

Present were: Nigel Whitlam (Chair), Peter James (Secretary), Jonathan Wilby (Treasurer), Gerald Brooker (Walks Co-ordinator), Marita Bulto (Communications Officer), Mark Lankester, Judith Thomas, Barbara Whitlam, Heidi Elliott

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held 25th June 2025

One minor correction, otherwise the minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as being correct.

3. Matters arising from previous Minutes

- The Chair had emailed walk leaders regarding the new training requirements.
- Matters on the agenda to be discussed again:
 - reports on trips away
 - social events
 - 90th anniversary event
 - walk leader training
 - Peter's request for assistance with path work
 - buying walkie talkies

4. Chair's Report

Since our last meeting on 25th June, the 90th anniversary walks and social gathering took place on 29th June, which were very successful and very positive feedback was received from a number of participating groups in the county.

We attended some of the Atobetter events which, although helping to get the name of Ramblers generally and Norwich Group specifically in front of the public, the events were largely poorly attended and were not worth the time and effort put in.

The Dorset trip took place in September which, as I was on the trip, I can confirm was excellent and appeared to be enjoyed by all. From the comments and pictures I have seen on Facebook, the Peak District trip also appeared to be very successful. No doubt Marita will say more about the trips in her report.

The CPR training and walk leaders open day was also very successful and generally well received. I thank everyone who attended, some of whom are at this meeting. I give special thanks to Gerald for taking part in the presentations, Barbara for cooking for the event and our colleagues at Hike Norfolk for their roles.

Both the 90th anniversary and the open day were arranged jointly with Hike Norfolk and the benefits of our collaboration could be seen, including having a larger pool of volunteers to utilise, a greater

reach in promoting the events and halving the costs. The costs for the open day came in under budget thanks to some shrewd purchasing.

The new regulations regarding walk leader training have of course come into effect since the last meeting and we need to review how many leaders on our list have not yet completed the training or certified that they are exempt by virtue of the number of walks they have led.

The difficulties in getting walks into the programme at an early date have continued and it is tedious having to remind leaders month by month. It is positive that a few new leaders have appeared which may have a slight positive effect on this issue.

The AGM does of course take place on 16th November and we will discuss this later in the agenda.

5. Secretary's Report, including Membership

Currently there are 535 members and 5 affiliates. There have been 17 new members.

6. Treasurer's Report

Fund Balance

The bank balance at 28th October is £1,423.14 with £5 held in cash. This compares with the bank balance at 25th June of £1,683.62 with £5 held in cash. Since that time there have been precisely three transactions, the largest of which at £176.18 was for Norwich Ramblers' contribution towards the leaders' training day.

Other transactions are for Wymondham Church Room hire for the AGM and Norwich Ramblers' contribution towards the 90th Year Celebrations.

Future Outlook

The results for 2024/25 highlighted a number of matters:

- very low expenses for the year:
 - no expenditure on footpaths and other maintenance work
 - return of deposit for hall hire for last year's AGM
 - limited number of expense claims (other than reimbursements on trip payments)
- area funding slightly more than in previous year (£639 versus £607)
- RWH travel income much less than in previous year (£190 versus £570)

Footpaths etc, Peter can outline the situation.

Payment for walk recces: my understanding is that no charges were incurred for the recces in Wiltshire and Dorset but there may be charges for recent recces in relation to the recent Peak District trip and the forthcoming Lake District trip.

It was confirmed that there will be no longer be payments made to people reccing walks on trips away.

Peter needs to advise in advance re money required for footpath work.

7. Walks Co-ordinator's Report

Good to see a recent improvement in the number of walks in the programme, so thanks to leaders for that.

Walk Leader Training

Due to all Ramblers groups having to register each person who leads for them, Norwich have several leaders registered who actually belong to other groups ie Dorset and Hike Norfolk. Marita suggests removing non-Norwich leaders from our list, as their walk leader training should fall under their home group. Marita will sort this problem. All walk co-ordinators and Nigel have access to the area on the hub where there is a list of leaders and whether they've done their training. No need to do training if you've led 12 walks in last three years, in which case you need to enter this information. All the leaders who have not completed the training need to be contacted. Marita will find original email from Ramblers and forward to the offenders. Need to ensure all leaders on trips away have completed the training.

In future Marita will provide Nigel and Peter with names of new walk leaders.

8. Trips Away Review – current situation

Nothing to add other than how successful they've been and that they seem to be getting better and better. There were no restrictions on numbers and that worked successfully. There will just be three trips next year as no-one has come forward to help organise the possible Devon trip.

Marita felt there should be some parameters and consistency when walking on trips away and with other groups, ie which side of the road, speed of walking. It should be stated that leaders need to receive the walks beforehand.

Walkie Talkies

Discussed the possibility of buying walkie talkies, mainly to use on trips away to communicate when there is no phone signal. When away on a trip sets could easily be passed between leaders, but it would be more difficult within Norfolk as walk leaders could be a long way apart. Marita has done some research. The good ones need a licence so would not be possible. Prices vary between £80 - £130 each. Set of four available for £137, but sounds too cheap. Their operational range varies according to the terrain so could be limited in the Lakes. People who have experience of using them stressed that cheap ones don't hold a charge, and hills/mountains get in the way of them all, and sometimes you get a phone signal when you cannot communicate with a walkie talkie. Not a good idea to buy just before going away as people would need to practise with them in Norfolk. If they are used in Norfolk it was suggested they should be kept somewhere centrally and when needed for a walk possibly someone going on that walk would be able to pick them up.

Marita needs to know how much she can spend. Agreed a maximum of £300 for 2 or 3 sets. Marita to research further.

9. Communications Officer's Report

All going well.

Currently it is Peter's email on the national website for contacting Norwich Ramblers, and he then forwards the queries to Marita. Peter will look at arranging for the emails to go directly to the Norwich Ramblers general email address so Marita could access them directly.

10. Navigation Training

It does not seem as if the National training schemes are going to include navigation. Gerald is willing to offer training but will only take four people at a time. However, he is willing to do as many sessions as necessary. He is not qualified to train but is obviously very experienced and qualified in navigation. It would be based on the National Navigation Scheme's silver award. It would be at least a full day, and available to walk leaders and those who have shown an interest in becoming one. Frank has been doing this for his group for a while and Gerald is going to discuss it with him.

11. Training and Advertising for future path maintenance volunteers

Marita asked Peter about training requirements for path work. Peter responded that he just needs people and they get their training on the job. Very physical work. Need to advertise for volunteers. They don't need to be members. Peter registers them so they are insured. Peter should have some leaflets which he will find, and Marita asked for some text so she can put something on Meetup. At the moment the work is winding down for winter but will start the campaign after Christmas in preparation for next year.

12. Risks/Health and Safety

As mentioned earlier, guidance is needed for walk leaders to get a consistent approach. When on trips away and being led by people from other groups the walk is still under the auspices of Norwich Ramblers. Nigel recounted an event while on an away trip when people were walking on the wrong side of the road, and there was another occasion when the leader ignored a closed and dangerous footbridge, cutting the cordon and leading the group across. These walks should abide by the national rules and those of Norwich Ramblers.

Locally there have also been incidents, with wasp nests and walking under a fallen tree to find a fallen power cable on the other side. These are unexpected events but the leader should stop others following until they've assessed the situation. Clearly if the leader is not at the front this could be an issue. Guidelines required. A message to be sent to leaders about being aware.

13. Reports on Area

Nothing to report. The next meeting is in two weeks.

14. AGM November 16th 2025

The Chair asked if everyone is happy to re-stand at the AGM and all said yes. Heidi will not be at the AGM. A new Social Events Coordinator is needed, or possibly two. Sarah Hatfield and Heidi have been coming up with ideas and helping Sue but do not want to be responsible. Over the summer with evening walks and people on holiday the events have dropped off a bit. Nigel will put something on Facebook and see if that produces a response.

Access to the hall after 1pm, until 4pm. Have tea and coffee left over from the leader day. A number of committee members offered to make cakes as part of the AGM refreshments. Decided not to hold a raffle as it made no money last year, and the hall does not allow alcohol in any form.

Marita would like it to be less formal, but not really possible. Suggested try and get though official part quickly. Could promote navigation training and help for Peter, but it will be in the reports.

15. Any other business

Jonathan queried whether leaders should be issued with hi vis. When walking on the road the leader and back marker should have hi vis. Peter has a lot which he will bring to the AGM to distribute to leaders.

Mark queried the necessity for first aid kits to be carried by leaders. Discussed but decided it would be impractical. Gerald has full first aid kit. Each member should carry what they may need. Between them the people on the walk would probably be able to produce anything necessary.

16. Date of next meeting

February 11th 2026

Signed

Nigel Whitlam: Chair