



The Ramblers

HAMPSHIRE AREA

www.hampshireramblers.org.uk

Annual Report to 30 September 2017

Annual General Meeting:

Saturday 10 February 2018 2.00pm to 5:00pm

Kempshott Village Hall, Pack Lane, Basingstoke, Hants RG22 5HN.

AGM hosted by North Hampshire Downs Ramblers

Contents

1. AGM Agenda

2. The Annual Report

The report addresses the Ramblers basic objectives and seeks to show what has been achieved during the year and tasks for the future. It is addressed to the Board of Trustees, Central Office and Members of Hampshire Area. It has been prepared from inputs provided by Area Officers and Groups. The report contains the following sections.

- Chairman's introduction
- The extent of Hampshire Area and Membership
- Area Administration and Organisation
- Treasurer's report
- Audited Income and Expenditure
- Membership
- Footpaths Access and Walking Environment
- National Parks in our Area
- Publicity
- Group Reports

Notes:

This report is not intended for distribution outside the Ramblers' Association, although extracts may be used for publicity.

Copies are distributed to Ramblers Central Office, Hampshire Area Officers and Groups. Copies will be available for individuals at the AGM, or may be obtained post-free from the Area Secretary – email: dnixon27@waitrose.com, tel: 023 9273 2649. A copy will be posted on the Hampshire Area website.

RAMBLERS (HAMPSHIRE AREA) AREA AGM

Saturday 10 February 2018 2:00pm

Kempshott Village Hall, Pack Lane, Basingstoke, Hants RG22 5HN.

Hosted by North Hampshire Downs group.

Guests: Jackie Porter The Watercress Way

Teri Moore Ramblers Trustee

AGENDA

1. Welcome by Chairman
2. Apologies for absence
3. Approval of Minutes of AGM held on 11 February 2017
4. Matters arising
5. Appointment of 2 Tellers (North Hampshire Downs group)
6. Acceptance of Annual Report and Annual Accounts (see page 4 onwards. Accounts on page 6.)
7. Election of Officers of Area Council

Chairman	(David Nichols – willing to continue if elected)
Vice-Chairman	(Alan Marlow – willing to continue if elected)
Secretary	(David Nixon - willing to continue if elected)
Treasurer	(Mike Powell – willing to continue if elected))
Membership Secretary	(David Nichols - willing to continue if elected)
Footpath Officer	(Peter Sollars - standing down. Post vacant)
Access Officer	(Alan Marlow – willing to continue if elected)
Walking Environment	(Phil Wood – standing down. Post vacant)
Publicity Officer	(Owen Plunkett - willing to continue if elected)
Individual members	(Ruth Croker – willing to continue if elected)
Affiliated groups	(Ruth Croker – willing to continue if elected)
8. Appointment of:Webmaster (Mark Austin)
9. Appointment of Independent Examiner (Clive Thompsett)
10. Motions for General Council
11. Election of **3** Delegates to Ramblers GC 2018 (7-8 April University of Bangor)
12. Any other business
13. 2019 Area AGM - to be hosted by Portsmouth group. Date and venue to be decided.

HAMPSHIRE RAMBLERS - AREA ANNUAL REPORT

1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this report are

- to provide groups with encouragement to review each year their contribution to the achievement of the Ramblers constitutional aims
- to enable Area Council to exercise its role as manager of Ramblers activity in Hampshire
- to report to the Ramblers Chief Executive, as required by the Ramblers Constitution.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

David Nichols

A very warm welcome to you all to the Hampshire Area AGM held this year in Basingstoke and hosted by the North Hampshire Downs Group.

I am pleased to welcome Jackie Porter, County Councillor for the Itchen Valley Division, who is going to talk to us about the Watercress Way from Alresford. Also, Teri Moore, one of the Ramblers Trustees. She will bring us up to date on Ramblers developments.

The Ramblers General Council 2017 was hosted by our Area in Southampton and my thanks to the volunteers who enabled it to go ahead smoothly.

The matter of oil drilling in the East of Hampshire and into West Sussex campaign by local residents led to this being put on hold, although concern remains ongoing. Coastal access for the new Coast path is still a work in progress by Natural England which is charged with this task. Various routes have been determined with other contentious ones still being discussed.

Finally might I thank all our volunteers who are involved in the groups, whether it be leading walks, helping in the organisation, or just being involved, and long may you continue to be there for us.

Happy Walking and Best wishes for yet another successful year with campaigning.

THE EXTENT OF HAMPSHIRE AREA AND MEMBERSHIP

Hampshire Area consists of the County of Hampshire and the Unitary Authorities of Portsmouth and Southampton. Area comprises 15 groups and had a total membership of 4181 on 30 September 2017. 9 clubs are affiliated to Hampshire Area.

AREA ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANISATION

Area Council has held four meetings during the year. Area Council comprises the Area Officers and representatives from groups. Each Area Council meeting receives a financial report from the Treasurer, also regular updates on Membership, Footpaths, Access, Walking Environment, Publicity and the Hampshire Rambler. Area Council prepares an annual budget and discusses and agrees the allocation of money from Central Office to the Area groups.

TREASURER'S REPORT

(Mike Powell)

During the financial year to 30 September 2017 Area funds increased by £998.13 to £5,228.42, largely due to the continued non-printing of Hampshire Rambler. Because of the level of funds held by Area and Groups, Central Office did not fund as much as we requested. Basic entitlements to Groups were met but additional requests from Groups came from Area funds. In total, £7,175 was disbursed to Groups from a total expenditure of £8,699.83. It should be noted that Central Office is taking a stronger line on excessive balances held within the Area and next year's funding falls to £5,025.58 from £9,697.96 this year. This is lower even than the basic entitlement.

Expenditure within the Area accounts remains low, mainly because Officers do not claim all the expenses to which they are entitled. A decision needs to be made on the future of Hampshire Rambler because of the need to include such a publication in future year's budget.

I am grateful for the work of all the Group Treasurers in meeting deadlines and the accuracy of their work.

The Area accounts were examined again this year by Clive Thompsett, who is happy to continue in the role.

**The Ramblers Association
Hampshire Area.**

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 30th September 2017

Income	2016 - 2017		2015 - 2016	
	£	£	£	£
Area Allocation from RA Central Office		9697.96		9697.96
Donation		0.00		237.20
Deposit Interest		0.00		3.50
Total Income		9697.96		9938.66
 Expenditure				
Disbursements to Groups		7175.68		5897.96
Hampshire Rambler				
Printing	0.00		1542.00	
Distribution Expenses	0.00		104.66	
Editor/Advert Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	1646.66
Footpaths (Practical Work)				
Secretary's expenses	124.63		54.99	
Footpath Projects	632.70	757.33	0.00	54.99
Countryside Protection/Campaigns		181.00		81.00
Publicity		0.00		35.00
Governance (Admin)				
Chairman's expenses	0.00		22.50	
Secretary, Treasurer, Membership	0.00		0.00	
Secretary & Webmasters' expenses				
Hire of Meeting Rooms	368.00		200.00	
National Conference	0.00		134.00	
Meetings (Including AGM)	217.82	585.82	160.00	516.50
Total Expenditure		8699.83		8232.11
Surplus/Deficit		998.13		1706.55
Balance at bank b/fwd	as at 1st October 2016	4230.29	as at 1st October 2015	2523.74
Current Balance		5228.42		4230.29
Represented by:				
Balance at Bank	as at 30 September 2017	5228.42	as at 30th September 2016	4230.29

Signed:

Date:

Mr Michael Powell, Treasurer

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group independent examination guidelines, I consider the "WX" accounts to give a fair representation of the Area's financial activities for the year to 30th Sept 2016

Signed:

Date:

6/11/17

Mr Clive Thompsett. MBE FCMA
Independent Examiner

MEMBERSHIP

David Nichols

At the year-end, 30 September 2017, the membership total for Hampshire Area was 4181. This represents a loss of members on the year of 87. Costs I am sure are still playing a part in Ramblers but the monthly payment of subscriptions seems to have helped. The "No Group" section is up and down over the year but we must attempt to get the members into groups wherever possible if they are known to us. The 20s30s group have shown a drop in numbers which is a concern, whereas the 40+ group have put on a modest increase in numbers.

The national numbers also appear to be in decline with a drop to 104694 from a figure in April of 105462. We shall no doubt hear more about this at the General Council in April.

My usual thanks are very much due to the membership secretaries throughout the county who have made my job so much easier. To those who have stepped down this year, my especial thanks for all they have done over the years and welcome to the new secretaries who have taken their place, thank you for volunteering.

GROUP MEMBERSHIP - 01 OCTOBER 2017

GROUP	TOTAL
ALTON	211
ANDOVER	166
MEON	347
NEW FOREST	497
N.E. HANTS	224
PORTSMOUTH	245
ROMSEY	203
SOUTHAMPTON	375
S.E. HANTS	427
WINCHESTER	498
WALTHAM	185
EASTLEIGH	189
NORTH HAMPSHIRE DOWNS	257
HAMPSHIRE 20s 30s	111
HAMPSHIRE 40+	167
Others	79
AREA	4181

FOOTPATHS ACCESS and WALKING ENVIRONMENT

Peter Sollars, Alan Marlow, Phil Wood

Review of FPAWE Committee; Constitution, Strategy etc

The FPAWE committee has implemented the constitutional changes agreed at the Area AGM at the start of 2017. As part of this action the committee is producing a set of 'Best Practice Guidelines' which set out the 'Hampshire specific' details of the key activities of FPAWE work. (These are not intended to replace the general guidance already available centrally, but to complement it by setting out local procedures and guidelines).

The planned list of topics is: --Inspecting footpaths; Fingerpost and way-marker post erection; Insurance; Local Planning Applications; Path clearing; Claiming Lost Ways (CROW Act 2026 cut-off); Public Path Orders; BVPI; Stiles to Gates; Bridges; Taking Legal Action; Claiming RoW under the 20 year rule.

The first 6 of these guidelines have been prepared and agreed and have been published on the Hampshire Area website, others are in preparation.

Rights of Way changes

Changes to the RoW network have continued at the recent historically low level during the twelve months to September 2017. Proposals are passed to local group Footpath Secretaries for comment

and/or action and response. An increasing percentage of the proposals that have come forward are made under the Town & Country Planning Act, which is the process that building developers have to use to make changes to the network. Most of the remainder were received through HCC and were mainly for path diversions. Recent staff changes in HCC mean that the rate of diversion proposals may increase again during the next year.

BVPI 178 (or Ease of Use) surveys (on behalf of HCC Countryside Services)

Further twice-yearly parish rights of way surveys have been completed by the majority of Hampshire Ramblers groups. We have been undertaking these surveys on behalf of HCC regularly since 2008 and have now covered over half of the county, accumulating a significant database of information in this time.

For the two sets of surveys undertaken during the period of this report the results from the surveys undertaken in November 2016 show a small decline in satisfaction, with 27% of paths failing (based on reports from 14 parishes). The results from the surveys undertaken in May 2017 show a satisfaction figure of 26%, based on 16 parishes. (For the record, it took 1100 person hours to undertake these surveys and to document the results, on a total of 663 separate rights of way).

Although the satisfaction rate has shown a slight decline this year (from 25% failure in 2016) it is still below the long-term average of 29% recorded over the whole period since 2008 in a total of 215 parishes.

As in previous years, problems with signage account for approximately 50% of the failures, and about half of these are failures of roadside fingerposts, a statistic that has been consistent since 2008. This is disappointing, given the relative ease with which such problems can be fixed. During more recent surveys many surveyors have been authorised to correct waymarking problems. This approach is beginning to be reflected by an improvement in this area.

Failed stiles (16%), and general obstructions (18%) make up the majority of the remaining problems.

Coastal Access – The England Coast Path

In July 2017 Natural England submitted their proposals for the detailed route for the section of coast from Old Portsmouth eastwards around Langstone Harbour to the middle of the Hayling Island South Beach. This is a largely non-contentious section of the path, it mainly follows the existing Solent Way and the Hayling Billy Trail. However, we did raise half a dozen ‘representations’ about some small details of the route, the outcome of these is still awaited.

Two further sections of the path in Hampshire were due to be published during this year (Highcliffe to Calshot, and the section from Hayling South Beach to the county boundary at Emsworth and eastwards to East Head in West Sussex). Both have been delayed, mainly because of complications with wildlife considerations, and are not now expected to be published until the spring of 2018.

Bridges and Major Works

There has been a successful blitz on fixing defective bridges on RoW in Hampshire. 20 or more have been repaired during recent months, including a number that Ramblers have been pressing for. There is a continuing programme of major works being undertaken. Ramblers groups have contributed a number of proposals to this programme.

Volunteer Working parties

This year we have again increased our efforts with volunteer work parties contributing to the maintenance and repair of the RoW network. Over the year to September 2017 Ramblers groups in Hampshire have contributed approximately 4800 hours of work. (The equivalent of nearly 4 full-time workers). This effort is split fairly evenly between vegetation removal, replacing stiles with gates, and includes the BVPI path survey and reporting work noted

South Downs National Park

Owen Plunkett

The **South Downs National Park** reached its 7th birthday at the beginning of April. To mark the occasion the Hampshire Area of the Ramblers organised a special event at the SDNP Centre in Midhurst. Members of the public, Ramblers and other organisations’ members took part.

Margaret Paren, the chair of the SDNP Authority greeted everybody and outlined the achievements so far. She expressed concern over funding for the countryside when Brexit took effect. Kate Ashbrook

from the Ramblers took up this theme when she spoke after people returned from a walk in the National Park. She said, “ We must make sure that post –Brexit agricultural payments are used to improve public access and the landscape so that places like the South Downs National Park will benefit”. She continued, “The public-path network is at risk of neglect and deterioration from lack of funding, as county councils have other priorities even in the National Park”. She went on to say we need to ensure that we get more access land on the South Downs.

Before hearing Kate Ashbrook a 7.5 mile walk, ably led by George & Jasper Stride, had been enjoyed by all. Much of the route was beside the river, Rother, one of the most tranquil and unspoilt rivers in the UK. Highlights seen on the route included the Mill at Stedham and churches

Markwell’s Wood – fracking/drilling.

There has been a very active campaign to prevent drilling in this wood near Finchdean. We were waiting for a decision from the South Downs National Park Authority. 2000 objections had been submitted, but when the authority met they decided they wanted more detail from the applicants. We were given little time to object again, but just before the authority met again, the application was withdrawn. At first we thought this was good news, but we have since learned that the company in question are likely to make a new application. It seems that this was just a tactical move! A new application is expected very soon.

South Downs Network. The Hampshire Area is affiliated to the Network, which liaises with the National Park Authority and keeps a very critical eye on goings on.

I attended the Network AGM in June. We discussed a plan to publish “The Story of the SD Campaign”. Many of us will have an input into that, but we are waiting to find a suitable author or authors.

We all so discussed possible routes for bypasses for the A27 at Chichester, Arundel & Worthing. Many of the suggestions are quite unsuitable and impinge on the National Park. Chichester is a real problem and a suggested route to the north of the city has been ruled out.

THE SDNPA are discussing the local plan. The draft document is very long. If anybody is interested they should go on the SDNP website.

New Forest National Park

Ruth Croker

The chief concern of the New Forest National Park Local Access Forum with relevance to Ramblers is the route of the England Coast Path in the New Forest.

The LAF has received reports on progress at its quarterly meetings and a sub-group, which I chaired, has had regular meetings with the responsible NE Officer. Finalising a route has been difficult. Users, landowners and nature conservationists have conflicting interests. Evidence to support the chosen route is being prepared by NE.

The publication of the route has been delayed on numerous occasions. It is expected early in 2018.

Preparation of planning advice. This has been time consuming.

Opportunities for house building within the National Park are extremely limited. In consequence house building will be mainly in the New Forest District Council area, on the periphery of the National Park..

An increase in population on the periphery will almost certainly mean an increase in people wishing to use the Park for recreation, and will inevitably put pressure on the Park’s fragile landscape.

Of particular current interest is the development of housing on the Fawley Power Station site.

A Recreation Management Strategy is being prepared. The Access Forum is involved through Advisory Group membership. The preparation of the strategy is ongoing and is very difficult. A first stage consultation has taken place.

Further information about the National Park can be found on the National Park website.
newforestnpa.gov.uk

PUBLICITY

Owen Plunkett

Green Fair For a number of years we have run a successful stall at the Green Fair at the Sustainability Centre at East Meon, but last year we applied too late and they were completely full. I

would like to sound out your support for a stall in 2018. I would need help running the stall and input from groups.

SDNP 8th Anniversary. I have again organised an event to celebrate the 8th Anniversary. This will take place from the SDNP Centre at Midhurst on Saturday 31 March at 10.30am. There will be brief speeches before and a 6-7 mile walk led by George & Jasper Stride, members of the S E Hants Group. The centre have again kindly said they will provide tea after the walk.

REPORTS FROM GROUPS

Groups were asked to report on their activities during the year, particularly on recruitment, promotion of walking, footpaths, access and walking environment, and any campaigns they had undertaken.

Alton group

Alton Group remains healthy in spite of dwindling membership. Our walks seem to have generated a good reputation and we enjoy the company of several members from other counties who claim that we are a more friendly Group.

Our finance has been helped by the sale of the 'Walks from Alton' book which brings in about £500 a year. The book will need to be re-printed soon and we are keeping £2000 in reserve to pay for it. A lot of the money has gone towards kissing gates which we install in collaboration with HCC.

This year we have taken a break from first aid and map reading courses which we have run for the last two years and the group holiday failed to get off the ground. Our social calendar was as successful as ever and 4 events during the year were well attended.

As corporate members of the Alton Town Twinning Association 10 of the Group made a visit to Pertuis in Provence where we were hosted by the same 'Randonneurs' who came to Alton last year. We enjoyed 3 days of walking in very warm conditions and 4 evenings of entertainment.

When the Alton Walking Festival took place we led one walk during the week. Next year the festival is due to last for the whole month of May and we are making available our entire walking program for the event.

The Group has again been active with our gazebo and banners at village fêtes and we continue to improve our presentation. The Four Marks Festiwell was especially successful and the event was well attended by all kinds of other healthy organisations. We will make an effort to improve our publicity and to follow up the leads that we come across.

Alton volunteer schedule has been vigorous again this year working on signage, clearance, gates and stiles. This year we have also constructed bridges and a boardwalk. A total of 650 hours was put in thanks to our Footpath Secretary and his teams.

Alton continues in its ancient tradition of taking the register at the start of a walk as per standing instructions for leaders at...

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/about-volunteering/volunteering-faqs.aspx#>

Andover group

Membership of Andover Ramblers was 166 on 30 September 2017, a net loss of 5% from last year's figure of 175.

Investigation by the Andover Ramblers' Committee indicates that the fall in membership is confined to inactive members and does not reflect the overall state of health of the group, which continues to thrive. The number of members who attend walks and social events, plus the number who continue to volunteer for footpath work, continues to increase. We continue to see new members joining the group, but not in sufficient numbers to replace older members who fail to renew their membership once they deem their walking days to be over.

Publicity

Andover Ramblers' Publicity officer has led various initiatives over the course of the year designed to publicise the group, including: publicity drives at the local Library, where leaflets describing our walks were distributed; articles in and letters to the Andover Advertiser, particularly highlighting our footpath work; material on the local "Spotted in Andover" website; and maintenance of a local Facebook page.

Promoting Walking

Volunteers have led walks on every Saturday and Sunday of the year, plus evening walks every Wednesday in the summer. The walk programme is established months in advance and published in the newsletter (delivered quarterly to all members) and online (Walk Finder and Andover Ramblers Website).

Footpath Work

All rights of way in the Andover area have been allocated volunteer wardens, and a total of 438 (80% of the total) were inspected during the year under review, with problems immediately rectified or reported to Hampshire County Council (HCC) as appropriate. 127 waymarks were put up, 13 finger/waymarker posts were erected and 43 rights of way were cleared. This represented a total of 712 volunteer hours.

In addition, a total of 148 volunteer hours were spent conducting BVPI surveys on behalf of HCC.

Walking Environment

Test Valley Borough Council sends all planning applications in the Andover area which may have an effect on the walking environment to the Andover Ramblers Footpath Secretary for comment. All receive a response, even where no comment is necessary. In the year under review, 43 such applications were reviewed, taking a total of 23 volunteer hours.

In addition, an Andover Ramblers member has recorded a total of 876 volunteer hours investigating lost paths and preparing the documentation to have them restored to the definitive map.

General Summary

Group members led holidays to the Lake District and Exmoor during the year under review. These holidays, and also the various social events staged during the year proved to be popular with members and were well attended.

Eastleigh group

The group has a number of enthusiastic walk leaders who continue to supply a varied selection of walks for the members. These have covered all the variety our location provides, from West Sussex to East Dorset, Berkshire in the north and the Isle of Wight in the south. Further afield a group of our members began the Two Moors way in May this spring and completed it in September.

A barge trip along the Basingstoke Canal run by Accessible Boating combined a social event with a walk.

Our 2016 annual Christmas lunch was held at The Dog and Crook, Brambridge with a pre-lunch walk along the Itchen Navigation and a fancy hats competition at the lunch.

Our group hosted the Area AGM in February, this being preceded by a 7 mile circular walk from Bursledon to Hamble along part of The Solent Way.

The group was grateful to Area for granting additional funds to help with costs of postage and printing and to enable us to fund footpath improvements.

As well as regular weekend walks; we have recently introduced the option to join a midweek walk. These are short notice walks, notified by e-mail, for those who prefer shorter walks, usually 5-6 miles and take place on either Tuesday or Thursday mornings. Attendance has been encouraging and it is anticipated that we will continue to do this provided enough leaders come forward.

Finance

We have seen the benefit of encouraging members to receive information via our website as printing and postage costs have reduced from £369 to £153 this year. Footpath improvements were partly funded by HCC who supplied much of the material (gates, mesh etc). It is anticipated that the surplus built up will be spent in the coming year.

Thanks to those members who took Ramblers Holidays this year, by nominating Eastleigh Group, we received £120.

Footpaths

With over 5000 houses having planning permission and construction averaging 670 units a year Eastleigh residents can easily find development sites close by. We have identified 22 rights of way that are currently affected and the last year has seen five diversion orders confirmed although in none of those cases has the order taken effect as the new routes have yet to be provided. We have been actively pursuing two developers who have illegally obstructed rights of way. Hampshire County Council too have been taking a tougher line than usual in those cases and have changed their policy with regard to temporary closures as a result of the developers failure to comply with the conditions they imposed. Regrettably RA Head Office has declined a request from Hampshire Area to prosecute Bellway Homes who have built houses on a bridleway in Bishopstoke.

On the positive side, surveys of Hamble-le-Rice and Hedge End Parishes found problems on only 4 of 37 rights of way, an average of 10.8% compared with 22% Hampshire wide. Stiles on West End 13 and Fair Oak 28 were replaced with gates, another redundant one removed, path vegetation clearance undertaken and a boardwalk rebuilt. Further work is planned using the financial resources held in our accounts.

Membership

There has been a continued decline in our membership numbers from 204 in October 2016 to 190 a year later. We have lost more members than we have gained, however we have attracted 18 new members. The ageing population and the options to find walks on-line without committing to membership fees are clearly the way things are going.

Meon group

Our AGM in November 2016 was well attended with 57 present; we filled the main officer positions. The committee met 3 times during the year.

Our membership has decreased slightly over the year to a net total of 348, -1%. The Group continues to offer 3 walks on almost every Sunday throughout the year (lengths vary between 5 and 16 miles). We offered an increasing number of mid-week walks and have occasional shorter Family walks on Saturdays. We continued our walk down the River Thames using a coach – we will reach Wallingford in October. This project will continue until early 2020!

This year saw the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Meon Group. We have celebrated this by walking several sections of the Allan King Way (Allan was the first chairman of the Group). We held a celebratory Hog Roast in July attended by 80 members and guests including 16 who had been involved with the Group in 1977.

A continuing concern is the small number of members who are willing to lead walks as some older members step down after leading for many years.

Footpaths. Our Footpath Secretary has surveyed 2 parishes, Southwick and Widley and Boarhunt; in both parishes the percentage of fails is unacceptably high at 35%. We have worked with the County Rights of Way team to install four gates, including two on the Allan King Way and one on Portsdown Hill opposite the Nelson Monument. This gate now allows stile-free access along much of this fine ridge above Portsmouth. We have assisted the Rights of Way team to replace two sleeper bridges between Southwick and Purbrook. With financial assistance from both the Winchester and Waltham Groups we have purchased new waymarks for the Allan King Way; the route will be re-waymarked over the next few months.

Environment and countryside. Little new information has been published about the Welborne development plan for the area west of the A32 north of Fareham. Coastal erosion continues to affect paths of the coast path east of Warsash. We have been involved in the consultations about the routing for the England Coast Path and await the detailed plans. The proposed Interconnector between France and Britain (IFA2) that will make landfall at Lee-on-the-Solent and again slightly further west has been approved, with the main building work sited on the north of the Daedalus airfield. No rights of way are affected by the work.

The Group's finances are sound. Finances have been boosted through well attended social activities throughout the year and the very well attended coach walk, by contributions from the Walking

Partnership and a continuing advertisement in our newsletter placed by Ramblers Holidays. Our newsletter printing costs remain very low and most newsletters continue to be hand-delivered.

NE Hants group

2017 has been a very productive year for the Group with a full extensive walks programme, footpath work and social events all of which have been well attended.

Social Events: The year started with our most popular social event the Christmas walk and festive lunch with over 50 members in attendance. Further events followed which included a Skittles Night, the annual Slide Show Evening and Quiz Night. To reduce costs we have introduced a self-help buffet where all members contribute towards a buffet selection that is coordinated by a member of the group.

The Groups 43rd October Weekend was based in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight with 46 members in attendance. This saw a total of six walks on offer covering some excellent coastal walking as well as visiting some most pleasant villages on the island.

Footpath Work: The Footpath section has been very active throughout the year with the introduction of a monthly Shears & Secateurs day which is published in the walks programme and further details provided for the location and work to be carried out. A number of tasks have been completed working with Hampshire County Council and also Parish Council initiatives. This has seen 17 footpaths being cleared of overgrown vegetation, the installation of 9 bridges, replacing 5 stiles with kissing gates, a number of steps and waymark posts being installed. On average there has been around 200 hours of work being put in throughout each period of reporting statistics to Hampshire Area. At our recent footpath meeting our Ranger from Hampshire County Council indicated that they would support a request for funding the purchase of tools to the value of £500 and safety training will be provided to ensure correct procedures are followed when these items are being used.

Membership: As has been seen in most groups we have lost around 11 members throughout this year most due to elderly age of some of our long-standing members. We have introduced an open Facebook page which advertises walks via Walksfinder and social activities as well as distributing posters in places of high people visibility in the hope that this will enhance the awareness of our Group and in turn increase our membership numbers over this next year.

Finance: The Group agreed to accept a reduced level of funding for the 2017/2018 financial year. To try and alleviate the negative impact this may have we have managed to secure £50 of financial support towards the printing and distribution costs for each of our three annual Newsletters and Walks Programme's from Ramblers Walking Holidays. We are also actively encouraging postal recipients of the newsletter to change to e-mail copies which has proved successful. Costs for room hire has increased so careful management of our accounts as the year unfolds will be in place to identify areas of concern.

New Forest group

We have had a full programme of Walks and Social Events throughout the year, and have again this year contributed to New Forest Walking Festival. This will hopefully bring in new members.

We have lost quite a few of our regular Walks Leaders due to ill health and death, and we sometimes struggle to fill the programme. We offer help and guidance to new Leaders if required, and plan to organise another Map and Compass Training Day.

Our Walks Librarian is continuing to collect walks details from former Leaders who are no longer able to lead Walks, so that they are not lost and can help new Leaders in putting on Walks.

The Group arranges Group Holidays. This year's was to Ludlow. Next year's is to Halsway Manor in Somerset.

The Social Events throughout the year have included a Christmas Lunch, New Year's Day event, New Year's Dinner, Coach Trip to Windsor, Summer Afternoon Tea, Boat Trip, and Fish & Chip Quiz Night, together with a number of special walks.

A "Heartstart" First Aid Course presented by Bransgore First Responders was run in March. This was very interesting and useful. We plan to arrange another one next year.

We have started organising Footpath Maintenance work this year. The Group hope to take on more major work and are looking for someone to take on the task of organising this.

We are still waiting for publication of the proposals for the Highcliffe to Calshot section of the England Coast Path. It should have been published by Natural England earlier this year, but we understand that there have been problems with local landowners. We anticipate that we will be disappointed with some of the proposed route and are likely to be making formal "Representation". This will be led by Hampshire Area Committee with input from our Group and support from Ramblers' Central Office.

There has been a slight increase in Membership numbers during the year.

North Hampshire Downs group

It has been an exceptionally enjoyable year with a variety of different events taking place.

The AGM was well supported. Reports are always circulated prior to the meeting so committee members just gave a brief overview of the work they had done during the year. All the members of the committee were re-elected including the Chair; Maurice Ward would prefer to stand down but is remaining in situ until another candidate comes forward. The talk this year was by Stephen Thair on 'Aspects of Papua New Guinea' and was very enjoyable and informative.

The walks have been varied and very enjoyable. By the AGM we had completed 96 walks, covering 693 miles organised by 30 different walk leaders.

Our membership increased by 6 on last year's figures, which is very positive.

Our social activities continue to flourish and are open to all members. Due to the number of social events that are on offer it was decided to share the help and organisation with other members of the group. Several members readily came forward.

The Path Patrol Volunteers group continues to be engaged in monthly activities (2nd Thursday of month) and works alongside Hampshire County Council Countryside Team. This year the group has put in kissing gates, cleared vegetation, built a large sleeper bridge, repaired a bridge and carried out two Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) surveys.

Our finances are healthy. Gate labels have finally been bought.

The Facebook page is popular with members. The newsletter was not so well supported so now there is a 'Members contribution' section on the website instead.

All members noted the date for the Area AGM on 10 February 2018.

Portsmouth group

Members of the public enjoy finding out about the Portsmouth walks by reference to both our website, which is kept fully up to date, and Walksfinder on the National site.

Car sharing is still a problem and a source of concern for trying to accommodate non-car owners and whilst many walkers still go direct we try to encourage people to come to Cosham Railway Station, easily reached by public transport, and car share.

Once again, as in previous years, the shorter walks held on a Saturday morning are the most popular; as many people can usually manage 5 to 10 miles and once a month a definite "five miles and under" walk has been inserted into the programme which has proved popular also. In addition, once a month a "Bus walk" is put on by a leader which attracts those without transport wishing to avail themselves of this type of walk.

The full day walks on Sundays have seen an increase in committed members who wish to walk faster and longer, and the numbers are rising. Many of these members have enjoyed more challenging walks by train over several stages on Saturdays during the summer months. Once again our thanks as always are due to the walk leaders who have experienced problems themselves through injury and we have managed to lead the walks as advertised.

Our London walks have continued at two a year and this year involved the Thames Path from Putney to Richmond in the blistering heat of June. In the Autumn we walked from the London Eye to Regents Park around the "Royal Parks" which was much enjoyed by the 40 or so who joined us.

Once again members of the group have been able to enjoy the Annual Meal in March with a walk beforehand, a skittles evening at Stubbington, and a Christmas Dinner at the Royal Naval and Royal Albert Yacht club in Old Portsmouth which was enjoyed by all.

Romsey group

Promoting walking: The Romsey Group offered 122 walks during the year with a total of 12,947 miles walked compared with 132 and 13,267 ml last year. The figures are again showing a downward trend mainly because we have fewer leaders offering walks. We have during the year attracted some new walkers and the average number of people on walks has increased by 4%. Short Saturday walks are getting more popular.

Membership Recruitment and Publicity: Membership has dropped by 6 (3%) over the year but we have had a number of new people attending walks during the year. The average age of our group is quite high and this may be deterring new younger potential members from joining. We continue to get coverage in the local press. A walk was organized in conjunction with Romsey Library for mental health week.

Footpath work: Group footpath volunteers were active throughout the year spending 93 hours on vegetation clearance, fitting kissing gates and erecting finger posts and 181 hours on BVPI surveys and other surveys. The reorganization within HCC has led to 41 hours of meetings to redefine priorities. Major work in our area by HCC has included a new bridge over the Dunn and a bridge and renewed board walk on the Test Way. HCC have also after many years committed to repairing the Test Way through Squab Wood. Work on reopening the Keble Way continues. A safe crossing of the Straight mile near Romsey was established and discussion with the Forestry Commission to provide a link across Jermyn's Lane is in progress.

Countryside matters: There are no fracking sites or wind farms in our area. Sand and gravel sites are winding down. Several solar farms are now in operation but they are not seriously affecting any footpaths.

The work of replying to Planning Consultations has continued with several significant developments taking place in our area.

SE Hants group

Walks programme.

This year's walk programme included 280 walks led by 50 leaders. Our distribution secretary has reduced the number of programmes being posted to 87 out of 339 deliveries to households. 77 are sent by email and 175 by hand-delivery. This reduces our printing and postage costs by over £500 per year.

Membership and Publicity

Group membership decreased by 22 to 427 – a worrying decline.. In fact over the year we gained 29 members but lost 51 members due to deaths, resignations and non-renewals. Despite the fall in membership the number of people on walks has either stayed about the same or increased significantly – up 23% for long Sunday walks (average is 16), and up 16% for Wednesday B/B+ walks (average 19) and Thursday walks (average 27).

Footpath clearance activities

This year volunteers have spent about 30 hours clearing vegetation from overgrown footpaths. Although this is a much lower figure than last year we have cleared more paths – the brush cutter purchased last year has given a considerable increase in productivity!

Footpath surveys etc

Footpath surveys have been carried out in four parishes this year, two in our 'patch' and two in Central East Hants that are not inspected by other Ramblers groups. The fail rates were: Clanfield 21%; Froxfield 20%; Buriton 19% and Stroud 14%.

Coastal Access

The group has been involved in coastal access work for the section from Farlington Marshes to Emsworth. This includes the east coast of Hayling Island, which has long been difficult for coastal walking in Hampshire.

Map reading course

15 members attended a one-day map-reading course in October which was provided by members of our group – it was very well-received and has generated some new leaders.

Social activities

Social activities during the year have been get-togethers at a local pub, Christmas meals, Mince Pie walks followed by food and drink and a quiz and our annual coach trip, this year to Swanage. The AGM is now a significant social event, with soup and cakes provided for members after Sunday morning walks. About 50 people attended the November 2017 meeting. The formal meeting was followed by a very good presentation on footpath work and the contributions by volunteers by our Community Engagement Ranger Abby Sullivan.

Southampton group

The regular walks programme has again been very well supported by leaders and members - 240 walks in total. New leaders have come forward during the year and more are always needed to keep the programme filled to the current level. In August a coach trip to Arundel & Amberley was very well supported; participants had a choice of 3 walks, a visit to Arundel Castle or a day in at Amberley Museum.

There was an increase in membership during the year, the 33 resigned/lapsed members (55 previous year) being more than offset by 39 new members and 8 transferred in (33 & 6 previous year). The main focus for publicity continues to be the libraries. Monthly A4 "What's on" posters are displayed in most of the Southampton libraries. Recruitment leaflets are also available in the central library and many of the local libraries.

Just over half of the membership receives the Programme & Newsletter electronically. This still leaves a print run of approximately 190 hard copies, most of which are delivered by hand thanks to a good network of volunteers. Advertising revenue from Ramblers Walking Holidays and HF Holidays continues making a contribution towards printing costs.

The Group received £540 – up from last year - from The Walking Partnership, which is supported by Ramblers Walking Holidays and provides direct funding to groups.

A few members have attended the Path Warden training programme run by HCC. Following this a couple of members have undertaken path clearing in the parishes of Netley Marsh and Fawley, and surveyed paths in Ampfield for HCC.

Some walk leaders have attended first aid courses and more are being encouraged to do so.

Waltham Group

Promoting walking. Walks were advertised as usual in the parish magazines of the Waltham area and on the Walksfinder webpages. There were 122 walks with 2183 attendances, a minimal drop from 2016.

Membership. 19 new enquiries led to 16 new members, replacing some of the natural losses, so that the total membership is now 184, slightly down from 191 in 2016. It is noticeable that current members make considerable efforts to welcome new members and to encourage potential members joining a walk as a trial.

Footpath work. Waltham group volunteers have contributed a total of 367 hours of work so far this year. Three more stiles were replaced by kissing-gates. A board-walk was constructed over a wet section of path in Durley by Waltham and Eastleigh volunteers working together – this received a small grant from Hampshire Rights-of-Way Improvement Trust as well as Ramblers funds. BVPI surveys were completed for Exton and Swanmore parishes, and Warnford is essentially complete. Other footpaths are being monitored regularly.

Access matters. All planning applications in the Waltham area were perused. 20 were found to be near to footpaths and were examined in more detail. Most issues were subsequently resolved. Representatives continued to attend meetings about the proposed Botley bypass for which plans are progressing and which will include crossing facilities for walkers. Representatives also attended discussions on the proposed Botley to Bishops Waltham Trail and attended the Hamble River Forum.

Administration. The recent AGM has seen the election of a new Secretary and this will allow the previous incumbent (who also acted as Chair for several years) to concentrate on the role of Chair. We are keen to increase the number of walk leaders which currently stands at 20. One new leader has come forward this year and we are actively seeking more members to take up this role to spread the load. The number of members receiving their programmes and newsletters by email is slowly increasing, reducing some of the time and cost of hand or postal deliveries.

Winchester group

- 29th July marked the 50th Anniversary of Winchester Ramblers and we marked the event with a programme of anniversary walks finishing at the Mayor's official residence at Abbey House and a celebration at the Winchester Rugby Club.
- Winchester Ramblers publishes walks in the Hampshire Chronicle, and during 2017 published 170 walks on the Ramblers GWEM system. We hosted walks for the Festival of Winter Walks and a walk for the City Council's "Feet First" initiative.
- We improved our public profile by working, in conjunction with Winchester Council and Hampshire County Council, to encourage recreational walking, clearing and maintaining local footpaths, and maintaining a Facebook page.
- The Committee met five times during the past year.
- Group membership fell from 511 to 498 during the year. 44 failed to renew their subscriptions but were partly offset by recruitment of 31 new members.
- This year there were 310 walks ranging from 3 to 26 miles in our walks programme - a slight reduction from recent years but still quite an achievement by our walks co-ordinators and leaders.

Footpath and Access

- The main activity on Footpath work in the Winchester Group this year has been our focus on increasing our partnerships with HCC Countryside Service and others to undertake practical work on the path network. This work has focussed not only on maintenance activity such as cutting back vegetation but improvement works of various forms and the group worked for almost 300 hours between January and September.
- To give some examples we have widened and re-aligned a path in Olivers Battery; shovelled mud to create drainage channels in Sparsholt parish; placed anti-slip strips on a bridge in Colden Common; undertaken path surface repairs in Winchester; replaced stiles with gates in Colden Common and cleared vegetation in Hursley, Itchen Valley and Owslebury parishes. The group replaced 3 stiles with gates but have been unable to achieve our targets because of the time and effort it takes to get all the necessary permissions to make these changes.
- We maintained our programme of parish path surveys and path way-marking where appropriate. This year we surveyed footpaths and rights of way in 8 of our 30 parishes plus a number of specific surveys on behalf of HCC to check on outstanding reported path problems. Results indicate that 75% of paths are totally problem free, the most prolific problems still being missing finger posts and poor stiles.

Walking Environment

We have managed to keep a general watching brief on planning applications that may impact on rights of way in the area, but this is still something of a limited activity due to lack of time. We still need to get more thoroughly involved with projects such as the Barton Farm development in order to ensure that the interests of walkers are not forgotten during and after major development works.

Hampshire 20s30s group

2016/17 has been another good year for the group.

- Membership slightly down – currently 120 down 6 on last year, it can fluctuate by 5-10 people each month though.
- Around 70 walks. There was also a pub crawl, an orienteering event and two walk leader training sessions. We also had one joint walk with Southampton University Walking Society
- 2 trips away: Snowdonia and camping in Dorset.
- Regular social events including a Christmas meal, a BBQ, Barn dances, Bowling, Goodwood Revival and several meals.

We have put on 69 walks this year. Turnout on walks has varied but 10-15 is typical, and we have continued to be able to put on walks most weekends. Best turnout on a walk was 24. We have quarterly walks planning meetings, which aim to ensure that there are plenty of walks on the programme but we still suffer from the same problem as many other groups in struggling to recruit new leaders.

The website continues to be the main way by which new members find us, we have revamped our website and will be launching the new version mid-November.

This has been another successful year, with such a wide variety and number of walks being offered to members. The group continues to attract a good numbers of walkers most weeks throughout the year. We would like to get more members involved in the running of the group and hopefully through this encourage more people to be comfortable with organizing walks and socials. To help achieve this, we have added a Publicity Officer role to the committee this year.

Hampshire 40+ group

The Hampshire 40+ Walking Group is one of the two age-related groups in the Hampshire Area of the Ramblers. In the past year the group has been particularly successful in its main focus area of led walks, which has in turn brought in new members (mostly from the expected age group).

Promoting Walking

The group has been able to offer led walks almost every Saturday and Sunday throughout the year with several summer evening walks and bank holiday bonuses. Distances have ranged from 5 to 16 miles in locations all across the county, also visiting Wiltshire, Dorset and West Sussex. Walks attract between 8 and 20, mostly group members with occasional guests from other groups who are always most welcome to join us. Our two most popular walks of the year were attended by 30 people.

We don't produce a printed walks programme, relying on our website (<http://hampshirewalkers.org.uk/announcements>) to keep members informed. The programme tends to evolve on a month-by-month basis avoiding the need for walk leaders to commit to dates too far in the future.

Membership

We have seen a modest growth in membership this year. The feedback we receive is that we are a welcoming and fun group. New members like the ability to join us for two or three walks before signing up, and also the “just turn up” policy.

A lot of our new members find the group first through our Facebook group page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hantswalk40s/>) where photos from our walks are posted. We have several talented photographers!

Volunteers

As with all the Ramblers groups we rely on the time and energy of our many volunteers. We are fortunate to have a core group of walk leaders who keep the programme active, as well as our committee members and other helpers.

After four years of committee service we were sad to see Lorraine Jobin and Simon Gale decide not to stand again due to increased work commitments. Both remain active members of the group.

Socials and Holidays

A highlight of the year was a trip to the Peak District in June, which attracted 26 members for a long weekend with over half staying on for a full week. There were led walks on most days, amounting to more than 45 miles over the week, including Mam Tor and Kinder Scout.

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