

## Update from your CEO

sent on behalf of staff and trustees

Sent to: all active volunteers who have registered on the Ramblers website.

24 January 2018

Hello Harry

Happy new year / Blwyddyn Newydd Dda / Bliadhna Mhath Ûr. When I wrote to you in January last year, it was to ask that we focus on what unites us, be kind to each other, and draw strength from our diversity. A year on, I think we are working much better together as “one team” - with the election of a terrific new president, a rejuvenated board, the recruitment of a number of new staff, strong induction programmes for trustees and area volunteers and improved organisational dialogue (via initiatives such as the Ramblers roadshows, monthly volunteer newsletter and area and group infrastructure survey).

A strong team delivers great results and by working together we did well in 2017. Significant highlights included; launching a new election manifesto with access post Brexit at its heart, making good progress on the England Coast Path, running effective Network Rail and access campaigns, settling our pension deficit, producing a new shared use advice note, revising our walk leader checklist, running a walk leader training pilot in Scotland and responding to a major Welsh Government consultation. Most importantly for the future, we have become a People’s Postcode Lottery direct beneficiary and have created a strong business plan for 2018-2020.

Our new business plan asks us all to *look outwards and adapt at pace to our evolving circumstances, to remain relevant*. It also articulates the need for us to *build a culture of trust and adhere to our collective values and code of conduct*. This year I think we need to continue to adapt and strive for relevance - and to trust each other whilst we do so. The Edelman Trust Barometer [shows trust is in crisis around the world](#). People are concerned about globalisation, environmental degradation and technological innovation, and what this means for them, and for their children.

For us to continue to help everyone to enjoy the outdoors on foot, we need to embody the change we wish to see in the world. By putting each other - and our members, supporters and beneficiaries - at the heart of our work on paths, access and walk leadership, we can play an active role in helping to rebuild trust. We are well placed to unite our wise elders with future generations who seek the same sense of freedom, wellbeing and sociability and who share our love of green spaces. Working together, we will enhance not only our own relevance as a charity, but our trust and faith in each other and the quality of our precious natural environment.

January is a busy month for area annual general meetings (AGMs). I thoroughly enjoyed joining our local AGM last weekend and was delighted to learn that the area is planning to run a North Wales Ramblers walking festival this summer to raise our profile and aid member recruitment. I also met Crispin Truman, the relatively new Chief Executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) last week. It was encouraging to hear that CPRE want to develop strong partnerships and run campaigns with like-minded organisations and we agreed to work together on the access-post-Brexit agenda.

This newsletter also includes updates on the government’s new environment plan and cycle safety review, Walking for Health, area support, and the Ramblers response to a controversial development proposal at Thirlmere. If you are thinking of applying to be a trustee, the deadline is 24 February, and you can find out more [here](#). We are also seeking areas interested in working with Kent area to host the second year of our successful Carers Walks pilot. And we need your help to publicise our first ever Britain’s Best Walking

Neighbourhoods Awards. I wish you the very best for 2018 and look forward to working - and walking - with you again this year.

Kindest regards,

Vanessa Griffiths  
chief executive officer

Phone: 020 7339 8578

Email: [ceo@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:ceo@ramblers.zendesk.com)

Twitter: [@RamblerVan](https://twitter.com/RamblerVan)



## Trustee recruitment - please note that the deadline for standing for the board is 24 February

We're looking for new trustees, including a chair and honorary treasurer, to help the Ramblers grow and develop – and there's still time for you to put your name forward for election. You can find further information and a nomination form [here](#). If you would like to discuss your nomination with the chair or a member of the general council team please email [generalcouncil@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:generalcouncil@ramblers.zendesk.com) and we will be delighted to help. The deadline for nominations is 24 February.

If you are coming to the general council meeting in Bangor, please also keep an eye out for the February update which will be emailed to general council members and area chairs and secretaries this week. Online registration for the meeting is now open and all the information you need [can be found here](#). The deadline for registration is 24 February, and please note that we cannot accept registrations after this date.

---

## Public access acknowledged as a public good - please note key parliamentary developments

On 4 January, in an important speech at the annual Oxford Farming Conference, Environment Secretary Michael Gove spoke of the need to invest - as part of the reform to agricultural payments - in public access for the public good post-Brexit. You can read the Ramblers response to his speech [here](#). This is extremely welcome news – since the General Election in 2017 we have been busy making the case to ministers, civil servants and MPs that improving the path network needs to be one of the outcomes secured through payments to landowners and farmers. We will continue our efforts to influence the forthcoming Agriculture White Paper and Agriculture Bill to ensure that this positive statement of intent now becomes a reality. If you have further questions, please email [policy@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:policy@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## Promising ambitions in Government's Environment Plan

This month I was invited to the Prime Minister's launch of the Government's long-awaited 25 year environment plan. We were encouraged by ambitions to increase engagement with the countryside, create more woodland and to ensure that planning policy better aligns with environmental objectives. We now need to see the detail underpinning the plan to clarify how it will be implemented, and to identify how the Ramblers can be part of the solution. You can read the Ramblers feedback [here](#). If you have further questions, please email [policy@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:policy@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## Cycle Safety Review - please let us know if you have local examples of shared use

Following a series of high profile accidents, the Government is conducting a review into cycle safety to consider ways in which safety can be improved between cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. The Government is calling for evidence and we are looking for case studies to demonstrate where walkers and cyclists share space safely

and/or where improvements are needed. If you have any local examples of shared use which we could usefully highlight, please send them to [policy@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:policy@ramblers.org.uk) by Monday 12 February. Many thanks in advance.

---

## Best Walking Neighbourhoods - please get ready to publicise the Award

In February we'll be launching our first "Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood Awards". Our campaign aim is to highlight places across England, Scotland and Wales that have invested in developing great walking environments - where people can enjoy walking easily every day, whether to the shops, to work, to school or simply to walk the dog. We'll be celebrating neighbourhoods with well-connected networks of walking routes, accessible natural green spaces and well-designed public spaces.

Thank you to everyone who submitted a nomination. It was tricky choosing between so many great examples and we're really excited to have a fantastic shortlist of places for you to vote on. Kate Conto, senior policy officer, and Laura Burley, campaigns officer, shortlisted the nominations based on our urban walking policy. We loved learning about the huge variety of community events, street parties and health walks taking place and making our neighbourhoods accessible, welcoming, walkable places.

Voting will be open from 26 February to 14 March on our website. We'll be in touch with you closer to the launch date to share the shortlist and link to the voting page via email newsletters. In the meantime, it would be great if you could reserve space in your newsletters, on your webpages and in any other communications you send out, to get ready to publicise the awards and to encourage voting. You can find out more about what makes a good walking neighbourhood in [this blog from Kate Conto](#). If you have any questions please contact us on [campaigns@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## Thirlmere zipwire - please note the Ramblers position on this proposal

Before Christmas and during the holiday period we were contacted by a number of Ramblers members and members of the public who were concerned about proposals at Thirlmere in the Lake District. The proposals are for an 'activity hub' to include 8 zip wires along 2 routes running across the lake at Thirlmere, and an 18km cycleway.

The Ramblers Lake District area had already submitted a planning objection to this proposal, so we uploaded a reinforcing statement [to the volunteer zone](#) of the Ramblers website. The statement highlighted the Ramblers position on countryside protection and our support for the work of our volunteers across the country in protecting the countryside in which we all love to walk. The statement articulated the Ramblers wider support for the Lake District area's objection - which was based on local knowledge of the landscape, walking environment, community and economy. You can [download our statement here](#). If you are looking for support on local planning proposals please contact [Alison.Hallas@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Alison.Hallas@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## Walks for carers - please let us know if your area would like to take part in this pilot

As mentioned in this newsletter last September, the Ramblers have been partners in a pilot project run in the Kent area last year, to organise walks for carers and the people they care for. The pilot was such a success that we are hoping to trial the same enterprise in other areas and are looking for area teams who might be inspired to give it a go this year.

The project aims to provide scenic, sociable, health-inducing, fun and relaxed walks for people who, for many reasons, may struggle to get out in the fresh air regularly. Kent Ramblers identified a number of likely venues - seaside proms, stately homes, country parks, formal gardens - all of which offered flat, easy ground for wheelchairs where necessary and a longer, more challenging walk for those who wanted to go further. Naturally, lunch was involved.

Carer support organisations joined forces with the Ramblers to publicise the walks and helped attract a growing band of strollers. For three hours, labels like "carer" and "dementia" and "Parkinsons" could be cast aside, replaced instead by "friends out walking". The results - physically, mentally, emotionally - have been wonderful. If you would like to put forward walks in your area please contact [sue.mott12@gmail.com](mailto:sue.mott12@gmail.com).

You can learn more about the walks for carers on the [Kent Ramblers website](#) or the [Sport England website](#).

---

## Festival of Winter Walks - thank you for participating

Thank you to all of you who took part in the Ramblers annual Festival of Winter Walks. Over 2,000 walks took place up and down the country and our walks tracker indicated that 3,500 new walkers registered an account and joined in online. We promoted the festival on social media and through our "i" newspaper supplement, and achieved great coverage nationally (including the Sun and Metro online) and in the regional press. We've been collecting some of [our favourite photos into a Flickr gallery](#) for you to enjoy.

Some Ramblers groups and Walking for Health schemes applied for, and were awarded festival funds to amplify their activities. North Somerset Walking for Health ran 5 events; Improving Lives Plymouth held a walk, tea and talk event for adults with mental health support needs and/or learning disabilities (which featured on BBC Spotlight news); Surrey Heath Walking for Health were joined by over 80 people from toddlers to seniors; and the Edinburgh Young Walkers harnessed the season to scale a very snowy Ben A'an near Aberfoyle, and to run subsequent winter walking skills training. These walks all appear to have successfully attracted new walkers.

If you have any questions about the Festival of Winter Walks, please email [Patrick.Scott@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Patrick.Scott@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## English Walking for Health (WfH) programme - please note this update

We are pleased to confirm that funding for short group walks has been secured - from 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018 - to enable continuation of this programme beyond the Macmillan contract, which comes to a close on the 31 March. We have been conducting a consultation on a proposed WfH staff structure from 1 April. The continuation funding and our staff team will enable us to provide a core level of support to short group walk providers in 2018. During 2018 the Ramblers will explore how we can transition to a more integrated model - subject to funding - so that short group walks become an integral part of the Ramblers offer across the country. We are also currently reviewing our WfH data processing procedures (including the walker registration form) in order to ensure that the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will be met. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact [rob.wallis@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:rob.wallis@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## Area support officer for Southern England - please welcome Tansy Miller

As part of building a strong area support team, we are delighted that we have been joined this month by Tansy Miller, our new area support officer for Southern England. Tansy will work alongside Diane Simcoe, who covers Northern England. Both Tansy and Diane report to Richard Sharp, our area support manager. Tansy's appointment means that we now have full cover for our 44 English areas, as well as complementary area support in Scotland and Wales.

Tansy has worked for several large volunteer-based charities in similar roles, supporting and developing volunteer led activities, including Citizens Advice, the Cleft Lip & Palate Association and the Community Development Foundation. In her spare time she is a keen hiker; both around her home in East Anglia and recently across the national parks of the USA and in the Himalayas. She is looking forward to meeting her area colleagues and can be contacted on [tansy.miller@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:tansy.miller@ramblers.org.uk).

---

## Ramblers Cymru - please book your places on these development opportunities

As previewed in the December newsletter, an inaugural Publicity Co-ordinators Networking Meeting will take place on 30 January 2018 in Llandrindod Wells. This meeting is for publicity officers and all those interested in marketing. A course entitled "How to Write a Grant Application" will take place on 28 February 2018 in Newtown for those interested in fundraising. Please contact [Catherine.Morgan@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Catherine.Morgan@ramblers.org.uk) for more information on both these meetings.

Ramblers Cymru will also be offering training courses for those wishing to lead short walks for people who are

currently inactive. Eight courses will take place, in venues across Wales, from the last week of January to the middle of May. Please [click here](#) to see details of the eight courses and to book your place. Please note there is a £10 fee which will be refunded (minus a small administration charge) on completion of the course.

And for those of you interested in leading a volunteer work party (primarily aimed at maintenance work on Public Rights of Way but applicable to any practical work party) a course entitled “Practical Maintenance – Leading a Volunteer Group” will take place on 26 February in Cardiff. Please contact [Amanda.Hill@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Amanda.Hill@ramblers.org.uk) for more information on this course.

---

## Ramblers Scotland – Celebrating the 15th anniversary of the passing of Land Reform Act

All this month, Ramblers Scotland has been marking the 15th anniversary of the passing of Land Reform Act, the iconic legislation which secured the nation’s world-class access rights.

On 10 January, we held a hugely successful event at Scottish Parliament. More than a dozen MSPs attended, including four ministers, as well as well-known personalities such as Cameron McNeish, Ben Dolphin and our former president Dennis Canavan. BBC Radio Scotland recorded a wonderful programme at the event.

We also introduced our Out There campaign to outdoor personalities, politicians, partner organisations and campaigners – and received strong backing, including from Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham. Our campaign hashtag #OutThere was even trending on Twitter – as one of the UK’s most talked-about topics! See our [Facebook page](#) for more about our Out There campaign. If you have any questions, please email [Danny.Carden@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Danny.Carden@ramblers.org.uk).