

EAST BERKSHIRE GROUP OF THE RAMBLERS
Minutes of the 55th Annual General Meeting

2.30pm SATURDAY 15th NOVEMBER 2025
Knowl Hill Village Hall, The Terrace, Knowl Hill, Reading RG10 9XB

In the Chair: in the absence of an official Chair, Graham Sexton had volunteered to act as Chair for this meeting (all resolutions were proposed by the Chair and voted on by show of hands)

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members. Copies of the Agenda and 2024/5 Financial Report were available for those members present to read. The minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting had been available on the EBR website during the year and a few copies were available at the Meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

A total of 37 members were present. Formal apologies had been received from Steve Gillions, Ruth Hill, Ian Ient, Roz Khokhar, Peter London, John Sainsbury, Richard Whetton, Shelagh Whitehouse and Mary Williams.

2. Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting held on 15th November 2024

There were no corrections necessary. The Chair proposed that the Minutes be approved as a true record of the Meeting. The resolution was passed unanimously. Eleanor Griffiths asked why Joy Strzelecki was no longer acting as Independent Examiner. The Chair responded that there was no dramatic reason. She just hadn't wished to continue.

3. Chair's Annual Report (Group Annual Report):

The Chair presented the Group Annual report, which he explained was really a report from the Committee, as, in the absence of an official Chairman, the report had been compiled with contributions from other Committee members.

"You will notice, in response to observations made last year, that we have changed the date and time of the AGM to a Saturday afternoon rather than Friday evening to see if this would boost attendance. Attendance in 2024 was 38 members and today it is 37, almost the same.

Volunteers: As members know, the group functions entirely on voluntary labour through the Committee, path wardens, walks leaders etc. All members benefit from the work done by these volunteers, so please join me in thanking them. The group could not work without them. *[Applause]*

Walks: Between us, we have led an amazing 130 walks since January. These have included hilly walks, flat walks, riverside walks, London walks, a dawn walk, pub walks, Strollathons and coach walks. We should be very proud of the variety and range of the walks in our programme. Very many thanks to our leaders who give their time willingly to plan and recce the walks as well as completing the training now required by Ramblers. We have had three new leaders in the last year and really need a few more, as inevitably we have lost some leaders due to health and family commitments. If you enjoy our walks and feel that you could help us to keep our programme full and exciting, please have a word with Linda Francis or any member of the committee. You will be supported with training and planning walks if you have any worries.

Membership: During the year the following members have sadly passed away:

Mr V Roberts

Mr Peter Parberry

Meg Knight

Of these, probably the best known was Meg who was a very active member. Her funeral, held a few weeks ago, was attended by a number of EBR members.

As at 1 November 2024 we had 302 members, which was a net reduction in membership of 6 (-1.95%) year to date. This comprised of 34 new members less 40 who left us. In comparison, this year, as at 1 November, we had 286 members, a net reduction of 12 (-4.03%) year to date. This comprised of 39 new members less 51 who have left us. The losses are for a variety of reasons - membership not renewed, resignations, transfers to other Groups and Areas and those who have sadly passed away. The general trend is for a gradual reduction in our membership numbers.

On 1 January 2015 we had 428 members and on 1 January 2025 we had 298 members, a net loss of 130 members over 10 years. It is vital therefore that the current membership encourages friends and acquaintances to try Ramblers out on some taster walks.

Endowment Fund: For the benefit of new members, the Chair explained that a quite significant sum of money had been received by EBR some years ago as a result of the sale of the Rambling for Pleasure walks books. EBR

could not retain these funds and they had been passed to Ramblers to hold in the EBR Endowment Fund. EBR had stipulated that the funds should be spent on projects consistent with Ramblers' charitable objectives. After many years of inaction by Ramblers, The Committee had been able to report last year that EBR had agreed to support four projects to spend the funds which had been held for so long with Ramblers, and these have been completed. This year another request for applications for projects was sent out by Ramblers and, after sifting through applications received, Ramblers provided the Committee with a selection for consideration. We chose five projects to support as "local" as we could find. One was very local which was for footpath resurfacing at Sonning as submitted by Loddon Valley Ramblers. Of the five we agreed, three have already been completed – the one in Sonning, and two others in Selbourne, Hampshire and Tincleton (near Dorchester) in Dorset both to replace stiles with kissing gates. Of the remaining two (also for gate replacements for stiles) one is in progress but there is a possibility the other may not come to fruition. If all five are completed, as we hope, we will be left with a balance in the fund of around £6,500. If they do not complete, our balance will be around £14,000. A new round of invitations is expected to be launched by Ramblers early next year and we hope that will result in some further projects which we can support to clear the balance in the Fund and allow it to be closed next year.

Planning: There was not a lot to report. Concerns over how the potential Holyport film studio development might impact the Rights of Way network in the EBR area had been resolved as the Government, which had called in the project to make a final decision, refused the application. Although not strictly in our area there is another film studio development under review by the Government in Little Marlow. Not strictly in EBR's area but we do walk we do walk there occasionally. A decision on that project was expected in November but nothing had been heard so far.

Footpaths: This would be covered in a separate report under the next Agenda item.

Coach walks: This year we started our monthly coach walks to walk the South Downs Way and have done Legs 1-6 Winchester to Chanctonbury Hill walking over 60 miles April to October (omitting August). This series has been well attended, engaging over 40 members, including Amersham and Wycombe Walkers. The overall attendance over these legs covered the costs of coach bookings. A healthy surplus gained in April to July was used to cover lower numbers of walkers seen in September and October. Therefore, members are reminded that their support of the coach walks is essential to ensure their continuation.

The monthly SDW coach walks will continue next year when we will walk from Chanctonbury Hill to Eastbourne (Legs 7 to 10). These walks will take place on the first Wednesday each month (from April) through until July in 2026. Note that the June leg will move to the second week to accommodate the timing of the Sedbergh HF Holiday. Trips to Eastbourne, Brighton and a short walk option are also to be investigated, as add-ons. The walks will be led by Peter Koklitis, Lesley Winch and Dawn Davies (all EBR members). This will complete all remaining sections of the South Downs Way.

On behalf of the Committee and members, I would like to thank the SDW team for their hard work this year. It's no mean task to organise a progressive walk like this.

Holidays: The Dovedale break held in September organised by John Harden through HF was enjoyed by those who attended. The holiday to HF Sedbergh in June 2026 is now full with a waiting list being managed by Rosemary Davies. In the past we have had two holidays some years. If somebody would like to organise an Autumn break for next year we'd love to hear from you!

Christmas Lunch: This will be held on Wednesday 17th December at the Dashwood Arms. If you would like to sign up, please see Barbara Skaife, who is here today, after the AGM has finished. She has menus available and, if you can pay now, Lesley Winch will be accepting payment by credit card.

Volunteers: We are always looking for more Committee members and Path wardens. Liz will be retiring from the Committee at the conclusion of this meeting after more than 10 years in the role. Peter Koklitis has agreed to join the Committee as a General Member and we will be seeking your approval to his nomination later in the meeting. After the closure of this meeting we will have no Chair or Secretary so aspects of these roles will be shared by remaining Committee members. Please think about joining the Committee. There are only four meetings a year plus an AGM. If we want to maintain an active group, then we need more help to spread the load.

Ramblers' Governance: it is worth mentioning that Ramblers are in the process of a governance review. Initially, there had been some suggestion of changes to structures for Areas and groups but currently the focus was on how Ramblers' organise themselves at Trustee level – process for appointment/election of Trustees - to increase transparency and accountability.

Area AGM: This is to be held on Saturday 29th November at Pangbourne Village Hall. There will be two walks on offer before the meeting – a 5 mile hilly walk starting at 10.00 and a flat 5-mile walk starting at 10.30.

Closing his report, the Chair then invited questions. Richard Falconer asked if any nominees had come forward to stand for election at the Area AGM for the roles of Area Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. . The Chair replied that the answer was no and, in the event that no one did, the Area organisation would effectively fold having no one to run it. At the very least the Area bank account would need to be managed. Groups would need to deal directly with Ramblers' Head Office on matters such as submission of accounts.

There being no further questions, it was proposed that the Chair's report be approved. The resolution was passed unanimously.

4. Group Footpath Secretary's Report

In his capacity as Footpath Secretary, the Chair reported as follows:

"Firstly, I would like to thank all those who have helped me in my task of maintaining our rights-of-way network. Our path wardens walk the entire network twice a year to check for minor faults and submit reports to RBWM. This is the mechanism through which, for example, missing signs and overgrowing vegetation normally get reported.

I deal with major issues where footpaths are unusable for one reason or another. I also consider proposed diversions and whether we should oppose them.

This year I thought I would start with the footpath issues that are likely to affect the largest number of people. The first of these is the situation at Temple Bridge, which is the topic I receive far and away the most questions about from members. I did write about this in the Newsletter a few weeks ago, but I will summarise the situation for the benefit of the meeting. Temple Bridge was closed by the Environment Agency for safety reasons in May 2023. For a long time, they have been extremely tight-lipped about any plans to restore the crossing, with the general message being there was no money to do the work. The first step finally took place very recently when they removed the central section of the bridge. The plan is to inspect this section of the bridge and decide whether it can be repaired. The rumour is (and I must emphasise that it is a rumour, not official Environment Agency information) that, if repair is possible, the cost will be in the region of £700K to provide a 10-year extension to the life of the bridge. If full replacement is required, the cost is likely to be between £2m and £2.5m to provide a bridge with a similar 30-year life to the original. According to the Environment Agency website, they will come up with a clear costed plan of what they intend to do by the end of October 2026. I think it would be fair to conclude that they are not in a hurry. Only at that point will the process of trying to secure the funds to put the plan into place start in earnest. A fair summary of the situation with Temple Bridge would be that things are starting to move, but at a very slow pace.

The other issue that keeps on appearing in my inbox is the situation with the A4 underpass which is part of the Green Way in central Maidenhead. This has been subject to repeated flooding making it impassable. Looking back at my report from the last AGM, I can see that I was unduly optimistic about progress on this. The pump was recommissioned (sometime around November last year, as expected) and did, I think, result in a temporary improvement but, not long afterwards, the pump got blocked. This was eventually fixed but, since then, a further issue has emerged. Even with the pump working, because of problems with the retaining wall, there is still some flooding and the surface remains damp for most of the time. This has resulted in algal growth ("green slime" to you and me) which makes the surface slippery and RBWM's health and safety people have decided that the path must be closed. They have tried power-washing, but this only resulted in a very short-term improvement, and the council are not prepared to commit to doing this frequently enough to keep the path open. They are now looking at possibly installing some form of grippy surface on top of the concrete, but it will have to be cheap because there is no money set aside for this. The problem with the wall can only be fixed by a complete rebuild which would be very expensive and there is no prospect of the council finding the money for this. All in all, it is very sorry tale.

Having gone on at length about the situation with Temple Bridge and the A4 underpass, I'm only going to talk very briefly about footpath diversions. There are a couple of diversions under consideration that are very minor, resulting in 50m or so of extra walking. The only diversion of any substance, which I have talked about before, is the change to the Green Way East resulting from the extension of the gravel workings. I can't say that I'm particularly pleased about this as it does squeeze the green space between Maidenhead and Cookham, but Summerleaze already have planning permission so opposing it would be futile. I did notice, while walking in the area recently, that a double line of saplings has been planted that will in time shield the diverted route from the workings.

It was proposed that the Footpath Secretary's report be approved. The resolution was passed unanimously.

5. Group Honorary Treasurer's Report

The Honorary Treasurer, Richard Falconer, had distributed a copy of the 2024/25 accounts with the AGM Agenda. The accounts for the year are attached to these minutes as an Appendix.

The Treasurer expanded upon entries within the accounts.

"The headline for the year was that cash increased by £1,323, reflecting the success of the coach walks.

The "others" entry covered a leaving lunch for Pera as a thank you for her many years of service to EBR. Those at the lunch had paid for their own food and shared the costs of Pera and Gordon's lunch.

The commission figure of £230 (2024:£120) was commissions received from Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. If you book a holiday, please tell them when you book that you are a member of the Ramblers Association (EBR's reference is BK01).

The meetings' cost was for the AGM, including refreshments and £160 for renting a room for committee meetings.

Socials covered Christmas and New Year lunches.

Coach walks had made a surplus of £830, although the October walk lost some money. This was a pleasing result after losses every year since the Pandemic.

Leader training of (£865 (2024: £342) was a First Aid course run by Green Box First Aid Training Ltd. Windsor Group had paid £95 for a couple of their members to attend.

Questions were invited on the report. Helen London asked why there was a big loss showing for holidays. The Treasurer explained that this was a timing issue as the accounts were compiled on a cash and not an accrual basis. Eleanor Griffiths asked why the payment from the Windsor group for attendance at the First Aid training was not showing in the accounts. The Treasurer explained that this was as a result of "netting off". "

It was proposed that the Treasurer's report be approved. The resolution was passed unanimously.

6. Election/Re-Election of Officers

Peter Koklitis had agreed to join the Committee as a General Member (a member without portfolio so to speak). A Nomination Form for his election as a General Committee member had been received as follows:

General Member	Peter Koklitis
<i>Proposed by:</i>	<i>Seconded by:</i>
<i>Liz Richardson</i>	<i>Graham Sexton</i>

A formal resolution to elect Peter Koklitis a General Member of the Committee from the conclusion of the AGM, was proposed by the Chair. The resolution was passed unanimously.

It was noted that, at the conclusion of the AGM, Liz Richardson would be stepping down as Group Secretary and was therefore not offering herself for re-election. No nomination forms had been received for the role of Chair or Secretary and these positions would remain vacant.

All other Committee members were to retire at the AGM and were offering themselves for re-election in the following roles:

Footpath Secretary	(Graham Sexton)
Group Treasurer	(Richard Falconer)
Membership Secretary and Recruitment contact	(Malcolm Stone)
Countryside Officer	(Ian Ient)
Walks Co-ordinator and Joint Newsletter Editor	(Linda Francis)
Joint Newsletter Editor	(Peter Griffiths)
Webmaster	(Richard Whetton)

The non-Committee position of Walks Reports Co-ordinator had been held during the year by Kaye Carver who was willing to continue in this role. The Chair took the opportunity to thank Mrs Carver for the great job she did on supplying walks reports to the Committee for each of their meetings. He said this demonstrated that it was possible to help with the management of the group other than as a Committee member. If anyone had time to spare to support the Committee then he asked them to please let a Committee member know.

The proposal by the Chair for the other Committee members to be re-elected en-bloc was agreed by the meeting by affirmation.

The Chair proposed the resolution to re-elect the Committee members standing for re-election which was passed unanimously.

7. Group representative on the Area Committee

As the Chair (a role which would remain vacant at the conclusion of the AGM) would normally also be appointed as Area representative, it was proposed that the resolution be "to authorise any Committee member to act as the EBR representative for Berkshire Area Committee meetings". The resolution was passed unanimously. It was noted, however, that there was some doubt over the future of the Area Committee but, if it were to continue, EBR would send a representative to each meeting.

8. Appointment of an Independent Examiner of the Group's Accounts

It was noted that Joy Strzelecki had declined to continue to act as Independent Examiner for the Group for this financial year. Iris Morgan had kindly accepted the role and carried out the review of the accounts as Independent Examiner for the 2024/5 financial year and was prepared to continue for the 2025/6 financial year.

It was proposed that Iris Morgan's appointment as Independent Examiner for East Berkshire Ramblers for the 2024/5 and 2025/6 financial years be confirmed. The resolution was passed unanimously.

9. Any other business

Timing of AGM: Pera Marrs suggested that members present be asked to vote on whether they preferred the afternoon timing for the AGM or not. The majority present voted in favour of an afternoon meeting.

Coach walk attendance: Eve Norton suggested that EBR consider offering seats on the coach to members of Maidenhead U3A to increase attendance, recognising always that EBR members would have priority. Malcolm Stone commented that U3A generally did not do walks of such a long distance as EBR did on each coach walk. The Committee would consider Eve's suggestion.

Autumn footpath survey: Kaye Carver asked about the timing for the survey as path wardens had not yet heard anything. The Chair responded that this was within the remit of Ian Ient, who was unfortunately unable to attend the AGM due to illness. This would be raised with him. Eleanor Griffiths said she understood the deadline for submission had been extended to the New Year.

Christmas lunch: this would be held on 17th December. There would be both a short and a long walk offered before the lunch. Members present were asked to vote on whether they would prefer to be offered a choice of a two or a three-course meal or simply two courses. The members present were overwhelmingly in favour of having only two courses offered. The Chair reminded members that at the end of the AGM Barbara Skaife and Lesley Winch would be available to take bookings and collect payment by credit card, respectively.

New Year lunch: it was noted that so far no one had volunteered to organise a New Year lunch. Barbara Skaife agreed to organise such a lunch in the New Year.

10. Final questions and answers

There were no further questions.

As there was no further business, the Chair closed the formal business of the AGM at 3.30pm.

[illegible]

Presentation

A vote of thanks and the presentation of a gift voucher and flowers to the outgoing Secretary, Liz Richardson, was made by the Chair.

Afternoon tea

Following the meeting members enjoyed afternoon tea with hot/cold drinks and the opportunity to socialise.

EAST BERKSHIRE RAMBLERS GROUP ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED 30/09/25
Figures all in £s

Main				Main			
Receipts	Current yr	Prior yr		Payments		Current yr	Prior yr
From CO (funding)	406	409		To CO		-	
Commissions	230	120		To Area		-	
T/fer from 'Self-funded'	-			To Group (funding)		-	
				Practical work		-	
				Walks leader training		865	342
				News letter/publicity			142
Grants	1,000	1,000		Publication/goods costs			
Publication/goods sales		4		Meetings (inc. AGM)		388	251
Advert sales	50	100		Admin		86	148
Other	-			Other		179	
Total receipts	1,686	1,633		Total payments		1,518	883
Surplus/(deficit)	168	0					

Self funded				Self funded			
Receipts	Current yr	Prior yr		Payments		Current yr	Prior yr
Coach walks	3,130	2,788		Coach walks		2,300	3,370
Holidays	8,690	14,595		Holidays		8,315	17,808
Socials	1,478	1,935		Socials		1,528	1,886
Deposit interest	-	-		T/fer to 'Main'		-	
Other	-			Other		-	
Total receipts	13,298	19,318		Total payments		12,143	23,064
Surplus/(deficit)	1,155						

Summary	Restricted	Main		Self-funded	Total		Prior yr
Total Receipts	-	1,686		13,298	14,984		20,954
Total payments	-	1,518		12,143	13,661		23,947
Surplus/(deficit)	-	168			1,323		(2,993)
Fixed asset movement	-	-			-		
Investment movement	-	-			-		
Stock movement	-	-			-		
Movement in funds	-	168		1,155	1,323		(2,993)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30/09/2025

ASSETS	2025	2024					
Unity Trust	3,932	2,245		Balance brought forward			12,223
Lloyds	9,614	9,978		Movement	Main	168	
					Self funded	1,155	
							1,323
	13,546	12,223					13,546

Prepared by Richard Falconer

Date: 10th November 2025

Independent Examiner's Report

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Group and Area Independent Examination Report guidelines I consider the East Berkshire Ramblers' accounts to 30th September 2025 are properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the group for the year ended 30th September 2025 and the balance sheet at that date.

Signed by Iris Morgan

Date: 14th November 2025