenance volunteers are still going strong and are clearing paths in Dacorum and South Bedfordshire. They will be working on Great Gaddesden paths 67 and 69 soon.

Little Gaddesden path 16 has been obstructed by a car and this was reported by a Bedfordshire Rambler. Clayton has been informed.

A question from the floor was raised with regard to the reorganisation of local government and how this will affect the roles of footpath officers. It is likely to be in place by 2028. Should we be raising this with Ramblers central office? Should the Governance changes be delayed until the new structure of local government is settled?

The Publicity Officers Report – Anne James and Azar Thomson

Anne and Azar have focused on Facebook. Since they took on this role in January 2025 the number of followers has increased by 4% and the number of views has risen from 3,990 to 5,028 of which 91% were followers. It would be good to engage with non-followers as this can extend our reach and potentially gain more followers.

77% of followers are women and 23% are men. Also, 59 are aged 45 – 64 and 41% are over 64.

In order to promote WHR and gain new members our walks have recently been advertised on the Hemel Hempstead Community Facebook platform with information highlighting the benefits of walking with us. This platform will continue to be monitored and if it is successful will be extended to other local communities such as Redbourn.

In order to attract new members and increase visibility Anne and Azar propose to create a simple leaflet that sells the benefits of walking with us and can be posted on community Facebook pages and linked to our website. They have also considered using Meetup though there are problems with this and more discussion is needed at committee level.

Other ideas include having walks on different days of the week and not using the booking system. These also need to be discussed by the committee. We are limited by the number of walk leaders we have and should not try to do too much too soon.

Any other suggestion from WHR members would be very welcome.

The Election of Officers

Ian Brander stood down as Walks Coordinator and Clive Sutton was nominated to take his place. The meeting voted to accept this proposal. There were no new nominations for other officer roles and the existing officers were unanimously re-elected en bloc.

This was proposed by Gordon Munro and seconded by Ginny Harrison.

Chair – Marion Adams

Treasurer – John Drake

Secretary – Lynda Abbott

Webmaster – Ian Brander

Membership Secretary – Chris Abbott

Footpath Secretary – John Rowe

Area Liaison Representative – Marion Adams

Publicity Officers – Anne James and Azar Thomson

Other committee members were also re-elected unanimously. Proposed by Ruth Crowther and seconded by Val Howlett. They are:

Gordon Munro, Heather Harris, Ginny Harrison. Heather has agreed to take on the role of Deputy Walks Coordinator.

Marion thanked Val for organising the refreshments and will pass on our thanks to the Boxmoor Trust.

Marion reminded the meeting that the Area AGM is on 24th January 2026.

The meeting ended at 3.15.

Lynda Abbott (Secretary)