Minutes of Isle of Wight Ramblers Combined Area and Main Group Annual Presentation Day and General Meeting

25th January 2025 - Arreton Community Centre

1. Apologies from members: Steve Gibson, Geoff Doolan, Helen Jones ,Sally Kelly, Pamela Ann, Suzanne and Dave Atkin, Sandra Goddard, Carol Crawford, Serena Hayes, Pauline and Alan Hunter

2. Jackie Hough read out a list of members who had passed in 2024 and a minutes silence was held

3. Last years 2024 minutes were approved with all in favour and no matters arising.
   Proposer: David Howarth
   Seconder: Mike Slater

4. David Yates gave the Chair's report, noting that this was his last official act as Chair, as previously advised he will now stand down as Chair but will still be active in his role as Parish Rep. David outlined some of the frustrations he had encountered during his term and his thoughts on the rise of 'alternative' walking groups and decline in Ramblers membership. He ascribed some of this to the cost of the annual subscription which led to an enthusiastic debate with Mike Slater pointing out that unlike other groups such as Facebook groups that only arrange walks the Ramblers in contrast support many activities such as footpath monitoring and maintenance, representations to local and central government. David Howarth noted that legacies, grants and event funding added significantly to Ramblers funds. David Yates suggested that tiered membership might be an option (We do already have reduced membership fees for people on benefits, couples and families). Mike Slater noted that the National Ramblers updated strategy includes initiatives to help deprived communities and minority groups get out walking. People participating in these projects will not need to pay a membership fee.

5. Anne Cable gave the Social Events report. Anne noted that enthusiasm for social events was low with several proposed events cancelled due to lack of interest. Only the summer barbeque and Christmas lunch were held in 2024. An open discussion was held on if we want social events and if so what type of event.

5.1. Anne distributed paper slips to allow members to propose events, these were collected after the meeting.

5.2. As the only available weekend date for a Christmas lunch at the Shanklin Conservative club as too close to Christmas it was decided to hold a 'Winter' lunch, at the Conservative club on a weekend, proposed date was 11th January, to be arranged.

5.3. Anne also proposed a 'pop-up' event which would include a walk, planned for November or December. Arreton Barns was proposed as a venue.

5.4. Anne thanked Carol Henley and Anne Parker for their help with social events.

5.5. Mike Slater noted that 2025 was the Ramblers 90th anniversary and a walk/event to celebrate would be appropriate.

6. David Howarth gave the Area treasurers report. The report has been published in full online as part of the AGM notification. Cash reserves remain good with major outgoings noted as re-printing "12 Favourite Walks", the May ECP campaign and Area and Footpath meetings. Donate a Gate Gift Aid helps to subsidise the cost of the Donate a Gate scheme.

6.1. David also gave the Publicity officer report. A very active year including winning a gold award from the Walking Festival and being proposed as a national 'Tourism Superstar' which included filming a submission, great publicity for Ramblers. David was heavily involved in the ECP 'action day' which included news feeds and a video. David also worked with Ian Dickens, great-great-grandson of Charles Dickens on the Dickens Walk Trail and leaflet to celebrate 175 years since Dickens came to the IOW. Carl Hughes setup QR links in the leaflet with voice clips from the Dickens family.

7. Jackie Hough gave the Group Treasures report, full details are online in the AGM notification. Jackie noted that the balance was down as little income received, once again the group fund from CO was given to the Area. The Annual Report was submitted and signed for by the Auditors.

7.1. Jackie noted that this was her 10th year as Group Treasurer and she intended to stand down next year.

8. Mike Slater gave the Footpath report. The full report is online in the AGM notification. Mike gave a wide-ranging report noting:

8.1. The volunteers monitor footpath accessibility and any landowner actions. Helen Jones has been appointed as Parish Path Reps Coordinator.

8.2. We support the Rights of Way with minor maintenance tasks. Tim Marshall and John Stewart-Murray coordinate volunteers and had a meeting in January with RoW to discuss future cooperation.

8.2.1. Linda Jones noted that Tim had a good website so Tim showed the site and discussed the work flow.

8.3. Mike noted our involvement with the English Coastal Path project. We have made many submissions on the IOW routing, so far our extensive campaign on section 1 has not changed the proposed inland route but we will continue to be involved.

8.3.1. As of November 2024, Routes for Sections 3,4,5,6,8, & 9 have been approved by DEFRA. An IOW Council Project Manager is leading work to confirm funding requirement and implement these route on the ground. However, several modifications are being processed due to recent stretches of coastal erosion.

8.3.2. As at December 2024 Sections 2, 7, and 10 have outstanding landowner objections that are awaiting a Planning Inspector review.

8.4. We have proposed alternatives to the Landslip footpath re-routing and advice on creating a safer and easier route.

8.5. The Fort Victoria development was successfully opposed, the appeal has recently been refused and we are working with locals to create a definitive footpath in the area.

8.6. Mike noted that there were vacancies as Parish Footpath Reps, Lucy Thornycroft volunteered to be the Brighstone rep.

9. David Yates gave Steve Gibson's Walks Programme report. The walks program looks much healthier than this time last year and new Walk Leaders have taken the training and been appointed so more walks expected.

10. Jackie Hough gave the Holiday's report. Two successful holidays were enjoyed in the Lake District and Corfu, Albania and Epirus. This was attended by 23 Ramblers for 8 days with many fine walks.

10.1. Jackie is planning a walking holiday in October in Portugal. It is proving to be expensive despite changing hotels.

10.2. This is the last holiday that Jackie will organise after 30 years as she will step down this year. David Howarth noted that holidays could be booked through the Ramblers Holidays website and the IOW Ramblers would receive some funds from this.

10.3. Jackie was warmly thanked by the meeting for her efforts in arranging holidays and as Group Treasurer over many years.

11. Approving the IOW Ramblers accounts was proposed by Roger and seconded by John Stewart-Murray

12. The following Office Holders and Committee Members were re-appointed (as a block), with all in favour and no matters arising. Proposer: John Stewart-Murray. Seconder: Lucy Thornycroft

Area Treasurer	David Howarth
Group Treasurer	Jackie Hough*
Footpath Secretary	Mike Slater
Walks Programme	Steve Gibson
Social Events	Ann Cable
Social Media	Linda Jones
Holidays	Jackie Hough*
Publicity	David Howarth
Donate a Gate	David Howarth
Membership Secretary*	David Howarth
Web master	Carl Hughes
Planning/RoW	John Hague
Social Events	Anne Parker
Social Events	Carol Henley
Committee Officer	Pam Dana

Jackie Hough will stand down as Group Treasurer and Holidays this year.
John Stewart-Murray will assist David Howarth as Membership Secretary

13. Carl Hughes proposed and David Howarth seconded the following appointments:

13.1 Helen Jones as Parish Footpath Representatives Coordinator.

13.2 John Stewart-Murray as Group Secretary and Footpath Maintenance Coordinator.

14. The positions of Group Chair and Countryside Officer are currently vacant.

14. As the Group Chair is vacant Mike Slater presented the following interim structure following prior discussions:

15.1 The Office Holders will organise and manage their activities, coordinating with other officers and Ramblers Central Office as required. Quarterly Area coordination meetings have been scheduled.

16. Mike Slater proposed and John Stewart-Murray seconded that Pam Dana, Ann Parker and Car-

ol Henley are confirmed as committee members.

17. A request was put out for other members to join the committee.
17.1 Jenny Walker and Amanda Shepherd volunteered to join the committee.

18. Mike Slater requested volunteers to attend the Ramblers AGM.
18.1 Jenny Walker and Amanda Shepherd tentatively volunteered, pending on diary clashes. Mike to follow-up.

19. Any other business.
19.1 No other business was proposed so the meeting was closed at 1200.

20. A very interesting presentation was given by Ian Dickens, great great grandson of Charles Dickens. Ian discussed Charles Dickens long association and love for the IOW, in Charles's words "If I cannot walk far and fast I will explode" and of his home at Higham House "The most beautiful house I have ever seen"
Some of Dicken's characters such as Mr Dick and Miss Haversham were based on local characters. Ian was heavily involved with the Charles Dicken's Trail concept and leaflet and has been instrumental in arranging the May 3rd launch party at the Royal Hotel where he hopes many of the current Dicken's family members will attend.
The meeting warmly thanked Ian Dickens for his presentation.

21. Extraordinary notes
21.1 David Yates apologised to Linda Jones for omitting to mention her valuable work as a committee member, responsible for social media and assisting David Howarth and Steve Gibson in various roles. Subsequent to the meeting Linda decided to resign from her role with immediate effect.
21.2 We thank Linda for her efforts whilst in this role.

22. The members enjoyed a tasty lunch of soups and puddings, provided by Tom and Jean Denoon - many thanks.

23. The date of the next Annual Presentation Day and AGM has been booked for Arreton Village Hall, Sat 24 Jan 2026