

7:30pm on Wednesday, 12th November 2025**Maiden Place Community Centre, Earley RG6 3HE****1. Apologies**

There were **43** members present.

Apologies were received from: Bobbi Ginty, Carol Brombley, Christine Harvey, Jo-Ann Tan Gurney, Stephen Smith.

2. Minutes of the last meeting (13th November 2024, Maiden Place Community Centre, Earley RG6 3HE.)**2.1 The minutes of the last committee meeting were adopted without alteration.**

Proposed by John Ginty, seconded by Mary Unwin and carried by the meeting .

2.2 Matters Arising – There were no matters arising.**3. Reports****3.1 Chair** (Richard Hatton)

Welcome to everyone and thank you for coming out this evening. Before I start you could please mute or switch off your 'phones.

The first thing I need to check is that in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations you are happy to have your name recorded in the minutes. If not please let Graham Croucher know.

Again I would like to thank Shirley and Elaine and their helpers for organising the catering and thank everyone else who contributed.

As you will all be aware I'm not the Chairman of the group. That is a vacancy that we've been unable to fill since Christine Harvey resigned this time last year and we can discuss this further when we come to the Election of the Committee section of the agenda. What has been happening is that Graham Croucher, Mary Bather, Nick Johnson and I have been chairing the meeting on a rotating basis and the finger of the spinometer pointed to me for this AGM. We have reports from our new Treasurer, Carol Brombley, Martin Labram as Walk's Co-ordinator and Steve Vale will cover Footpaths and Countryside. I'll make comment on other aspects of our groups activities but there's bound to be a bit of overlap.

Walks and walking

As a Walking Group we've got 422 members as at 8th November and although number fluctuates at the margin it has remained pretty steady throughout the year. Our main aim is to organise walks for all those members and this year again has been a great year for walking. We have an extensive programme with:

Long walks every Tuesday

An extra-long walk every other Tuesday

Standard walks every Thursday

Standard Lite walks every other Thursday

10 Saturday walks a year
Standard walks every Sunday.
Occasional Sunday Long walks.
Occasional evening walks with meals afterwards during the summer.

If we multiply the 4 months of our Sept – Dec walks by 3 then that would make 225 in a year. That's a good reason to celebrate and to give all our leaders a pat on the back. A real success story and many thanks to Martin Labram who pulls it all together every 4 months.

Mary and Steve representing LVR led walks in the Reading Walks Festival which took place last May and we'll be involved again in 2026.

The Committee

I'd like to thank all my fellow Committee members who have worked hard over the year. Without a replacement for Christine we've had to share out some of the roles of the chair and although Graham, Nick, Mary and myself have been controlling the committee meetings everyone has helped.

Our especial thanks to Martyn Brice who, although resigning as Treasurer because of personal reasons, has both managed a full transfer of the role to Carol Brombley but also to continue to support Carol and to attend our meetings when he can. Welcome and thank you too.

As always Nick Johnson has been organising our social events and ensuring all the emails get sent out for both holidays and updates when needed. We had a Race Night on 22nd November, Christmas lunch on 12th December and a Barn Dance on 23rd May.

Steve Vale as Footpath and Countryside Secretary ensures that we are updated on all the issues in our patch but also liaises closely with WBC to both get our point of view across but to also get as much funding as we can from the borough.

Thanks to Graham Croucher for all the work as Secretary and much more in the general running of the group. Steve Smith has now resigned from the committee but I'd like to thank him for the effort he put in over the last two years.

Finally, thanks to Jo and Graham in ensuring a smooth transition to the Ramblers standard website for displaying and promoting our walks programme.

We are always looking for new committee members! Although we have produced a new leaflet this year for circulation and placing out, currently there is a vacancy for a publicity officer but people can come on to be 'without portfolio'.

Holidays.

In April Paul Lawrence organised a holiday and the group went down to the Queen of the English Riviera for four nights in Torquay. There was some mixed and turbulent weather but enough good to enjoy both the south Devon coastline and the moors nearby.

In June we had a week in the Pyrenees organised by John Ginty and delivered by Hike Pyrenees. We've established a really good relationship with Phil of Hike Pyrenees and between John and Phil they sorted out a range of travel problems caused by Ryanair changing their flight schedules so that we had to go into Barcelona and be bused from there. But once we got to Biescas we had a brilliant set of walks each day, a wide and varied sequence of meals in the village and a rest day enjoying a day of history, architecture and tapas in Jaca.

In early October we had a fantastic weekend in the Isle of Wight organised by Mary Bather. Just managing to avoid Storm Amy we then had 4 rainless days for seeing and walking the western part of the island seeing Needles, Tennyson Down, the statue of Jimi Hendrix and clear views across to the southern mainland.

Organising our trips requires a lot of hard work but also provides a great deal of satisfaction for those involved in making the arrangements and it is all appreciated by the group. (So please volunteer!)

For next year we have holidays in Hope Cove (17th – 20th April) organised by Nick Johnson (fully booked with a small waiting list) and Abingworth (25th – 28th September) organised by Mary Unwin where we have 36 people (which gives us sole occupancy) but there are still one or two vacancies. Also, hot off the press, Carol Brombley will be offering a holiday back at the Elan Valley where we stayed in 2023 for 3 nights 17th – 20th August.

We continue to look for volunteer organisers as we head into 2027.

General.

On 14th November we have our games evening.

On 29th November is the area AGM based from Pangbourne Village Hall and I hope some of us can attend.

Nick Johnson on 11th December has organised the Christmas lunch at the Horse and Groom (fully booked) and the Mince pie and Mulled Wine walk is on Sunday 21st December.

We plan to have a Leaders' dinner at some point in the early part of the New Year.

Finally, for Leaders, before 1st January 2026, we all need to either complete the Leaders' training course or state that we've got grandfather / grandmother entitlements in order that we are all able to lead for the Ramblers.

Happy walking (and leading).

3.2 Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Annual Accounts (Carol Brombley)

Martyn Brice (previous Treasurer), stood in for Carol Brombley, who was away.

He thanked Nick Johnson for immediately stepping in to take on the role temporarily, because of Martyn's sudden need to stand down in January, and to Carol for subsequently taking on the role formally.

Martyn presented the Accounts for 2024/25 (**see Appendix 1**), with printed copies available to all who were there.

He explained that our funds are split between Main (core Ramblers activities and administration) and Self-Funded (social activities fully funded by LVR members).

The Main account balance had increased overall by around £1,000, with most of the expense attributable to practical footpath work.

There had, as always, been a lot of Self-Funded activity this year. Overall, the balance was down by around £4,000; however, it is not possible to directly compare year on year balances because of holidays where the finances are split across multiple years, for instance the 2025 Spain trip.

Our Main account has reserves of £1,800 and our Self-Funded account, after subtracting already committed expenses for forthcoming holidays and events, has reserves of over £3,700.

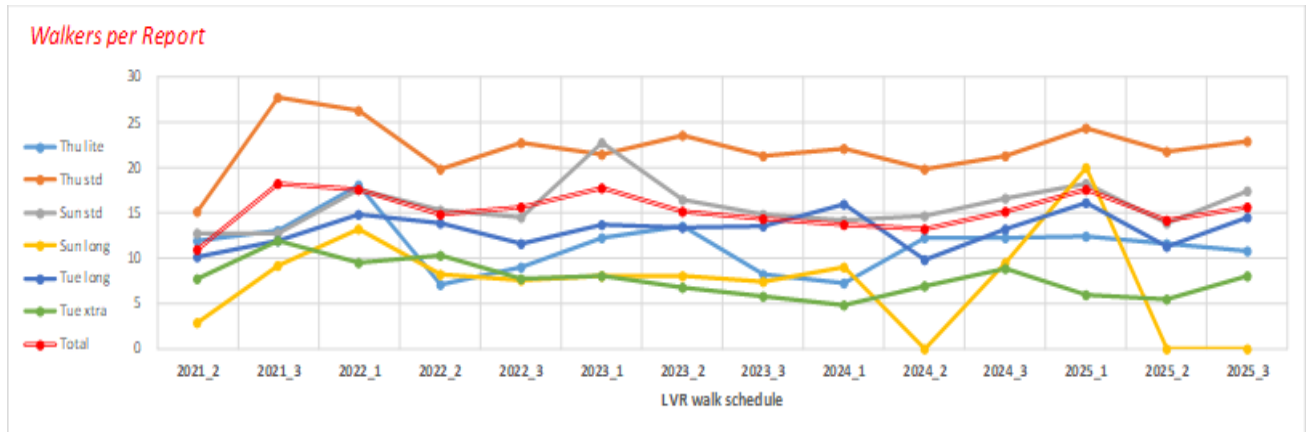
So, in summary, our funds are in good shape.

Martyn asked those present if there were any questions or concerns. None were raised.

3.3 Walks Co-ordinator (Martin Labram)

He talked on three topics.

- **Admin:** He announced that he would be stepping down after preparing the walks schedule for January – April 2026, but would help any successor to prepare the next one.
- **Walks:** Our walks attract an average of 14-18 walkers (more in winter than in summer); the national average is 15. The plot below is based on the 78% of the walks which were reported by our 45 active leaders.



- **IT:** The walks web page is derived from the walks uploaded by Martin. Mary Bather has agreed to be his backup for urgent changes required to the programme (approximately one change per week).

There have been problems with certain characters in walk descriptions, notably £, which have necessitated changes to avoid the description being discarded during the upload. Apart from an acknowledgement to Martin’s report of the fault, there has been no further response.

It appears that the original grid reference supplied by the leader is being changed, e.g SU800809 becomes SU799809, although the position shown on the map is derived from the correct reference.

After Mary Bather thanked Martin for his work over the years, and the meeting agreed, a discussion about the options for the future ensued.

- Splitting the job into two by having a person handling communication with the leaders, and another handling the IT component.
- Splitting into a “series” of walks: a person to deal with the walks on the different days of the week.
- Without volunteer(s) for the rôle no decision was reached.
- We should send an email to all members about the vacancy.

3.4 Footpath and Countryside (Steve Vale)

This has been my 8th year as Footpath Officer. Just to be clear on my brief, it is the maintenance and improvement of the footpath network and access **within the Borough of Wokingham**.

Work on maintaining and improving the footpath network has continued this year, and we

- installed 8 new signposts, and 15 new fingersigns;
- rebuilt a stile on a lightly- used path in Winnersh;

- carried out a major path resurfacing exercise at the eastern end of Sonning Footpath 1, which runs along the south bank of the Thames, from Sonning to Charvil.

My thanks are due to Ray Sharp for project-managing all this, to the volunteers who helped with the work, and to Ramblers' Path Accessibility Fund for funding the materials for the work in Sonning.

I regret that there has been no progress on the **25 stiles which we have identified as high priority for conversion** to gates. I have still been unable to secure landowner permissions. In this context, Ramblers are taking forward our suggestion of seeking a change in the law to allow conversions unless the landowner can show a valid objection. I also met one of the local MPs (Yuan Yang) last December and raised this issue with her – she seemed receptive to our arguments.

Our hopes of achieving a new public footpath at the south western end of **Chestnut Avenue** near the Wokingham/Winnersh border, have still not been fulfilled. Previous objections were withdrawn, and Wokingham Borough Council was on the point of creating the new path, when it received a claim from the British Horse Society that the route should be a bridleway rather than a footpath. The creation of the footpath has now been paused while the bridleway claim is investigated. All very frustrating

Wokingham Borough Council's Greenway plans have not advanced this year. The route from Arborfield Cross, to Cantley Park in Wokingham is still missing links at Bearwood Road and at the Wokingham end, with no firm plans to complete it. The completion of the rest of the original Greenways programme now appears to be dependent on other new developments – e.g. the construction of the solar farm at Barkham and the proposed Loddon Garden Village.

As reported last year, the **British Horse Society has submitted a large number of claims for new bridleways and the upgrading of footpaths to bridleways** across Wokingham Borough. The Borough Council is progressing these slowly, and are consulting us about each claim. I am steadfastly resisting inappropriate upgrades of paths to bridleways, not least because bridleway status allows for use by cyclists as well as horses.

The British Horse Society is also running a separate campaign to look at every footpath in the Borough and identify all those suitable for upgrade to bridleway. I am in dialogue with them, and there are a few paths where an upgrade would be acceptable, but I will seek to resist any inappropriate suggestions and make LVR's objections clear.

Relationships with Wokingham Borough Council have improved this year, and I now have regular 4-monthly meetings with the Council's rights of way team to discuss all relevant issues.

Having said that, I have to draw attention to the **Council's shortcomings**:

- The Council still does not have an up-to-date online definitive map, and progress on finalising one has been very slow.
- There is no user-friendly fault reporting system for rights of way – faults currently have to be reported on the same system which is used for roads, which is unhelpful and confusing.
- There is no proper system for notifying people when faults have been fixed.
- There is still no Rights of Way Manager in post, following failed recruitment exercises.

Plans for the future include:

- Resurfacing of the western end of Sonning Footpath 1 – grant funding for the materials is being sought from local charities in Sonning.
- Resurfacing of paths and installation of sleeper bridges in paths in Wargrave – I hope to seek more grant funding from Ramblers' Path Accessibility Fund.

- The signposting of the green corridor path through Lower Earley, from Shinfield Arms to Loddon Bridge – not a public right of way, but valuable nonetheless. I plan to seek funding from Earley Town Council.

Wokingham Way. We completed a full audit this year, with changes to some start points and updated transport links. The Mayor is proposing to walk it for charity in double sections over the next few months, and we hope to accompany her.

I would like to thank the **team of parish Footpath Wardens** for their support in the last year, and I am pleased to report that we have a full team in place, now including a warden for Woodley. I am always happy to receive any suggestions that could improve walkers' experiences. Please get in touch at any time – you can find my contact details on the website.

4. Election of Committee

John Ginty proposed that the following be re-elected to the committee:

Graham Croucher (secretary)
 Carol Brombley (treasurer)
 Jo Fox (website)
 Steve Vale (footpaths and countryside)
 Richard Hatton (membership secretary)
 Nick Johnson (social secretary)
 Martyn Brice
 Mary Bather

and that the following motion be accepted:

The meeting agrees to delegate to the Committee the filling or covering of other officer roles (including the Chair) in a way that secures the effective management of all elements of Loddon Valley Ramblers' activities in 2025/26, subject to the Committee keeping the membership informed of appointments and other arrangements on a regular basis through the year.

Seconded by John Turner and carried by the meeting.

5. Any Other Business

- Dave Fox reminded us that some members both walk and cycle, and he hoped we would take that into consideration when dealing with upgrades of footpaths to bridleways.
- Linda Ashwell raised the subject of dogs on walks; recently there have been problems with free-running dogs getting in people's way. It was noted that our advice to leaders is that they can refuse to allow all but assistance dogs on walks. The committee will discuss at their next meeting, and update the advice if necessary.
- Graham Croucher advised that all three officers on the Area committee (chair, secretary, treasurer) will be resigning at the Area AGM on 29th November, and there are no volunteers for any of the rôles, presenting it with an existential problem. In response to a query about what that committee actually *does*, it was pointed out that it presents a platform for all the Berkshire groups to interact with Head Office, rather than doing it individually. This is particularly true for budgets.

The meeting was followed by refreshments.

APPENDIX 1



Loddon Valley Ramblers

Annual Accounts for the year

1-Oct-24 to 30-Sep-25

Main Account

Income	2024/25	2023/24	Expenditure	2024/25	2023/24
Area funding	1,500.00	505.06	Walks programmes	0.00	0.00
Other Area income	0.00	0.00	Walks related	0.00	56.87
Donations	0.00	0.00	Walks leader training	45.00	1,197.56
Grants	600.00	897.00	Newsletters/publicity	191.00	233.42
Advertising income	0.00	0.00	Practical work	1,430.68	1,836.52
Loan	0.00	0.00	Meetings inc AGM	170.00	278.44
Other income	80.00	60.00	Admin	6.50	16.00
Other	0.00	0.00	Other	203.68	108.75
Total income	2,180.00	1,462.06	Total expenditure	2,046.86	3,727.56
Net surplus/(deficit) on year	2024/25	133.14			

Self-funded Account Summary

Income	2024/25	2023/24	Expenditure	2024/25	2023/24
Day Walks	0.00	0.00	Day Walks	62.39	0.00
Holidays	77,721.29	56,073.00	Holidays	81,703.64	55,095.96
Social	1,619.50	1,345.00	Social	1,482.08	1,697.55
Other	0.00	0.00	Other	0.00	40.00
Total income	79,340.79	57,418.00	Total expenditure	83,248.11	56,833.51
Net surplus/(deficit) on year	2024/25	(3,907.32)			

Balance sheet

	01-Oct-24	
Current account	10,226.81	
Cash	0.00	
Total funds at 1-Oct-24	10,226.81	
add net surplus/(deficit) on year 2024/25		(3,774.18)
Total		6,452.63

	30-Sep-24	
Current account	6,452.63	6,452.63
Cash	0.00	
Grand total at 30-Sep-25		6,452.63

Main Account Balance	1,803.05
Liabilities	0.00
Main Account Reserve	1,803.05

Self-funded Balance	4,649.58
Liabilities	889.00
Self-funded Reserve	3,760.58

For Notes to the Accounts & details of the Self-funded Account, please see over.

APPENDIX 1

SELF-FUNDED ACCOUNT

Income		2024/25	Expenditure		2024/25
	Torquay 25	9,827.00		Torquay 25	9,754.18
	Spain 25	52,969.29		Spain 25	57,983.46
*	IOW 25	11,700.00		IOW 25	10,591.00
*	Hope Cove 26	3,225.00		Hope Cove 26	3,375.00
	Race Night 24	500.00		Race Night 24	329.04
	Barn Dance 25	1,119.50		Barn Dance 25	1,083.04
*	TV Quiz Night 25	0.00		Quiz Night 25	70.00
	Other SF	0.00		Other SF	62.39
	Holidays	77,721.29		Holidays	81,703.64
	Social	1,619.50		Social	1,544.47
	Total Income	79,340.79		Total Expenditure	83,248.11
					- 3,907.32

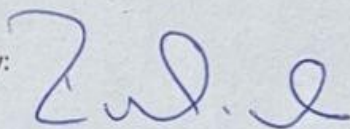
* Event not completed as yet

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

- 1 These accounts have been produced on the basis of actual receipts and payments in FY 2024/25
- 2 'Grants' consists of £600 from Wokingham Borough Council for footpath maintenance
- 3 'Other Income' is commission received from Ramblers Holidays Worldwide
- 4 Spain 25 holiday - £5,400 received in 2023/24
- 5 IOW 25 holiday - £50 deposit (to be refunded as member cancelled) received in 2023/24
- 6 Self-funded Liabilities:

IOW 25 monies for expenses	1,159.00
TV Quiz Night 26	- 70.00
- 7 In addition to these accounts, LVR holds a bond with Holiday Fellowship with a nominal value of £115.08

Examined by:



Date:

15.10.25

*The Ramblers' Association is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales.
Company registration number: 4458492. Registered Charity in England and Wales number: 1093577.
Registered office: 13 Dirty Lane, London SE1 9PA*