

Ramblers Association Ivel Valley Walkers

Minutes of the AGM

2.00 - 3.40pm, Sunday 6th November 2022

Wootton Village Hall MK 43 9EU

1. Present

41 members present. See attachment.

2. Apologies for absence

17 members sent their apologies including three Committee Members: See attachment.

3. Minutes of Zoom AGM 7.30-8.33pm Tuesday 9th November 2021

Item 3: The year for the AGM in 2020 was incorrectly stated as 2021.

With this corrected, the **Minutes were accepted by a majority vote.**

4. Matters arising from minutes

No matters arising.

5. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman read out his annual report which is **attached / available on the website**. It covered:

- Walks programme - returning to normal after Covid
- Holidays - Hartlington, Ambleside and long weekend in Bridlington
- Trips and events - Christmas lunch; mulled wine ramble; Windsor coach trip; Peacocks Auction House; Yomp, Chomp and Roll-Up; Coach trip to Derbyshire.
- Holiday 2023 - Ambrose, Sunday 14th - Friday 19th May.
- Ramblers Beds Area initiatives - IVW members have participated in Mapps, Apps and Compass training courses, including during Bedfordshire Walking Festival.
- Ramblers Beds Area initiative RIPPLE - IVW members have participated in path maintenance and restoration work throughout the year.
- The Chairman thanks IVW Committee members, walk leaders and coordinators, Beds Area Chair Nick Markham and Beds Area RIPPLE leader Barry Ingram, who will retire as organiser of Beds Walking Festival and Area Publicity Officer in November.
- The Chairman thanks the following five Committee members and one Walks Coordinator who are standing down:

- Pauline Seddon (webmaster)
- Alan Roland (programme secretary)
- Garry Wallace (treasurer)
- John Clark (footpaths officer)
- Ruth McNally (membership secretary)
- Sandra Axtell (Sunday walks coordinator)

6. Treasurer's Annual Report

Robert (Bob) Wallace read out the Treasurer's annual report in Garry Wallace's absence. It covered:

Administration account

- Suspension of activities due to Covid resulted in a net surplus of £559.10 in 2019-20.
- Due to the high level of net assets at the end of the 2020-21 financial year (£1,516.56), IVW waived its entitlement to a portion of Area funding for 2021-22, resulting in a planned deficit. This amounted to £222.26 for 2021-22.
- Positive cash balance at year end: £902.39
- Net assets at year end: £1,294.30
- This is considered to represent a sound financial position since the outgoings in a 'normal' financial year are around £1,000.

Social account

- Although Covid affected the volume of social activities, the principle of breaking even over the financial year was achieved.
- In 2021-22 the account generated a surplus of £109.00.
- Positive cash balance at year end: £1,384.91.
- Net assets at year end: £1,197.61.
- This is considered to be a sound financial position.

Standing down

After 3 years in office, the Treasurer is standing down. His report offers several thoughts regarding the future which will be considered by the new Chair and Committee and are included under Questions - see Item 13 below.

The Treasurer apologised for his absence due to a clash with the celebration of his Golden Wedding Anniversary.

A copy of the Treasurer's annual report, the financial report and the signed balance sheet are available on the IVW website.

Independent Audit

The accounts were audited by the Independent Auditor Tony Sheward. There were no questions.

The motion that they are accepted: proposed by Bob Wallace; seconded by Sue Tate.
Put to the vote: **Accepted by a majority.**

7. Annual Reports of IVW Committee Officers

Footpath Officer

Roy Carter read out John Clark's annual report which is **available on the IVW website**. It covered:

- IVW shares responsibility for Rights of Way matters with two other Ramblers Groups in Bedfordshire: Lea and Ickniel Group and North Bedfordshire Ramblers Group.
- John liaises with the Ramblers Association on issues relating to footpath matters involving national transport authorities.
- John has been involved in the Ramblers Association project 'Don't Lose Your Way'.
- John is contributing to a trial of a scheme that the Ramblers Association is working on in conjunction with Natural England. It involves testing a new App for members to report footpath problems to replace 'Pathwatch'.
- With the withdrawal of the unsuccessful 'Pathwatch' app, the IVW website provides information on how members can report footpath problems, including contacting John directly.
- The latter approach has been successful regarding a waymarking issue at Sandy.

Webmaster

Pauline Seddon read out her annual report which is available on the IVW website. It covered:

- Maintaining the IVW website to keep members informed and up-to-date about Group, Area and National activities including the Group Walks Programme
- Redesigning the system whereby IVW collects and processes walk details to make it easier for all involved. This leaves IVW better placed to respond to future changes introduced by the Ramblers Association.
- Supporting the Programme Secretary in the production of three Group Walks Programmes.
- Supporting walk leaders by updating the online walks programme with changes to Group Walks.
- Providing IT support to Committee members when requested.
- The website licence and hosting was renewed for a further 3 years in June 2022. The next renewal will require a renewal of the website domain name.
- Pauline has enjoyed performing the above activities but she is stepping down after 4 years because her values and priorities no longer align with those of the current Committee.

Programme Secretary

Roy Carter read out Alan Rowland's annual report which is **available on the IVW website**. It covered:

- A 12 month Programme of Group Walks comprising 196 walks and approx. 1,535 miles across Bedfordshire and into North Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire.
- Thanks to walk leaders.
- The option for Walk Leaders to limit group size and require pre-booking was continued.
- Existing Walk Leaders are under pressure to cover the Walks Programme. The Committee needs to continue to encourage more members to become Walk Leaders.
- Alan is stepping down after 5 years in the role. He thanks Walks Coordinators and Walk Leaders and a special thank you to Pauline Seddon IVW webmaster for improving IVW systems and processes for the online and printable programmes.

Membership Secretary

Ruth McNally spoke to her annual report which is **available on the IVW website.** It covered:

- IVW member changes over the past 12 months. IVW has a 'steady state' membership of around 361, with numbers of members joining over the past year (approx. 30) being equal to the number leaving. However, underneath the 'churn' is a steady mass of members which suggests satisfaction with what IVW, the Area and the Ramblers Association offer.
- IVW use of social media is on the AGM Agenda - see Item 11 below.
- Members who would like to receive information by email rather than by post to need to change their contact preferences with the Ramblers Association. The Membership Secretary can help them with this.
- Ruth is stepping down after three years in the role because her travel plans mean she could not guarantee the safeguarding of personal data of the members.

8. Election of Officers and other Committee Members

Election of IVW Chairman

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Chairman	Bob Wallace	Roy Carter	Tony Sheward

Agreed by a majority vote.

Handover of IVW Chairmanship

Roy Carter stepped down as Chairman of IVW. Bob Wallace took over the role of chairing the AGM.

Roger McCleod, as the longest serving member on the IVW Committee, thanked Roy for five years service as IVW Chairman, which encompassed the Covid problems. He paid tribute to Roy's good humour and for the successful programme of Group Walks and Trips and Events

that the Group has enjoyed under his Chairmanship. He was pleased that Roy was nominated to continue serving on the Committee. He presented Roy Carter with a signed card and £20 Cotswold voucher from IVW members.

Special Resolution to create the role of Vice Chair

The Chairman proposed a Special Resolution to approve the creation of the role of Vice Chair. The job description for this role is:

- i) to assist the Chair with his/her duties
- ii) to deputise for the Chair when h/she is not available

Proposed by Bob Wallace. Seconded by Tom Collier.

The Special Resolution was accepted by a majority vote.

Election of other Committee Officers and Members

The Chair read through the nominations to the Committee as detailed below

Officers			
Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconded
Vice Chair	Roger McLeod	Roy Carter	Tony Sheward
Treasurer	No nomination		
Membership Secretary	Roy Carter	Jan Wolfarth	Bob Wallace
General Secretary	Fran Stedman	Roy Carter	Jan Wolfarth
Programme Secretary	Roger McLeod	Tom Collier	Roy Carter
Publicity Officer	Tom Collier	Roger McLeod	Roy Carter
Social Secretary	Roger McLeod	Tom Collier	Roy Carter
Footpath Officer	Derek Turner	Roy Carter	Bob Wallace
Webmaster	No nomination		

All of the above Committee Officer nominations were approved by a majority vote.

Committee Members			
Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconded
Member	Mandy Wisson	Ruth McNally	Judith Lombardi
Member	Jan Wolfarth	Fran Stedman	Ruth McNally

Member	Dee Brockway	Ruth McNally	Judith Lombardi
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All of the above Committee Member nominations were approved by a majority vote.

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Tony Sheward agreed to continue as Independent Examiner for the Group.

His appointment was approved by a majority vote.

10. Proposal to conduct a Governance Review

The Chair thanked the new Committee for coming forward. He also thanked the many members who had been supportive of the Vice Chair and himself over the previous few days.

Looking to the future, the plan was to attract new volunteers, especially younger members, to join the Committee.

Of the two unfilled Committee roles, there was an expression of interest in one of them, and there were contingency plans to cover the roles until the positions were filled.

The Chair acknowledged that over the past weeks and months the Committee had experienced problems due to misunderstandings and poor communications, and that the first task ahead was to take action to avoid a repeat of these problems.

For this purpose, the Chair and Vice Chair propose to undertake a governance review of how IVW operates. Specifically, the review will address the urgent need for:

- An up-to-date constitution;
- More precise definition of Treasurer's role;
- Guidelines for how the Committee operates;

If this proposal is approved, the Chair and Vice Chair will conduct the review and present the revised governance measures to the Committee for their feedback early next year (January / February 2023). These measures will be revised in the light of their feedback and then circulated to the IVW membership who will be permitted to vote on them.

The following questions and comments about this proposal were raised:

- Member question: Does the Ramblers Association provide information, support and advice on how to run a Ramblers Group that IVW could draw upon?
- *Chair: Yes. IVW is already engaged in dialogue with Area Chair Nick Markham and the Ramblers Association Area Support Officer Vanessa Swanson. They will advise on the review process. The Ramblers Association has a model constitution that IVW will tailor to their needs.*
- Member question: Will questions that members submitted to this AGM be used to inform the review?
- *Chair: Yes.*

- Member question: Will the new governance proposals be put to the membership?
- *Chair: First of all the draft will be put to Committee members for comment. It will then be revised and the final version will be shared with the membership for their vote. Area Chair Nick Markham will advise on the process. The aim is to complete the process before AGM 2023.*
- Member question: Most members were unaware of the recent problems experienced by the Committee. Members need to be kept informed in the future. Can we please request more transparency from the Committee in future.
- *Chair: It was good that the members did not know what was happening! This is a new beginning, going forward. The new governance measures will make sure what happened before won't happen again.*
- Member question: What were the issues?
- Comment: It is not helpful to go over the past.
- Comment from 2021-22 Committee member: The Committee became disharmonious so some people moved on.
- Member comment: I suggest that the introduction to the new governance document sets out the areas of dispute in the past and how these are addressed under the new governance measures.

The proposal that the Chair and Vice Chair conduct a governance review was agreed by a majority vote.

11. Use of social media - Ruth McNally

Further background information is available in the Membership Secretary's Annual Report which is on the IVW website.

- Earlier this year, Beds Area Ramblers asked the Groups to discuss the future use of social media. IVW Committee decided to put it on the AGM agenda. The idea is to have an initial sounding at the AGM for the Committee to take into account in its future deliberations.
- North Beds Ramblers has a Facebook Group. Leighton Buzzard Ramblers has a Facebook Page. Each performs a different function that are explained in the supporting document.
- There is no question that social media would be used to communicate with members *instead of* email / mail.
- Members would *not* be required to use social media in order to be informed about the IVW Walks Programme and Trips and Events and other activities.
- However, social media could be used *instead of* a website.
- Having a social media account is like having a domestic pet - it requires almost daily attention for e.g. moderation, adding content, responding to queries. *Does IVW have the volunteer capacity to do this?*
- *Does IVW need a social media presence - and if so, why?* It is important to answer this question before making any decisions about whether to use social media and if so, which platforms to use - it doesn't have to be Facebook.

Questions and comments are below.

- N. Beds Ramblers Facebook Group is pleasant and I would be happy for IVW to have one too.
- Toddington Ramblers use their website in an interactive way - might be a good idea to look at that as another potential model.
- N. Beds Ramblers Group took a decision to create a Facebook Group instead of a website.
- Do we have to choose between a Facebook Group or a Facebook Page or can we have both?
 - We can have both.
- How many members here use Facebook?
 - About 50% of those present raised their hands.
- How many Facebook users look at it every week?
 - 50% of those present raised their hands.
- How many Facebook users look at it every day?
 - Same 50% of those present raised their hands.
- Would a Facebook group encourage those not on Facebook to use it?
- Would it encourage younger members?
- N Beds Facebook is easier to follow than IVW emails because all in the same place.
- One member present at the AGM expressed interest in volunteering to create a Facebook presence for IVW.
- IVW has more urgent priorities than this to attend to - but more hands make light work.

Action: to go to the committee but not as urgent as some other issues.

12. Bedfordshire Walking Festival 2023 - Nick Markham, Beds Area Chair

Nick Markham provided a one-page document to support this discussion **(attached)**.

- How many participated in BWF2022? At least half put up their hands.
- Beds Walking Festival is a very successful annual event having taken place every year since 2009 except 2020
- Barry Ingram who initiated BWF and is the main organiser is standing down. Thank you to Barry for organising it.
- The big question for the IVW Group is: *Do you want a BWF 2023?* One third put their hands up.
- We cannot clone Barry. The proposal is to establish a BWF sub-committee comprising two Committee members from each of the Beds Ramblers Groups.
- There is a 1-page document that outlines the work needed.
- There is also a 30 page Handover Document by Barry Ingram, Nick and Ruth McNally.
- The sub-committee members need the support of their Groups. We need a buy-in from all the Beds Groups. In particular, to:

- Populate the Walks Programme with Walks
- Distribute the publicity (programmes, posters, flyers)
- Who would like to walk in BWF 2023? About 60% of those present raised their hands.

**IVW Chair Bob Wallace gave his support to the BWF 2323.
IVW BWF sub-committee members are Roy Carter & Tom Collier**

13. Member questions submitted to the Chairman

Chairman expressed his opinion that some of the questions were probably prompted by misunderstandings and poor communication mentioned earlier. No answers will be given to these good questions today, but they will be considered by Chair and Vice Chair during the governance review. The Chair read out the questions.

- A. Bank transfer needs to be adopted as the universal means of subscribing to IVW social events

Area Chair Nick Markham responded that this would violate Ramblers Association policy that Ramblers should be open to all. However, Nick said that he would convey criticisms of the particular bank used by the Ramblers Association, namely Unity Bank.

Action: Area Chair Nick Markham

- B. Email needs to be adopted as the universal means of communication with IVW members.
- C. Committee meetings need to be conducted as business meetings and with Zoom
- D. The Treasurer should have the right of prior approval of all financial transactions
- E. Any subjects requiring the input of key committee Officers should only be discussed with prior written notice and in their presence.
- F. Suggest all on the committee have an officer's role. Only allow a committee member role if the intention is to become an officer. After a period of 1 year, any committee member who has not become an officer either has to be voted into an officer role or leave the committee.
- G. Officers who retire or resign should be allowed to remain on the committee for 1-year to facilitate a smooth transition or a move to a different officer role.
- H. Committee meetings to have an agenda that is distributed in advance, along with any supporting material. AOB that requires officer input to be minuted and included at the next meeting
- I. Ensure all printed material is checked and signed off by the producer & publicity officer who confirm the most fundamental items (web addresses, location, spelling)

etc) are accurate. Do the fundamental items exist as a policy/process that's understood by all committee members?

- J. One of the treasurer's roles is to regularly present information on the group's finances to local meetings. Why hasn't that been happening?

Action: All of the above questions will be considered by the Committee.

14. Any Other Business

Volunteers for Walk Coordinator Roles

There are some expressions of interest but these are not confirmed.

Thank you from Beds Area Chair

Thank you very much for what you are doing and the best of luck.

Tuesday Group Walk Description

The description of Tuesday walks need to be changed. It was argued that the description of Tuesday walks may be putting off some walkers because it implies they are faster walks than on other days. However, others disagreed saying:

- It didn't put them off - they prefer faster walks
- Tuesday walks are part of a menu of varied walks to suit different tastes and needs
- Sunday walks can be fast too
- 12-mile walks sometimes need a cafe break
- Wednesday walk description suggests it finishes with a pub lunch - so can we look at that too?

Action: Walk leaders to canvas Tuesday walkers for their opinions and it will come back to the Committee and revisit at next year's AGM

15. Ivel Valley Walkers 2023 AGM

2.00pm Sunday November 5th 2023

Venue to be advised