



East Cheshire Ramblers' Committee Meeting

11th August 2023


10:00 am

Meeting called by Maggie Swindells

Location 16 Castle Hill Court, Prestbury, Macclesfield, SK10 4UT

10:00 am

Committee	Maggie Swindells	Chair
	Colin Finlayson	Treasurer
	Neil Collie	Footpath Committee Chair
	Melanie Davy	Committee Member
	Gina Thompson	Social Secretary
	Sue Munslow	Membership Secretary
	Jane Gay	Committee Member
	Jennefer Mellor	Social Media
	Nigel Hersee	Secretary

1.	Apologies		
1.1	Keith Anderson	Lost Ways	
 2.	Minutes of Last Meeting - approved		
2.1	No comments received		
3.	Matters arising from last meeting		
3.1	None received or to be commented on under Reports section		
4.	Walk Programme		
4.1	<p>It has been agreed we will ask a FEW VOLUNTEERS to trial using the new Walks Manager as well as posting walks on ECR. We are not asking ALL walk leaders to post their walks on Ramblers Walks Manager system. JM will be the lead Group Online Walks Editor and MS will act as back up. Any walk submitted by a walk leader needs to be approved by the Groups Online Walk Editor. JM and MS will work together to explore how to upload ECR walks 'en masse; this would replicate the position we were in before Walks Manager was introduced. It would provide, as it has in the past, an opportunity for Ramblers from other areas to find information about our walks and join us if they wish to do so. When this system is up and running, WALK Leaders WILL NOT BE REQUIRED to duplicate the work they already do by submitting walks on the ECR website. Fundamentally we will upload in 2 locations. Lorraine Tolley to trial her upcoming 2 walks scheduled for 15th & 19th. Melanie Davy will produce a simplified check list for posting walks on Walks Manager to help the trial.</p>		<p>MS MD JM</p>
5.	Reports from Officers		
5.1	Chair		
5.1.2	<p>Introduction to Managing Safety on Group Walks - still being debated with the view to a consistent approach across the national membership. Any changes are likely in the Autumn including new training opportunities for Walk Leaders and a new Walk Leader Handbook.</p>		Note

5.1.3	Supporting Vulnerable People - further comments refer to RA Guidance. This will be discussed at the Walk Coordinators Meeting in September. Committee has also agreed to pursue this at any future Walk Leader training events.	Note
5.1.4	Walk Leader Training to be reviewed with potentially offering a weekend date next year outside the holiday period due to restrictions of mid-week/holiday attendance.	MS
5.1.5	50 th Anniversary Events. MS recorded her thanks from the Chair to all contributors	
5.2	Treasurers Report	
5.2.1	CF confirmed new Budget set in conjunction with MS and recommendation that we had sufficient funds to proceed as this current year i.e., £1200-00.	Note
5.2.2	Launch date for “Snapshot” survey report postponed, as CF has reviewed 2014 report and will now follow the same format and hopefully target during October.	CF
5.3	Footpath Secretary Report	
5.3.1	Current update - 38% of inspected footpaths have been entered onto the database.	Note
5.3.2	New Footpath Inspector to be inducted into process by NC today.	NC
5.3.3	NC confirmed the plan for his strategic withdrawal from Footpath Committee.	Note
5.3.4	JG to brief NC re a possible relocation of a footpath by Francoms	JG
5.4	Membership Secretary Report	
5.4.1	Refer report	Note
5.5	Social Secretary Report	
5.5.1	Refer report	Note
5.6	Lost Ways Report	



5.6.1	Refer report	Note
5.6.2	The request for volunteers to do research to be raised at 50th Anniversary Volunteers' Tea on 12 August.	MS/NC/KA
6.	Any Other Business	
6.1	Reports to be with me in future 14 day before ECR committee meetings in future. Reminder to be sent and cc to MS and JG. i.e., 22 nd September	
7.	Future Planned Meeting Dates	
7.1	Walk Coordinator meeting 19 th September at JG 2:00 pm	All
7.2	6 th October @ 10:00, to include agreement of the AGM Agenda.	All

Appendix 1 Chair Report

prepared by Maggie Swindells

As always, I'd like to thank all the members of the committee for your support and advice. Our 50th Anniversary Year is certainly proving to be a busy one but its success so far has been down to great team work and careful planning. I'm very grateful to you all for the extra time you've given to ensure the events have been so successful.

ECR WEBPAGE

The changes we agreed for our page on the Ramblers have been actioned.

Members can access the page using the following:

- Visit <https://www.ramblers.org.uk>
- Login using your user name and password
- Click on 'My Groups'
- If you have assigned ECR as your group in your Ramblers Account it should take you to East Cheshire Ramblers
- Click East Cheshire Ramblers and you'll find our information. The link to our Facebook page and our website both works.

WALKS MANAGER

Walks Manager has now gone live and can be accessed via the link on the Ramblers website. This is where all the available Ramblers walks are posted. I have successfully posted a walk! It's not complicated to post an individual walk; it is virtually the same process as the one we use for ECR. However, to upload a group of walks is slightly more complex as it involves creating a 'csv' file, see page 18 of the Walks Manager Guidance. Teresa Marshall no longer wishes to take on the role of uploading walks.

It would seem we have three options:

- We could ask walk leaders to volunteer to post their walks on Walks Manager (we would still need a Walks Coordinator to approve the walk)
- Seek a volunteer who would be willing to become the Walks Coordinator and would be willing to posts all our walks each month.
- Or do nothing. Which I feel is a shame as we have had visitors in the past who have joined our walks.

I have written to Ramblers to see if a link could be created from Walks Manager to the ECR Notice Board, but I have not had a response. The Walks Manager Guidance has been circulated for your information.

INTRODUCTION TO MANAGING SAFETY ON GROUP WALKS PROJECT

Over the coming months, a group of staff and volunteers at the Ramblers will be developing a new approach to managing safety on group walks, which they suggest will be more streamlined, consistent and proportionate than the current one.

Ramblers will be reviewing the support, tools and guidance for walk leaders so the association can ensure it is providing the skills and knowledge they need to confidently lead welcoming, safe and enjoyable group walks. Ramblers will be refreshing the walk leaders training and creating a handbook of best practice.

On Tuesday 4 July, a panel of speakers provided more information about the project in an introductory webinar. Unfortunately, I was away but the main details are outlined below:

Lucy Armitage, Trustee and Walk Leader, led on the importance of the project to ensure the Ramblers was meeting its legal and moral obligations to walkers and walk leaders. Another Trustee and Walk Leader, Mark Chung, set out what has happened so far. Mark described the work of the 'task and finish' group set up in 2022, and the commissioning of Martin Chester to research best practice in the sector, nationally and internationally, which led to three key findings:

- We have an excellent safety record, but things can go wrong, and we need to be able to evidence the high standard of our walk leadership.
- Walking with the Ramblers is different to walking with friends: both the charity and walk leader have a duty of care to our walkers.
- Not all walks are the same and we need to take a proportionate approach.
- Martin was unable to join the webinar but recorded a video delving deeper into his research which you can watch on Assemble.

Rebecca Birrane, Head of Walking Experience and Regional Engagement, outlined the timeline and next steps for the project, clarifying what this project means for walk leaders, leadership volunteers and partners.

A range of topics were discussed from recruitment to liability, training and catering for those who are less IT confident when creating new training and tools. There were lots of questions which we were not able to get through, and which we have now incorporated into an updated FAQ document which is now on Assemble.

If you wish to watch the webinar, the recording and slide deck are available through the Document Hub on Assemble.

One key outcome was the decision, from October 2023, not to require walk leaders to produce a WRITTEN RISK ASSESSMENT. Ramblers want to move to a Consistent Core Approach Risk Management rather than Risk Assessment.

Something which Dave Barraclough feels East Cheshire Ramblers have been doing very successfully for year! He has made a very detailed response to the detail shared in the webinar.

Until October 2023 the current guidance on Risk Assessment remains. Walk Leaders are required to complete a written Risk Assessment.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE WALKERS

I was contacted in May by a walk leader who raised questions about how we could support a strong but 'vulnerable' walker who wish to walk with us. I contacted Head Office and spoke to Claire Watkins who provided some very useful advice. She also shared a draft document which the Ramblers are putting together to help with sensitive conversations.

The following points are outlined in the guidance:

- A group walk needs to be safe, enjoyable, and inclusive for everyone.
- Walks are planned and led by volunteers.
- We need to understand the individual needs of a walker to plan for a good walking experience for all.
- Ramblers will do its best to support the full participation of everyone.
- However, there may be circumstances when walkers with disabilities may not be accommodated due to the type of the walk or a lack of appropriate and reasonable support available.
- Sometimes we have to say a walk is not suitable, but this does not necessarily mean every walk is unsuitable.
- The key is for both sides to consider what can be reasonably expected the walk leaders involved continued to offer sensitive support for the walker and the family and I would like to thank them all for their care, kindness and professionalism. If any of our walk leaders find themselves in a similar position, then please feel free to contact me.

The draft guidance has been circulated with my report.

TRAINING - BASIC MAP READING AND WALK LEADER TRAINING

Our walking programme is totally dependent on volunteer Walk Leaders. To support new Walk Leaders, or anyone thinking of becoming one we have organised another.

BASIC MAP READING AND WALK LEADER TRAINING DAY on 23rd August at Macclesfield Tennis Club. The training is FREE. If you are interested, please contact.

Gina Thompson on gthompemail@gmail.com 07843 914886.

LOGGING ON TO ASSEMBLE

There is no obvious link from the new website to 'Assemble', where all the documents to support volunteers are held. In order to access the Assemble site members now have to follow the following route:

- Visit <https://www.ramblers.org.uk>
- Login using your username and password.



- Scroll down to Volunteer Resources and click the link.
- Click login in to Assemble.
- Username and Password

Members need to register as a volunteer to access this site.

An alternative route <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-resources>

NEW PROW OFFICER

Brian Richardson met with the new PRow Officer for our area in July. Peter Atkinson was a Prow officer in Shropshire for 15 years and lives near Crewe.

Brian discussed a number of issues and projects and gained the impression that he 'seems enthusiastic to cooperate with us and even offered to give us a hand here and there. A useful two hours and he has some idea of my ECR priority jobs.'

50 TH ANNIVERSARY

We have enjoyed some excellent events so far this year thanks to the 50 th Anniversary group who have given a great deal of their time to ensure members have a memorable time. Grateful thanks go to Jane Gay, Frank Gay, Melanie Davy, Gina Thompson, Nick Wild and Steve Hull.

Next Event

An Afternoon Tea for ALL volunteers, past and present. Saturday 12 th August 2023.

For more information, please contact Gina Thompson at gthompemail@gmail.com M 07843 914886



Appendix 2 Treasurers Report prepared by Colin Finlayson August 2023

Bank Balance :

At 1/08/23 our balance stood at £7688.54

Budget 2023/2024 :

ECR Budget was submitted to Area on 22nd July and forwarded RA Centre on 1st August.

(Copies will be made available for viewing at the meeting)

Footpath Committee Equipment :

Following a proposal received from the FP committee it has been agreed to purchase a printer to assist the group with their document control requirements.
Anticipated costs £ 75.00.

Any Other business (Ongoing from 20th Jan meeting) :

Item 7.3 Survey of Walkers

CF proposes to hold this later in the year during the month of September in order that comparisons can be made with previous surveys that were also carried out in September.
CF will liaise with all the walk coordinators in due course.

Appendix 3 Footpath Secretaries Report

Prepared by Neil Collie

Annual Survey of Paths. The annual survey of the 1295 rights-of-way in the ECR area is under way with a full complement of about 40 inspectors. One inspector had asked for some assistance due to injury. The deadline for completion of the survey is 29 September 2023. Currently (5 August 2023) 28% of the path inspections have been entered into the database.

Some unsolicited comments have been received from the head of the Public Rights of Way Unit that they find the database 'excellent for its up-to-date information and usefulness, and impressive in both volunteer input and software'.

Footpaths Committee. The Committee met on 27 April 2023 and on 4 July 2023 where progress on various initiatives were reviewed.

The project to improve the signage of the permissive path on North Rode FP 2 is progressing with Brian Richardson arranging a date for the posts to be installed.

Six rot-proof recycled plastic waymarker posts are to be purchased as a trial to determine the advantages and disadvantages of using recycled plastic (e.g., can they be sawn, will they accept nails and screws).

Roles and responsibilities on the Committee have been re-assessed as I have said I will not be standing as Footpaths Secretary in November 2023.

CEC Public Rights of Way Unit. Two new ROW Maintenance Officers have been recruited by CEC and funds have been secured for an additional post in the year 2023/24. In addition, two new officers have been recruited to the Legal Orders team to fill vacancies. There has also been an increase in the annual maintenance budget for 2023/24.

An application by North Cheshire Riders to upgrade Great Warford FPs 23 and 25 to bridleways was rejected by the CEC Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee in July 2023 due to insufficient evidence.

Lost Ways. The Parish Co-ordinators have now visited all the sites of the 'worth-considering' paths which had been identified by Colin Park from earlier work by the consultants Land Aspects working for the Countryside Agency. These have been considered by the footpaths committee and 7 paths identified as worth researching in depth by any 'Lost Ways' volunteers co-ordinated by Keith Anderson. Note that in addition to these paths a large number of other possible Lost Ways have been identified by RA Central Office which have not yet been assessed as to whether they add significantly to the path network.

Neil Collie

Footpaths Secretary. 5.08.23

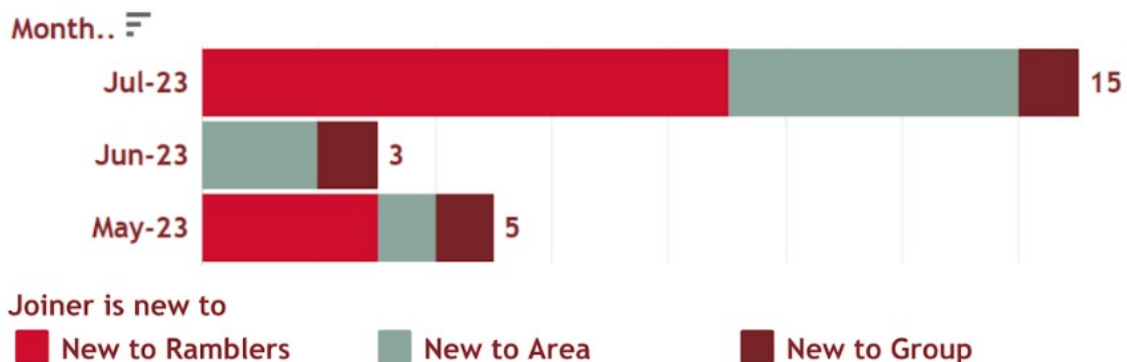
Appendix 4 Membership Report

prepared by Sue Munslow

During July our total membership is now 591. Membership numbers seem to have reached a plateau having been very slowly increasing for a few years. The monthly figures as shown in the graph look very different from each other but don't necessarily show a trend as the individual monthly numbers are very small.

Most of the members who have left the group are shown as lapsed and most of the names I don't recognise. I think they are walkers who have joined us but not walked with us or done so infrequently. Others have moved areas.

Secretary List Summary Counts



Appendix 5 Social Secretary Report

prepared by Gina Thompson

Since our last meeting of 21st April, it has been a bit of a whirlwind with 7 events to report on so will keep it as brief as I can.

18th April Navigation Aids Workshop Organised by Maggie Swindells and Jane Gay Attended by 20 people, feedback is that it went well and was worth all the planning, everyone learned how to use ECR's Collection of Walks including how to upload them on to other apps. Also found out how to use open AR Viewer on OS App which allows the user to see what peaks and places there are in the far distance.

11th May Evening Walks started Organised by Ralph Atherton. I have not had the opportunity to go on any of these walks due to family commitments. However, I am hearing that some weeks the numbers have been very low.

27th-29th May 50km Cumulative Walks and Picnic Organised by Steve Hull/ Nick Wild/ Steve Osborne/ Food Maggie Swindells and Gina Thompson.

A bright idea that turned into a popular and well organised event 4 walks over 3 days walking along the Gritstone trail and cumulating at Mow Cop for a lovely picnic which was enjoyed by all.

2-4th June Weekend Away Llynmawr Nr Chirk Organised by Melanie Davy. This event was helped by the fabulous weather as well as the glorious location. Melanie's-reflection is that you always had to do some road walking on all the walks. As far as the hotel was concerned, (The Mulberry Inn) I would return in a flash. Fantastic place and lovely food. Bit limited for single rooms,

27th June Coach Trip to Cannock Chase Organised by Ann Thompson who also led Long walk medium walk led by Melanie Davy Short Walk led by Maggie Swindells This was a very well attended event (the Coach was full) Ann provided me with the following summary: The real problem with the trip was the coach driver. Did not put sat nav on and had a piece of paper with the route!! Not well prepared at all for the trip. However never had that problem before and is obviously something to bear in mind for future trips. Need to clarify as get on that driver knows exactly where he is going!! I could tell the way he slowly loaded bags etc. at Wilmslow that he was used to old folks' outings not folk wanting to get somewhere quickly. Other than that, the walks were very enjoyable.

2nd July Wizard Walk Alderley Edge Organised by Elaine Taylor Although this was a shorter than average walk (3.5 miles) Elaine was very engaging and informative and all 15 who walked gave very positive feedback of their enjoyment. I have plans to do a similar but longer walk with Elaine for 2024.

15th July 50th Anniversary Walks with Picnic at Lyme Park. Organised by Steve Hull Five stars go to Steve for another very well organised event. With 4 walks all meeting in Lyme Park Boiler house. Thanks to the leaders who were Steve Hull, Melanie Davy, Maggie Swindells and Jane Gay. The cake was fantastic as was the slide show put together by Roger Fielding. We had sun during the lunch stop but I believe most walkers got wet somewhere along the walk. Nevertheless, everyone enjoyed themselves.

EAST CHESHIRE RAMBLERS SOCIAL CALENDAR 2023



Please see below our Social Events for the remainder of the year are shown below. Very many thanks to everyone who has and is contributing to our events, without you this would not be possible. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to help or have an idea for an event.

Gina Thompson gthompemail@gmail.com M 07843 914886

Thursday 24th August 2023	Basic map reading and walk leader. Training Organised by Maggie Swindells/ Jane Gay. Led by Gillian Kaye
Saturday 9th to Sunday 17th September 2023 TBC	Bollington Walking FesSval
Friday 22nd September 2023	Live Music Night songs from the 60's and 70's to sing.-along with Organised by John Galligan
Friday 29th September to Monday 2nd October	Elan Valley near Rhayader Organised by Ann Thompson
Saturday October 7th 2023	50th Anniversary Lunch organised by Gina Thompson and Maggie Swindells
Saturday November 11th 2023	Ceilidh Mottram Village Hall organised by Ann Thompson and Toni Battilana
Saturday 25th November 2023	East Cheshire Ramblers AGM
November 2023	Cheshire East Area AGM
Saturday 2nd or 9th December 2023	Christmas Carol Short Walk organised Jenny Bordoli
December 2023	Mid-Week Christmas Meal organised by Andy Davies
Saturday 9th December 2023	Weekend Christmas Meal organised by Maggie Swindells
December 2023	Long Walkers Christmas Meal organised by TBC

Appendix 6 Lost Ways Report prepared by Keith Anderson

1. Neil had a conversation with a member about becoming involved with Lost Ways Research. I asked him to register and add himself to my team on Assembler, but so far, he has not done so. He did say he would get up to speed, so maybe I will hear from him soon.
2. I have had no response from the other 2 researchers, so I intend to contact them in September and see how they are doing.
3. The footpath committee have now completed the investigation on site of all the 'promising' Lost Ways arising from Colin Park's work and a final version of the table is attached to this report. You will see there are 7 paths which they have scored 4 or 5 in our ranking process.

The footpaths committee feel these would be strong contenders for detailed historical research, should there be anybody available. Neil thinks there may be other paths worthy of consideration (e.g., up to the Nab)

4. Neil and I wonder if it would be suitable to raise the issue for volunteers to do research at the Volunteers' tea part on 12/8

Appendix 7 Social Media Report prepared by Jennie Mellor

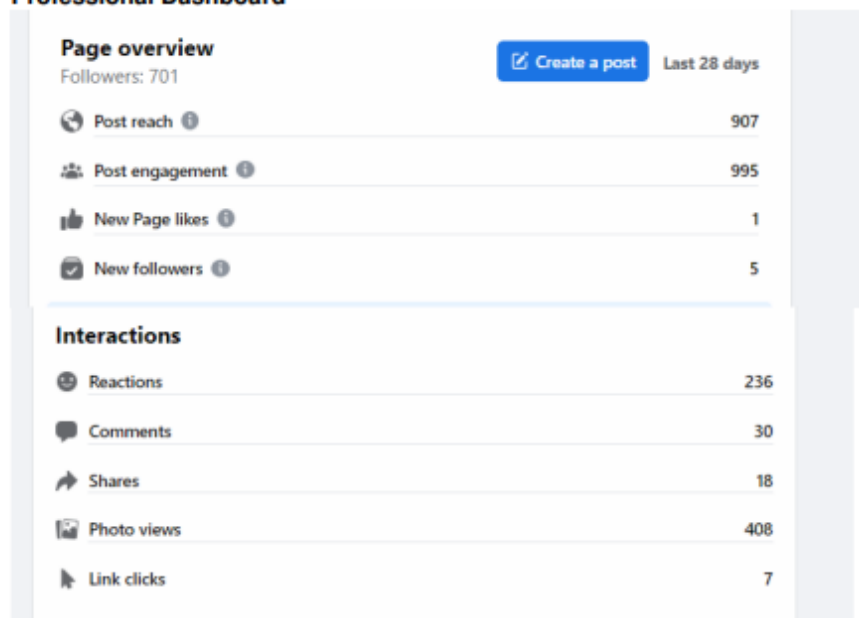
FACEBOOK UPDATE AUGUST 2023 – Jennie Mellor

Thanks again to all the Facebook contributors. We have seen some amazing photos.

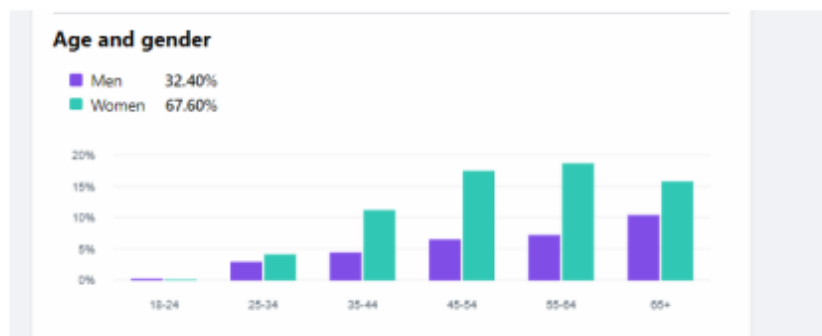
A significant increase in followers, post reach and post engagement this time.

ACTIVITY OVER THE LAST 28 DAYS TO 7th AUGUST 2023

Professional Dashboard



BREAKDOWN OF AUDIENCE BY AGE AND GENDER



Appendix 8 Walkers with Disabilities Conversation

Published by Ramblers Head Office and issued to our Chair

Walkers with disabilities conversation framework for Area Chairs, Group Chairs, Supporter Care Team (SCT), Walk Experience Team and Regional Engagement Team (RET).

Introduction

At Ramblers we want to involve and welcome as many people as possible to join our wonderful walking community and to enjoy the wider benefits that walking can bring.

We understand that from time-to-time there may be someone with a disability (both visible and invisible) who either wants to join or has joined a Ramblers walk.

This short guide will support you in the conversations you may have with disabled walkers.

What might need to be considered during conversations with disabled walkers?

- A group walk needs to be safe, enjoyable, and inclusive for everyone.
- Walks are planned and led by volunteers.
- We need to understand the individual needs of a walker to plan for a good walking experience for all.
- Ramblers will do its best to support full participation of everyone. However, there may be circumstances when walkers with disabilities may not be accommodated due to the type of the walk or a lack of appropriate and reasonable support available. Sometimes we have to say a walk is not suitable, but this does not necessarily mean every walk is unsuitable.
- The key is for both sides to consider what can be reasonably expected.

How should we approach the conversation to find a reasonable solution?

- Assuming the person making the enquiry has told you that they have a disability - explain that you will need to understand what works for them so you will need to ask them some questions. Ask if you have their consent to do this.
- We understand that conversations of this kind can be sensitive and so please do explain that the questions are for a reason and to help you and the person enquiring to consider the suitability of the walk for them.
- Reassure the person that any information they give you will only be shared with those who need to know to ensure their safety.
- Explain that you are not an expert – be honest about your level of knowledge in these matters. You need them to help you.
- Don't make any assumptions – **everyone is different**. Explain that you want to work out a mutually agreed solution and this may also involve the Walk Leader or Walk Coordinator.
- Note what words they use about their disability. If you are unsure how to say something, ask them to help or clarify for you.
- It's also OK to ask if you can call the person making the enquiry back if you need to run anything past a colleague or another volunteer so you can be supported as well.

Having a helpful conversation

- **Be positive but also realistic.** *“Are there any questions they would like to ask about Ramblers walks?”* Explain that every walk is different, and they may encounter the following: steep paths, steps, stiles, tree stump hazards, adverse weather conditions, length/time it takes, uneven or difficult paths, stiles or gates.
- Use **open questions** such as *“tell me what aspects of the walk you might find difficult”*. Prompts might include: coping with steps, walking up steep hills, uneven or slippery ground, how fast the group walk, hearing instructions or joining in conversations, understanding the briefing (too much information at once), climbing over stiles, needing to stop at certain times.
- Again the Walk Leader and Walks Coordinator should be able to help with more detail on each individual walk advertised.

Discuss the next steps and confirm the best way of communicating with the person making the enquiry.

Further support and help available - It's sometimes OK to say no!

Bear in mind a Group will have a bank of Walk Leaders and a varied walk programme so the walker will need to contact each Walk Leader to establish the suitability of each walk.

Disabled walkers when it's appropriate and safe, can bring someone along to support them on the walk.

It's also important to explain that the walking groups may not be able to provide the level of support that the disabled walker may require. Walking groups should feel confident to explain that it's reasonable for them not to offer additional support if they choose not to. However, if walks can accommodate a person with disabilities then this is also great!

There might also be the option of referring the person to local Wellbeing Walks where walks might be more suitable. Again, this needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If additional support is required, the disabled person should be able to identify this from other sources e.g. a social worker or carer.

If you have any further questions or best practice to share, please do contact RET@ramblers.org.uk