

Secretary's Report November 2022 – October 2023 (Gill Lawrence)

The committee for the West Berkshire Ramblers group was elected in November 2022. The Committee members are

Chairman – Eugene Futchter

Secretary – Gillian Lawrence

Treasurer – Jayne Kirk

Environmental Walking Officer – Graham Smith

Events Coordinator – Shona Kelly

Footpath Secretary – Neal Pike

Membership Secretaries – Robin Clugston/John Gardner

Publicity Officer – Richard Trimmer

Walk Coordinators – Sue Trimmer/ Siân Williams

Webmaster – Steve Collins

The committee for has met six times since November 2022, with the majority of members attending on each occasion. All the meetings this year took place in person at the Bowlers Arms.

Topics covered within the meetings have been outlined within the reports produced by each of the Officers. These are available to view on our West Berkshire website.

The Minutes of those meetings are available from secretary@wberksramblers.org.uk

Managing Safety on Group Walks

Since Covid, Ramblers Head Office has been holding Zoom meetings as a way of disseminating information. In July they held a webinar on Managing Safety on Group Walks. Ramblers Head Office have been looking at this area as they intend to overhaul the approach towards risk management. They started the process by conducting a volunteer survey and also employing an external consultant to review Ramblers approach to managing risk. As part of the consultant's review he looked at the way risk is managed by other similar organisations both in the UK and overseas.

Going forward Ramblers are keen to implement a 'core approach' which will encompass -

- Being able to evidence the high standard of the walk leadership

- Ensuring that Ramblers are meeting their duty of care as an organisation
- Making sure risk is managed in a proportionate and appropriate way

Once this new 'core approach' is in place, it was stated that we will no longer need to fill in or keep a written risk assessment for every walk. It was emphasised, however, that walk leaders must take proportionate steps to manage safety, and was recognised that for some walks, the leaders may still choose to complete a risk assessment as part of the proportionate approach.

Ramblers want walk leaders to develop their skills and knowledge to prevent or manage any incidents that do take place. They intend to produce a new Walk Leader handbook of best practice, along with resources, tools and training for walk leaders and have put in place a timeline for this new approach;

- Between June and September 2023, they held a series of workshops and online conversations with walk leaders and other volunteers to get involved and give feedback.
- Between October and December 2023, they'll be finalising the design and holding information sessions on the new guidance.
- From January 2024, they aim to have the new approach in place for all new walk leaders.

It was stated that walk leaders have an elevated duty of care to their group, but as long as the guidance has been followed walk leaders would not be liable. It was also noted that walk leaders should be able to demonstrate that they took proportionate steps to plan and lead a safe walk.

At the present time only new walk leaders will be required to undergo the training and reading of the handbook, but this may change as the Ramblers Board will want to demonstrate that all walk leaders are informed of the Ramblers safety guidelines.

Full information about the meeting, along with the question and answer session, has been published on Assemble.