

Taunton Deane Ramblers
Annual General Meeting – 27th November 2020
Area Representative's Report

Not unexpectedly, Somerset Area activity has been limited during 2020 owing to Covid-19. I served as Area Secretary for a second year, with Les Stather of Mendip Group continuing as Chairman. I have now taken over as Chair, with David Thompson (Woodspring) as Secretary, while Les has become Footpath Secretary owing to the sad death during the year of Carl Earl.

Ramblers' 2020 General Council was to have been held in Bristol – more or less as close as it is ever likely to get to our own Group – but because of Covid-19, the 'mass gathering' of delegates was cancelled, with formal business being conducted on a 'virtual' basis on Tuesday 15th September. In 2021, General Council has been provisionally arranged to take place on Saturday 17th April at the NEC in Birmingham.

For 2020 General Council, Somerset Area submitted an amendment to a motion from Wiltshire & Swindon, as follows:

“Council further requests the Board to seek a way to ensure that when a right of way is diverted to a field edge for the landowner's benefit that the landowner be legally responsible for maintaining that right of way to remain clear at all times.”

This was remitted to the Board of Trustees who were supportive of the aims of the motion as amended; unfortunately it is likely to require major highway legislation or a Private Members Bill to bring it about. Nonetheless, it is on the Ramblers 'shopping list'!

The 2020 Somerset Area AGM was hosted by Mendip Group at Henton Village Hall, near Wells, on Sunday 16th February. Despite the day starting very wet, 31 members attended from around the County. The Guest speaker was Professor Trevor Letcher, who gave a thought-provoking talk on the subject of 'Sustainability', concluding with the observation that in all of history, no generation has been asked to do something to benefit future generations that doesn't also benefit the current generation – yet that is what the challenge of climate change is requiring us to do. As is usual, the host Group organised a morning walk before the meeting and laid on excellent refreshments!

The 2021 Area AGM is provisionally scheduled to be held on Zoom on 14th February. This means that it will be the turn of South Somerset Group to host the AGM in 2022, with Taunton Deane following in 2023.

Philip Bisatt
Area Representative