



**The Ramblers' Association
Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area**

Annual Report

1 October 2024 - 30 September 2025

**Annual General Meeting: 10.15 on Saturday 7 February 2026 in the
Cherry Baker Room, The Wades Centre, Stratton Road,
Princes Risborough. Bucks HP27 9AX**

Join us for our Area AGM to find out what Ramblers is doing for *all* walkers! Please note that this year it is being held in the morning, before the walk.

This is your opportunity to exercise your democratic rights and make your views known on matters of concern to you. We anticipate that the meeting will end by 12.15 and will be followed by a walk (details below) at 13.00. We have booked the hall until 13.00 so you may eat your lunch there, or go to Wades Centre café.

All Area officers and committee members (other than those appointed by groups or affiliated organisations) are elected, or re-elected, at the AGM. We have a vacancy for Area Secretary (the role could be sub-divided). There are a number of other, long-standing vacancies (see agenda, page 2). Any offers of interest in any officer or committee role, or enquiries about what is involved, are welcome; please contact the Vice-Chairman at paul_j_rhodes@hotmail.com. Do not assume that other current officers would not welcome offers to replace, or assist, them.

At the Area AGM we elect our two members of Ramblers general council, who are entitled to speak and vote at the annual general council meeting, to be held in Newcastle upon Tyne on 25 April 2026; expenses are paid by Ramblers GB. Areas are encouraged to seek candidates from all parts of the membership, in line with our values of being inclusive to all and welcoming people from diverse backgrounds. If you wish to put your name forward or to find out more about what is involved, please contact the Vice-Chairman (above).

The AGM will be followed by a leisurely walk, 6 miles/9.7 kms, starting at 13.00 from: Mount car park, Stratton Rd, Princes Risborough HP27 9AN [4 hours £1.70, 6 hours £2.70].

Led by Paul Rhodes, this gentle afternoon walk explores the countryside and villages around Princes Risborough, taking in local history and easy-going paths. Starting from the Mount car park, we head out on a relaxed route that links the villages surrounding the town.

We pass the former home of pioneering aviator Amy Johnson, before continuing to the attractive villages of Horsenden and Bledlow; their churches provide a sense of the area's rural character and a natural place to pause along the way. The terrain is easy and mostly level, with only very gentle climbing spread across the route. We return to Princess Risborough via the Phoenix Trail, a long-distance route created on the former railway line between Princess Risborough and Thame.

Please note that we cross live railway lines several times, so care will be needed at these points. Dogs are welcome on leads. We aim to finish at the Mount car park by around 16.00, rounding off a calm and friendly winter walk.

Further details of the meeting and walks can be found on the Area website: <https://bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk/>.

Agenda for the Annual General Meeting at 10.15 on Saturday 7 February 2026

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 1 February 2025 (incorporated in the annual report, pages 3-5)
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. To receive the annual report and accounts:

(a) Chairman' Report	P7	(h) Press Officer's Report	p12
(b) Vice-chairman's Report	P7	(i) News Editor's Report	p12
(c) Treasurer's Report and Accounts	p8-9	(j) Publicity	p12
(d) Membership Secretary's Report	P10	(k) Member and ALO Reps	p13
(e) Footpath Secretary's Report	P10	(l) Countryside Secretary	p13
(f) North Bucks rRIPPLE Report	p11	(m) Group Reports	p13-15
(g) Access Officer's Report	p12		

5. To consider any motions of which due notice has been received (in writing, by the Vice-Chairman, not less than seven days before the meeting, ie by Saturday 31 January 2026)
6. Election of Officers:

(a) *Chairman	(g) North Bucks rRIPPLE Coordinator
(b) *Vice-Chairman	(h) Press Officer
(c) *Secretary (<i>vacant</i>)	(i) Access Officer
(d) *Treasurer	(j) News Editor
(e) *Footpath Secretary	(k) Countryside Secretary (<i>vacant</i>)
(f) Membership Secretary	(l) Publicity Officer (<i>vacant</i>)

Nominations are invited for all posts.

Only those marked * are required by the constitution to be elected at the AGM.

Note that the Web Master is an appointment by the executive committee, as opposed to an elected post (though the current Web Master serves on the committee as a local group representative).

7. Election of executive committee members not appointed by local groups:
 - (a) Not more than 5 representatives of individual members
 - (b) Not more than 5 representatives of local organisations affiliated to Ramblers
(In recent years none of the places in the latter category has been filled.)
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner
9. Appointment of two council members to serve from the 2026 general council AGM
10. Any other business

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 2.00 pm on Saturday 1 February 2025 in the Small Barn Hall, Amersham and District Community Association

[Note that, for data protection reasons, personal names, other than those of persons elected, have been omitted from this version of the minutes, while they are retained in the file copy. The relevant names can be revealed at the meeting on request.]

16 members of the Area and 1 guest attended.

The Chairman introduced the Annual General Meeting and welcomed those attending.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from three members.
2. **Minutes** of the AGM held on Saturday 3rd February 2024 were signed as a correct record.
3. **Matters arising** from the minutes. There were no matters arising not considered elsewhere on the agenda.
4. **Annual Report and Accounts**

The Chairman drew attention to the printed copies of the annual report which contained reports from Area officers. Additional comments made during the meeting included the following:

(a) Chairman's Report:

There was discussion of efforts by groups, or individual members, to canvass or meet recently elected MPs.

(b) Vice-Chairman's Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(c) Acting Secretary's Report:

It was requested that the death of a former Area Secretary be specifically minuted, with regret.

(d) Treasurer's Report and Accounts:

Nothing to add to written report.

(e) Membership Secretary's Report:

The transfer of former North West London Group members to adjacent Areas without authorisation was puzzling; the introduction of 'affiliated members' of groups, while not constitutionally recognised, is a means of avoiding GDPR problems.

(f) Footpath Secretary's Report:

The Footpath Secretary, while thanking footpath checkers, said that their declining numbers suggested the need for a rethink of our reporting system. She welcomed the recent government announcement of an intention to cancel the 2031 deadline for 'lost paths'.

(g) North Bucks ramblers Repairing & Improving Public Paths for Leisure & Exercise (NB rRIPPLE) Report:

The installation of more than 350 gates was applauded.

(h) Access Officer's Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(i) Press Officer's Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(j) News Editor:

Nothing to add to written report.

(k) Publicity:

Nothing to add to written report.

(l) Web Master's Report:

The Area committee needed to look into how to make better use of the website.

(m) Individual Member Representative and Affiliated Local Organisation reports:

The representative of individual members had attended meetings of the Milton Keynes Local Access Forum.

(n) Planning and countryside:

Nothing to add to written report.

(o) Local Group Reports:

Nothing to add to written report.

5. **Motions:** to consider any motions of which due notice had been received (in writing, by the Area Secretary, not less than 7 days before the meeting, i.e. by 25 January 2025).

No motions had been received:

6. **Election of Officers** (*all those named below were duly proposed and seconded*)

	<i>Elected</i>	<i>Proposed by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
Chairman	Trevor Jones		
Vice-Chairman	Paul Rhodes		
Secretary	<i>vacant</i>		
Treasurer	John Esslemont		
Footpath Secretary	Kate Ashbrook		
Membership Secretary	John Wainwright		
Press Officer	Kate Ashbrook		
Area Access Officer	Kate Ashbrook		
NB rRIPPLE Coordinator	Bill Piers		
Area News Editor	Bethan Stark		
Countryside Secretary	<i>vacant</i>		
Publicity Officer	<i>vacant</i>		

The Chairman stated that he would serve as Chairman for a maximum of three years.

In the absence of a Secretary, a member volunteered to compile minutes on a trial basis, another member would arrange meetings and consider digitization of archival material and the Chairman would be primary contact for general enquiries.

Countryside issues would remain a matter for group consideration, while the Vice-Chairman will consider opportunities for improvements to publicity.

7. **Election of Executive Committee Members not appointed by Local Groups**

(a) Representatives of Individual Members

Stephen Ratcliffe (duly proposed and seconded) was elected.

(b) There were no nominations for representatives of Affiliated Local Organisations.

8. **Appointment of Independent Examiner**

David Wager had indicated willingness to continue in the role, and was appointed (duly proposed and seconded).

9. **Appointment of two Council Members to serve from the 2024 General Council AGM**

It was proposed, seconded, and agreed by those present that Trevor Jones and Paul Rhodes be appointed.

10. **Any Other Business**

A member mentioned two problems in recruiting new leaders: training material was only available to those already registered as leaders; large attendances by members of other groups could be intimidating for inexperienced leaders. The Chairman encouraged adoption of a buddy system for new leaders. He asked groups to report to him and the Footpath Secretary on any contacts with MPs. He also drew attention to a large solar farm, affecting some paths, being planned for north Buckinghamshire and queried the Council's plans for greenways which appear not to be designed for active travel between home and work. Finally, he asked for expressions of interest from groups for a Buckinghamshire Walking Festival in 2026.

Formal business was concluded at 3.25pm.

11: **Speaker and discussion**

Our guest speaker, elected as a member of the Board of Trustees in 2024, introduced himself and said that, this year, the Board is keen to seek new trustees with expertise in fund raising and safeguarding. He said that the new strategy, now being implemented, continued to support footpath work, while emphasising making walking more accessible, particularly to disadvantaged groups. He mentioned the need for financial stability, which had led to a cut in staff numbers and other initiatives, such as evolving our membership model to a broader supporter model. This year would see consultation on governance issues, with particular

reference to the structure of the Board of Trustees; there would be discussion at the 2025 General Council meeting in the expectation of specific proposals being put to the 2026 meeting.

Responding to a question on co-operation with other organisations, he said that resources are currently spread too thinly for maximum impact; working with selected like-minded organisations could generate better results. A member asked what was meant in practice by ‘moving from a membership organisation to a supporter-led organisation’ to which the speaker responded that the members will remain the backbone of the organisation but we need also to draw on non-member supporters to a greater extent.

With regard to governance, a member mentioned potential problems in getting agreement for major changes to the Articles of Association; he was assured that lessons had been learnt from the experience of a previous attempt at such changes. The speaker explained that the initial consultation process with Areas and groups was about to kick-off in preparation for more in-depth discussion at the General Council meeting. A member said that a guide would be useful on how to approach minority communities without causing offence; another member said that younger members of such communities were likely to be more amenable.

12: In view of a shortage of time and the small number of members present a quiz that had been planned was deferred until next year.

Post-meeting note

After the meeting had closed, the chair realised that he had made a huge oversight and wished ‘for the record’ to offer sincere thanks to two retiring officers for their significant contribution to the Area committee and walkers in general for their work, over many years. One, having left the committee, will be missed. The other continues in another capacity but we hope that he is able to enjoy his reduced workload.

Area Annual Report 1 October 2024—30 September 2025

Chairman's report

The weather this year has made our walks more challenging than usual first with flooding then high temperatures, both lasting for several months. It is a great compliment to our walk leaders that so few walks were cancelled though many had to be adapted to suit the conditions.

Operationally, we continue to offer a strong programme of walks and we have teams involved in path maintenance as well as individuals who check the path network in nominated parishes across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Thanks to everyone who supports us getting out into the countryside. Both members and the wider public are grateful for everything you do.

Membership overall has remained largely static but some groups are facing a decline. Are there ways in which we all can advertise Ramblers, what we do and what we stand for, to attract more members?

It is my observation that we have a general resistance in finding new volunteers, from our active members, to join our Area and group committees as well as our walk leaders. We need to work hard, over the coming years, to reverse this and to demonstrate how being a volunteer can protect and grow this organisation of which we all enjoy being a part.

All groups have a significant membership who are inactive. Are there ways we can reach out to them to become active, as walkers, volunteers or committee members? There must be people out there with tremendous experience of being on committees. Just think how we could benefit from that knowledge to make everything work better.

There is a change happening now for walk leaders and the requirements they must fulfil to remain as leaders. I wonder how many will not meet the criteria in time? I hope that this does not affect our ability to put on successful walks programmes.

There is also change coming in the Ramblers' governance. There have been a number of iterations of the proposals over the year, it will be interesting to hear what is being finalised and to understand the impact to us all. Hopefully all will be changes beneficial to our groups and to our ability to feed back what the grass-roots membership wants and need from the board to make this organisation stronger.

Furthermore, the government is talking about the Access to Nature Bill and Ramblers is heavily involved in lobbying for this. As yet, there is no date when it will be put before parliament. This bill could affect our rights of access and our path network, and we hope will provide an increase in both.

To continue what we love, it is worth supporting the work at the centre, and engaging with our MPs to make them aware how important the outdoors is to their constituents.

Let us hope that we can work together in this coming year to expand the Ramblers and to spread the awareness of this great charity.

Trevor Jones

Vice Chairman's report

The previous year has been one where we have missed the experience and time from the acting secretary. Having been passed the boxes of archives, I took some time to review to determine what was worth retaining. Among the surprises in the old records I discovered letters from Tom Stephenson, the inspiration for the Pennine Way, Ramblers' secretary from 1945 and Ramblers' first full-time employee. The proposals for changes to Ramblers' governance have been through a number of iterations and the initial ideas to reduce the formality of area structures have been re-scheduled for further discussion next year. The proposals are focused on moving to one member one vote for trustee elections, and creating regular gatherings or forums for a wider membership involvement to discuss and feedback.

Paul Rhodes

Treasurer's report

The accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis, in line with central office recommendations, showing actual receipts and actual payments during the accounting year, October 2024 to September 2025. Thus, for example, gift aid on this year's eligible donations to our Donate-a-Gate fund, £163.56 received in October 2025, will be included in next year's accounts, while the gift aid of £187.64, shown in this year's accounts, was for donations made in the previous year. Donations (including gift aid) are treated as restricted funds (shown in **bold** in the accounts), used only for replacement of stiles by gates.

The Area has fixed assets, in the form of tools used by the NB rRIPPLE team. These were purchased in October 2022 for £971.79. Ramblers' accounting rules do not require fixed assets valued at under £5000 to be recorded in the balance sheet. The team's work is facilitated by the provision of gates by Buckinghamshire Council to supplement those funded by donations.

Up-to-date accounts are circulated to committee members prior to each meeting of the Area executive committee for scrutiny and subsequent approval at the meeting. Two signatories are required to make any withdrawals by cheque or internet banking from the Area's bank account. Current cheque signatories are the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Treasurer while, in addition to those, the Membership Secretary is authorised for internet banking.

Ramblers' accounts are required to show expenditure under headings relating to our charitable objects. The fact that we had no expenditure under two such headings ('Countryside' and 'Access') should not be taken as meaning we were inactive; rather this, and the low level of governance expenditure, reflect the negligible cost of email communication and the generosity of officers and other volunteers in not claiming expenses to which they may be entitled. Apart from rights-of-way work, our other main expenditure is on funding to groups and for our share of the costs of *South East Walker*. The latter is lower this year, covering just two printed editions and one online edition.

Main fund reserves are considerably higher than recommended levels (as a percentage of expenditure), as a result of lower-than-expected expenditure. This is partly accounted for in that certain expenses arising during the year were not claimed until after the year end. One group took less than the funding it initially requested, for which we are very grateful. While some group reserves (as with Area reserves) fall outside the recommended range, this can give a misleading picture as this does not take full account of all relevant factors: for example, if they have had unusually low expenditure, the reserves percentage will be unrealistically high.

I should like to thank group treasurers for notifying me of funding requirements and for completing their end of year accounts and annual returns. Also, I thank the Area Independent Examiner for scrutinising and checking the Area accounts, and group independent examiners for similar work at group level.

The following table gives a brief summary of group main fund income and expenditure. Self-funded activities such as socials and coach trips are not included. Columns are (A) main fund balance at start of year + (B) funding via Area + (C) other main fund income – (D) walks related expenditure including programmes – (E) other main fund expenditure = (F) main fund balance at end of year. (G) is any funds designated for particular use in future years and (H) is reserves (F-G as a percentage of D+E).

	A	+	B	+	C	-	D	-	E	=	F	G	H
Amersham	1517		0		100		289		643		685	500	20
Aylesbury	666		336		60		0		328		734	0	224
Chiltern YW	615		338		20		182		31		760	0	357
Chilterns WW	463		1965		200		973		173		1482	792	60
Hillingdon	1118		0		0		8		138		972	1000	-19
Milton Keynes	874		314		0		82		545		561	500	10
Wycombe	226		300		0		14		110		402	200	163

John Esslemont

Note: The accounts, as approved by the Independent Examiner, are reproduced on page 9.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED**30th September 2025**

	Year ended	30/9/25	30/9/24
INCOME:			
Funding from Central Office		6000.00	5500.00
Refund of deposit		150.00	150.00
Donations to restricted (Donate a Gate) fund		6853.94	6250.00
Gift Aid on donations		<u>187.64</u>	<u>462.77</u>
Total income		13191.58	12362.77
EXPENDITURE:			
Funding to Groups		3253.00	2072.00
Promoting Walking (South East Walker)		754.42	1381.80
Rights of Way: main fund		481.98	1278.23
restricted fund (gate installation)		6858.66	9874.18
Governance: Area committee meetings		190.00	230.00
Area AGM		48.90	46.00
Bank charges		<u>0.90</u>	<u>0.60</u>
Total expenditure		11587.86	14882.81
SURPLUS / DEFICIT for year:			
main fund		1420.80	641.37
restricted (Donate a Gate) fund		<u>182.92</u>	<u>-3161.41</u>
Total		1603.72	-2520.04
Funds brought forward from previous year		5534.75	8054.79
Funds carried forward to next year		7138.47	5534.75

BALANCE SHEET

Assets:	Main fund balance in bank at 30 th September	5738.32	4317.52
	Restricted fund balance in bank at 30 th September	<u>1400.15</u>	<u>1217.23</u>
	Total assets	7138.47	5534.75
Liabilities:		<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
	Total liabilities	0.00	0.00
NET ASSETS		<u>£ 7138.47</u>	<u>£ 5534.75</u>

John Esslemont, Treasurer

16th October 2025**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT:**

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and group independent examination guidelines, I consider the Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area accounts to give a fair representation of the Area's financial activities for the year to 30th September 2025.

David Wager, Independent Examiner

16th October 2025*Note: signed copy available for inspection on request.*

Membership Secretary's report

The table below shows the total membership of the Ramblers, our Area, and its constituents at 30 September 2025 and at 30 September 2024 for comparison.

	2025	2024	Difference	% Difference	Gains	Losses
<u>Ramblers</u>	106,095	103,876	2,219	2%		
<u>Area</u>	2,053	2,055	-2	0%		
<u>Groups</u>						
Amersham & District	322	340	-18	-5%	37	55
Aylesbury & District	205	218	-13	-6%	16	29
Hillingdon	344	340	4	1%	75	71
Milton Keynes & District	231	212	19	9%	59	40
Wycombe District	258	283	-25	-9%	26	51
Chilterns Weekend Walkers	343	315	28	9%	53	25
Hike MK	43	43	0	0%	9	9
Chiltern Young Walkers	148	161	-13	-8%	35	48
	1,894	1,912	-18	-1%	310	328
<u>Individuals</u>						
Area Membership	159	142	17	12%		
<u>Affiliated Clubs</u>	5	5	0	0%		

Ramblers' membership increased and Area membership remained at the same level due to Boundless offering its members free Ramblers' membership. Some groups did better than others.

John Wainwright

Footpath Secretary's report

We ask our path checkers to walk all the paths in their parishes at least once a year and to report problems. If they wish, they are consulted about any proposals for path changes. New volunteers are always welcome and are invited to discuss what is involved with me, or with their group footpath secretary.

Path checking

Former Aylesbury Vale district: 13 of 114 parishes were checked in whole or part; 207 of 2,326 paths, and 150.7 of 1,773 kilometres were checked.

The top three problems were from HS2 and building development, with stiles and overgrowth the most reported.

The group urgently needs to recruit more path checkers.

Former Chiltern district: path checks have been fully or partially completed for 12 out of 18 parishes. In total, 110 problems were identified and (most) reported to Buckinghamshire Council or rectified by our volunteers, mainly clipping near gates and stiles, installing waymarks, and removing small fallen trees. This was down from 137 issues last year.

The main problems were similar to previous years—undergrowth, waymarks and signposts, and stiles and gates. There was a drop in undergrowth and fallen trees reported.

We had a training meeting in April for some of our volunteers and helpers which focused on providing feedback from 2024 and sharing issues that people faced. This has proven to be a popular event and we will repeat it next year.

We held a Path Checking Day in August covering about 50 per cent of the Ashley Green paths. We had three teams of two, and 11 issues were identified and reported.

We now have volunteer names against 16 parishes, but one covers three parishes and another two, and we need to find more checkers. Vince Parry has given notice that he will step down as group footpath secretary next year, so a replacement must be found.

Former South Bucks district: We have no group here, but Tom Berry and Paul Graham did some useful checking. Tom checked some paths in Beaconsfield, Burnham, Denham, Gerrards Cross, and Hedgerley, and found that Denham continues to be the worst parish. Next year he will only do Denham and Gerrards Cross. Paul checked Iver comprehensively. Trevor Jones kindly volunteered to be coordinator for the district.

Former Wycombe district: eight out of 28 parishes were wholly or partly checked, 95 problems were reported, and 59 hours spent on this.

Milton Keynes: 364 paths in 22 of the 48 parishes were checked, and 139 problems were reported. Volunteers spent more than 101 hours checking and reporting. The most common problems were missing signposts and waymarks, poor gates and stiles, and overgrowth.

Path changes and planning

There were only eight path-change proposals during the year (a welcome reduction) and we did not object to any. We raised with Bucks Council the issue of notices posted on paths for closure up to six months for filming when in practice they are only needed for 16 days. The council stated that it was using the temporary traffic regulation order procedure which allows for closures up to six months. We consider this unsatisfactory but we have not encountered any further closures since we complained.

Buckinghamshire local access forum

Trevor Jones joined the forum this year as a walkers' representative. He reports that Bucks Council has started a review of its 'Promoted Walks' to include updated PDFs and GPX files of each route. Trevor is involved in this work.

The local Long Distance Walkers' Association branch has adopted the Cross-Bucks Way and has recently completed an initial audit of the route with approximately 15 issues being raised. The Bucks Council rights-of-way team know that it needs support to check the old problems reported but not resolved. Trevor has asked for a summary by parish of issues older than five years so that we can do some parish path-checking days to update the information.

Thanks

I should like to thank, in particular, Ian Dunford, Brian Greenow, Trevor Jones, and Vince Parry for all their help in analysing path check, corresponding with path checkers, checking their own parishes, and generally giving me welcome support and assistance. We are indebted to all our path checkers for their vigilance on paths in their patch and for their advice on path changes.

Kate Ashbrook

Footpath improvement by North Bucks rRIPPLE (ramblers Repairing and Improving public Paths for Leisure and Exercise)

We continue to go out 2-3 times a month. Between October 2024 and September 2025 we have installed gate numbers 354 to 378 inclusive, ie 25 gates. Full details of these installations, complete with before-and-after photos, can be viewed in our regular activity reports on the web page. These represent just a proportion of site visits, many of which are now to fit repair kits to prematurely fatigued D-latches on Centrewire gates, thankfully provided free of charge by the manufacturer. Other work includes path clearance and surface improvement, waymarker installation, and unblocking culverts.

Among several useful documents, including a Donate-a-Gate (DaG) form, the web page also lists current outstanding, potential and planned work with DaG opportunities available. Our DaG charges remain at £350 for a pedestrian gate installation and £500 for a kissing gate. This is not only useful for readers but also for us to try and keep tabs on the work in progress that can sometimes take months, or even years, to come to

fruition. Half the time spent running NB rRIPPLE is surveying and negotiating stile-to-gate conversions with landowners and parish councils.

Contractual issues have afflicted Buckinghamshire Council's rights-of-way outdoor workforce this year. Minimal vegetation clearance and structural maintenance appear to have been completed by them. This results in our team of reliable, independent and self-sufficient volunteers being ever more indispensable to the Council.

Many people and some parish councils remain as keen as ever to improve their local path networks and get rid of some of the numerous difficult stiles that continue to plague the county (and country), restricting access to the countryside for the less able. In the centre of Weston Turville, we have installed 10 gates this autumn. We continue to encourage an individual in specific parishes, often affiliated to the parish council, to become our local champion. Their remit is to identify blocked paths that need attention and potential stiles that could be converted to gates, and to identify landowners and gain their agreement. Unfortunately some parishes, such as Westcott, struggle with such an initiative. Here several gates that we installed were found during a walk recce to be completely blocked by vegetation. It would be beneficial if Buckinghamshire Council rights of way took more of a lead with developing 'Parish Path Wardens' similar to Oxfordshire's initiative.

Within the Ramblers we remain one of very few totally self-sufficient footpath maintenance groups. We have our own Land Rover 4x4 vehicle, trailer, power tools including a jackhammer, and two full sets of hand tools. We have a storage site in Thame, for gates and tamping-in stones.

Our regular activity reports, detailing each and every stile-to-gate conversion, as well as other improvement work carried out, can be found on our web page: www.bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk/donate-a-gate. We remain grateful to John Esslemont, Area Treasurer, for keeping the books in order with regards to this year's DaG income of £6853.94 in donations plus £187.64 gift aid, and our payments of £6,000 to Buckinghamshire Council to purchase more gates.

Bill Piers, North Bucks rRIPPLE Co-ordinator

Access Officer's report

I took on this role at the last AGM, to keep an eye on access issues. Whenever appropriate we back the Ramblers' call for the publication of the Access to Nature green paper, promised in the government's Environment Improvement Plan 2025 (but with no timetable). We stand by for the government's review of the access maps under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which is due to be completed by 2031, but have heard no word about this lately. It will be important to secure additional access land when the opportunity arises.

Kate Ashbrook

Press Officer's report

I have nothing to report this year. Please remember that I am always ready to publicise Ramblers' issues throughout our territory.

Kate Ashbrook

News Editor's report

During the year we learnt that, because *Walk* magazine had been reduced to three issues a year, the same applied to *South East Walker*. We now expect it to be published in mid-February, late-May, and late-September—which explains why we were not able to advertise our AGM there last year. Thank you to all who have submitted interesting articles to ensure that our Area continues to feature in the magazine.

Bethan Stark

Publicity Officer

The post of Publicity Officer was not filled at the 2025 AGM. Any publicity effort in our Area is, therefore, coming from our groups.

Representatives of Individual Members and of Affiliated Local Organisations

The inclusion of such representatives on the Area executive committee is specified not just in our own constitution but also in the model Area constitution approved as part of Ramblers' constitutional documents. In recent years none of our local organisations has appointed representatives. There is no formal definition of the role of 'representative of individual members' and we have used it as a means of adding useful additional individuals to the Area executive committee, either by election or by co-option. Hike MK, having converted to a flexigroup, is not entitled to appoint representatives to the committee, but the appointment of Stephen Ratcliffe as a representative of individual members allows the flexigroup to be kept informed of developments at Area level.

Countryside Secretary

This post was not filled at the 2025 AGM. The Footpath Secretary has made representations, where appropriate, on planning applications directly affecting rights of way. Broader issues are handled on an ad-hoc basis, or by our groups. A volunteer would be most welcome.

Reports from Groups

Amersham and District Group

The group has had another successful year of walks and social events. The 2024 AGM was held at Amersham Community Centre in the Large Barn Hall on 14 November 2024.

Walks

A comprehensive walks programme continued to be offered with thanks to our dedicated walks leaders and programme coordinators. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday walks continue to be well attended; Saturday now has a full programme of walks and Friday's programme is much improved. The committee continued to encourage new leaders to come forward to lead walks. The majority of our walk leaders (75 per cent) have now completed the online training or confirmed their experience, in line with the requirements from Ramblers. There are quite a few lapsed walk leaders on the system who should automatically be deleted by the end of January. First-aid kits have been ordered and distributed to ensure that these are available on walks.

Events

The group's annual walking holiday was at HF Abingworth in West Sussex from 7-11 October. Thirty four members took part and enjoyed the walks and evening entertainment. The group's Christmas lunch was held at The Ivy House on 10 December 2024. The summer's social event was a barbecue at the Hampden Arms on 26 July. The weather could have been better but not the quantity and quality of the food!

On behalf of the committee, our thanks go to all those members whose many efforts have contributed to another successful year.

Florence Orban and Penny Rook, Group Secretaries

Aylesbury and District Group

Regular walking activity continues, with the programme generally filled, albeit sometimes at the last minute. This is where walks manager is particularly useful as leaders can easily add a walk at short notice. We also use Whatsapp successfully to notify regular walkers, who have signed up to the chat, of any last-minute changes.

Our membership numbers are in slow decline and, despite being unable specifically to analyse individual member changes, we still have a core of 50-plus regular walkers out of a total membership of 200 plus. The problem of recruiting walk leaders continues with a disproportionate load falling on a diminishing number of leaders. We have tried various initiatives to encourage members to try walk leading with

limited success but will continue our efforts. The same applies to path checkers where we now only have seven checkers covering 17 out of the 68 Aylesbury Vale parishes.

On the positive side we have organised a couple of successful social events which were well attended, a New Year meal and a summer barbeque, and we have a group holiday booked for 2026.

I stood down as Chair at the AGM held at St Anne's Hall, Wendover on 21 November. Stephen Putman was elected as Chairman and will take on the role with immediate effect. I shall continue to be actively involved in supporting the group wherever required.

Carolyn Brown, former Chair

Chiltern Young Walkers

We completed 73 walks, covering a total of 583 miles, with a mix of evening, weekend, and introductory walks that offered something for everyone. This year we welcomed some new walk leaders, tried out combining evening walks with yoga, and wandered our way along the Chiltern Way, up Kinder Scout, and around the South Downs, sharing excellent conversation along the way as always. Our annual path-checking day covered Ellesborough parish for the second year, walking 15 miles of public rights of way with 25 issues identified. 2025 marked the group's 25th year and saw a celebratory walk retracing our inaugural steps in the year 2000. We were delighted to see some familiar faces return for this special event. Here's to the next 25 years!

Beth Stark, Chair

Chilterns Weekend Walkers

With membership up by nine per cent, eight new leaders and 12 per cent more walks, this has been another successful year for CWW.

Themed walks have added considerable interest and distinctiveness to our programme. Series have included the alphabet walks, famous people of the Chilterns walks, mill walks, the Capital Ring, challenge walks, name the series walks, beat the heat, and early risers. There were 40 leaders, of whom eight contributed their first walk for CWW.

Highlights of the year have included our fourth annual walks festival at Lane End, a one-day navigation course, our first walk leaders' get-together for many years, and a first-aid course for leaders. We enjoyed holidays and weekends away in Yorkshire, Shropshire, South Devon, and the New Forest, and a yoga and walking break in the Peak District.

We have had 35 social events, a 250 per cent increase from last year. These included a Christmas party weekend in the Cotswolds.

News features on our website have generated stories for *South East Walker* covering our spoil-heap path-victory in Saunderton, the alphabet walks and the walking and yoga weekend in Derbyshire.

As well as checking paths in our home parish of Lacey Green, our members have filled path-checking vacancies in Ashley Green, Beaconsfield, Ellesborough, Greater Marlow, Penn, Seer Green, and The Lee.

We ran our members' photo competition for the second year. To mark our group's forthcoming 20th anniversary, we produced a CWW 2026 calendar featuring memorable group-photos from our first two decades. It has been a great success and we have sold out.

Tim Axten, Chair

Hike MK

During 2025, Hike MK has enjoyed walks in the local Milton Keynes area, as well as trips away to the Chilterns, Cotswolds, Peak District, Brighton coast, and Ben Nevis. We have also had a number of social events, including pub quizzes, axe throwing, street food, and meals out. The group has welcomed a few new faces in 2025. The mid-week evening walks have been popular and well attended; however the group

still relies on a very small number of walk leaders and is lacking enough walk leaders to put on a full programme of weekend walks.

Stephen Ratcliffe, Main Contact

Hillingdon and District Group

We continue to offer our members a very respectable programme of walks although it must be said that some days are better supported than others by walk leaders. Saturday afternoons are of particular concern, although the Saturday morning short 'Walk and Talk' programme is proving very successful.

It is gratifying that leaders have so willingly accepted the training required of us by Ramblers, and also that significant numbers have requested first-aid training.

Holidays and social events are well supported. The group enjoyed a holiday on Exmoor. At Christmas 2024 there was a well-attended quiz, and in the summer there was a popular walking quiz followed by much-needed refreshments on one of the hottest days of the year. It would be good to see more members involved in initiating and leading such activities.

Thanks to the work of Denise Cherry, Hillingdon Ramblers has been successful in bidding for money from Ramblers GB which will be used along with a contribution from our funds to replace a stile on the Hillingdon Trail with a gate. This will make it easier for many more walkers to use this particular part of the trail.

Barbara Macdonald, Acting Chairman

Milton Keynes and District Group

Milton Keynes and District Ramblers had a successful year. We had an average attendance of 15-16 walkers on our walks throughout the year. We paid for a kissing gate on one of our regular walks. We assisted three new members in becoming walk leaders. We had a summer walk and picnic and a pre-Christmas walk with non-alcoholic mulled wine and mince pies at the half-way point. We also had regular evening walks between June and August which were well attended. Membership numbers are increasing so we are proud of our achievements.

Andy Gardiner, Chairman

Wycombe District Group

The group continues to offer a full walks programme. Walks are held on most Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The Wednesday walks are still the most popular with up to 20 attendees on many occasions. We are always keen to recruit new walk-leaders who now have to do some on-line training modules first. From October 2025, the walk-programme cycle is every three months as the fourth month was often very sparse.

The Committee convened three times this year. We have the funds to sponsor a gate and the committee is discussing this.

Socially, we enjoyed two meals together in December 2024, one at lunchtime at Spade Oak, Bourne End, and the other in the evening at The Old Queens Head, Penn. We also had a few days away at Abingworth, West Sussex in April.

The committee continues to function without a Chairperson and Publicity Officer. For myself being newly elected last year as group Secretary, the year has enjoyable and not onerous.

Roselle Beard, Group Secretary

Elected Members of the Area Executive Committee October 2024 - September 2025

Chairman	Trevor Jones	sunnytrev@gmail.com
Vice-Chairman	Paul Rhodes	paul_j_rhodes@hotmail.com
Secretary	<i>vacant</i>	
Treasurer	John Esslemont	johnandjean@thamesinternet.com
Footpath Secretary	Kate Ashbrook	ashbrookk@aol.com
Membership Secretary	John Wainwright	bmkwams@yahoo.co.uk
North Bucks rRIPPLE	Bill Piers	williamjsbpiers@gmail.com
Countryside Secretary	<i>vacant</i>	
News Editor	Bethan Stark (<i>from Feb 2024</i>)	thomasbethanmary@gmail.com
Publicity Officer	<i>vacant</i>	
Press Officer	Kate Ashbrook	(<i>as above</i>)
Access Officer	Kate Ashbrook	(<i>as above</i>)
Representatives of Individual Members		
	Stephen Ratcliffe	hikemk@gmail.com
Representatives of Affiliated Local Organisations		
	<i>vacant</i>	
Group Representatives		
Each of our groups is entitled to appoint two members of the Area Executive Committee, and substitutes are welcome to attend meetings of the committee.		

Area website: www.bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk

Groups

Walks and other activities within our Area are organised by our seven groups and one flexigroup:

Amersham and District Group	https://www.amershamramblers.org.uk/
Aylesbury and District Group	http://www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk/
Chiltern Young Walkers	https://www.chilterns2030s.org.uk/
Chilterns Weekend Walkers	chilternsw.co.uk
Hillingdon and District Group	https://www.ramblers.org.uk/hillingdon
Milton Keynes and District Group	http://www.mkramblers.org.uk/
Wycombe District Group	https://www.wycomberamblers.org.uk/
Hike MK (flexigroup)	https://www.hikemk.org.uk/

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