

Committee Meeting 3rd February 2026 held at 13.30h on Zoom.

Present: Liz H (Chair), Lynda K (Secretary), Gill L (Treasurer), Joy W, Barbara C, Trevor C, Brenda P (Footpath Officer), Charlotte T.

1. **Apologies:** None

2. **Minutes of Meeting on 22nd October 2025**

These were accepted by the Committee.

3. **Matters arising:**

- TDR AGM in November went well, although the consensus was that we return to a venue in Taunton for the next AGM.
- Christmas meal. The food at the Royal Oak in Hillcommon was excellent and the service was very good. They even included free bottles of prosecco as we made an early booking in October.

4. **Officers' reports:**

- **Treasurer's report:**

Summary	Main	Self funded	Total
Total receipts	312.70	844.00	1156.70
Total payments	119.00	1501.30	1620.30
Surplus/Deficit	193.70	-657.30	-463.60
Account balance	846.19	763.05	1609.24

Gill said that she had received a payment of £45 from B. Shipton which she knew nothing about but none of the Committee recognised the name.

Action: Gill will contact Val Norris to confirm that he/she is a TDR member.

- **Membership secretary report:**

1 November 2025 – 31 January 2026

TDR membership is currently 238 members with 1 affiliated member and 8 pending memberships.

Since 1st November: 8 new members (7 new to Ramblers, 1 rejoined), 7 members have resigned, 7 have lapsed: 3 of these were 'Out there awards' free membership last year.

The number of current members has dropped from 261 in February 2025 but Liz felt that this was part of a national trend.

- **Footpath officer report:**

The weather has been so awful that I have not been out very much to look at path problems. I have copied to you the consultation on the Green Lane proposals FYI.

Les has sent this out to path officers with this comment and I agree with him. I will be responding in a similar way. I would add that in our area the proposal is for Comeytrowe Lane to become an ORPA! As yet I have not looked at which bit of the lane is earmarked, but it seems to me that Comeytrowe Lane is a well-used road serving houses.

'I have no problem with turning some of our little used roads into car free areas. However, I am concerned about their maintenance and protection.

If they become ORPAs -green circles on the os map - then maintenance is the responsibility of Somerset Highways and we could be at the bottom of the pile for any repairs. They are not protected in law to the extent that proved are as OPRAs are not on the definitive map.

I would like to see them designated as Restricted Byways and put on the definitive map. We can then protect them using all the normal rights of way legislation.

*Les Stather
Somerset Ramblers Area Footpath Officer'*

Les has also written a paper on Faults which I have circulated.

At the next LEAF meeting I will ask for the policy of Rights of Way department to be reviewed on ploughing and cropping. A new policy will need to take into account the lack of compliance by some land users, and the lack of enforcement by R of W dept.

A new policy is needed to help staff to use the powers given in the law. These are often not used. If the land users know the Council mean it when they say, please stop blocking Rights of Way, we may move forward on the present situation where 20% of paths have faults. Many of these faults are simply ploughing and cropping. It is a simple cost-effective way of improving the R of W system.

Brenda Feb 2026

Brenda will try and get more information about Comeytrowe Lane. There would be a maintenance issue if OPRAs are not protected.

Gill commented that she had tried to access Comeytrowe Lane recently in her car and was diverted through the new estate to the new roundabout. Brenda thinks it will be a public consultation and TDR should give our view.

Liz suggested that Committee members should go and have a look at Comeytrowe Lane before a response from TDR is made.

Brenda had sent out to Committee members Les' information about how to record faults on the Definitive map which he mentioned in his talk at the AGM. Les has suggested adding it to the TDR website but Trevor thought that it might put some walk leaders off leading walks as it is another thing for them to do. (There is already a link to the SC 'Report a problem with a public right of way' page under the Mapping and Footpaths heading on the TDR website, connecting to the Explore Somerset map which Andy has added.) Liz felt that it would be good to emphasise to members that when they come across a problem with a path they should take a photo and report it using the Explore Somerset map. Brenda agreed with Liz on this. This could be mentioned when an email is sent out to members.

RoW: 80% of paths are open which means that 20% are not. Brenda asked if our group would be willing to try to put together a team to do some path clearing as this was brought up at the AGM and one member was keen. TDR has done this in the past although it is really the role of RoW.

Liz mentioned that Mendip group do a lot of clearing footpaths and have a very active team putting in gates, etc. and suggested that this was something that could be asked at the Area AGM to see how they go about managing it. Brenda replied that we can put our own group together if we wish to do so and liaise with RoW, by discussing what we would like to do and what they would like us to do. Liz asked what other Committee members thought of the idea.

Gill said that when Phil B was Footpath Secretary he had organised this but had to have someone from RoW present at each session as it meant operating on someone else's property.

Brenda replied that someone from the group would have to take the lead and liaise with RoW. Barbara asked what sort of equipment the group would be expected to use. At present TDR has mainly loppers and a handsaw. Gill suggested starting with trimming and cutting back, not heavy work and finding out who the contact for our area would be at RoW.

Liz said that it is the landowners responsibility to keep the footpaths clear.

Action: Brenda to set a date to visit Comeytrowe Lane and will send out an email inviting other Committee members to join her if available. **NB: Consultation closes on 24th February**

Action: Brenda will liaise with RoW to find out who to contact about footpath clearance and maybe have a conversation with Les at the AGM.

5. Winter Walk Programme

There is one Wednesday afternoon walk and one Sunday walk currently listed for this week then no future walks in the programme. Joy suggested that the wet weather had made it difficult to recce walks at the present time. The routes of some recent walks have been changed to avoid the worst of the mud. Trevor said that he has about 5 walk leaders who currently lead most of the walks on Wednesdays which is not sustainable.

Joy felt that a more direct approach is required, going up to people on a walk with a list of dates to be filled and asking 'when can I put you down for a walk?' Trevor said that he has tried that approach previously. Brenda suggested putting out a message that each member lead one walk a year.

Trevor said that he has brought up this issue of getting walks at each Committee meeting and we haven't been able to resolve it. Trevor has offered to buddy new walk leaders if they are unsure but that has not helped. He feels that there are now too many rules and regulations involved in leading a walk. We are volunteers, not paid workers. Gill commented that it was probably due to the insurance company involved.

Liz suggested that the National AGM might be the place to voice Trevor's concerns about members' reluctance to lead walks. Also that maybe the answer is to leave gaps in the programme if no one comes forward with a walk offer. Joy said that we haven't actually missed a week as people have come forward with a walk even with the bad weather. Liz agreed with Trevor that it is tedious to keep having to ask for walks. Trevor led 15 walks last year including those where he acted as a walk buddy. Gill said that it has been a long standing problem asking for walks.

There followed a discussion about how to encourage walk leaders to come forward and lead walks. Suggestions included having a list of dates that need filling to take on walks using a more direct approach to walk leaders, asking if they could fill one of the dates; sending out an email to all TDR walk leaders with a list of available dates; making suggestions of possible walks; putting a message on the TDR Facebook page to say there are gaps in the programme.

Trevor said that he felt he wasn't being listened to when he made suggestions at previous Committee meetings which he had already discussed with Liz and he had already suggested posting a request for walks on Facebook which was overruled by other Committee members. Gill commented that it is a public site and we should be careful when posting on it. It was agreed that Joy will post a soft approach for walks on there.

Barbara suggested that now we have a complete list of qualified walk leaders an email could be sent out to them all from the Committee with a list of available dates, asking for one walk offer from each of them. Brenda agreed and said that we could also offer a walk buddy and possible routes as well. Liz now holds the Walks box.

Action: Joy will post a request for walks on the Facebook page, a soft approach.

Action: Liz will draft an email to be sent out to all TDR walk leaders for both long and short walks.

Action: Trevor will ask for offers of walks from those on the Wednesday walk tomorrow.

6. Update on Current Walk Leaders

Joy said that records of all those walk leaders who attended the two training sessions have now been updated. Others had completed the training online or completed the self assessment form. The list had also been updated by Joy and Lynda to remove some members who no longer wish to lead walks.

From 2nd March 2026 any walks not being led by a registered walk leader will be removed from the published list of walks. It is now only possible to select walk leaders who have completed the training or self assessment when adding walks to the Walks Manager.

Joy had looked at some of the other local Ramblers group websites to see how they try to encourage walk leaders to lead walks. She felt that the Mendip group had more information about their walks and how to become a walk leader. Barbara doesn't want to increase the amount of information put into the actual walk descriptions.

There are lots of walks already listed on our website that Andy has added under the mapping and footpaths heading which could be promoted to walk leaders.

Action: Joy will circulate a list of current registered walk leaders who have completed the training or self assessment form.

Action: Joy will draft something to encourage walk leaders and will circulate it to other Committee members for approval before getting it added to our website.

7. First Aid Training

Liz has been away and only returned this week so has not organised this yet.

St John Ambulance usually hold the sessions at their Headquarters in Canon Street, Taunton.

Liz was not certain if the Air Ambulance are able to provide the training. Wednesday was suggested as the preferred day. Cost of training has not been confirmed but it was thought that one of them was provided free of charge.

Action: Liz will contact the organisations involved and ask for available dates and costs.

8. Elan Valley Group holiday

Liz had talked to some of our members who had stayed at the Lodge on a previous occasion and been told that the accommodation was quite basic which had rather put her off

organising the trip. Lynda and Joy had both been before and felt that the standard of the accommodation was okay and the food had been very good, with food for packed lunches provided each day. Joy said that she felt it would be better to stay for 3 nights rather than 2 to allow for 2 full days of walking. Lynda had a list of 10 members who had already shown an interest in the trip at the AGM.

Action: Liz will contact the Lodge and ask for a list of available dates for a 3 night stay if this is possible.

9. Summer Coach trip

Trevor has been looking at Castle Drogo as the destination for this trip. He has found a walk of approx 5 miles which Paul and Tracey are happy to recce. Paul is registered as a Walk Leader but has not yet completed the training. Tracey is not a walk leader. The longer route of 8 to 9 miles has yet to be decided. The walks can be done without entering the Castle grounds and incurring the charge of £17. It is free for National Trust members, as was the case for the trip to Stourhead.

The date of Wednesday 3rd June was decided upon as the preferred date, with Thursday 4th as backup. The journey will take approx 1 hour 15 mins and the coach will depart from Gateway P&R as that is convenient for Junction 25. Gill discussed the cost per person for the trip and said this should be calculated on the basis of 75% coach occupancy.

Action: Liz will contact Ridlers and book the coach for Wed 3rd June if available.

10. Correspondence

- Liz received an email from David Northey, Transport Advisor to Gideon Amos, regarding footpaths that cross railway lines and to get the Ramblers perspective. This follows the death of a teenager, killed while on a crossing between Taunton station and Bathpool.
Barbara said that there are two crossings in Wellington; one has red and green flashing lights, and one has nothing to tell you when a train is due. She personally does not like leading group walks which cross railway lines.
Liz said that she is reluctant to reply that crossings should be closed to walkers. Ones which have green and red lights would be preferable.

Action: Liz will compose a response to David and circulate it to Committee members for their approval.

- Lynda received an unsolicited email from Dave Templar promoting his new holiday retreat in Murcia, Spain. It was agreed not to promote this to the group without a personal recommendation.

11. A.O.B.

- Somerset Area AGM** on Saturday 21st February 2026 at Holcombe village hall.

Brenda and possibly Trevor will attend. The Chair of the Area is rotated between the Somerset groups. Liz asked if we would be interested in hosting the Area AGM again in 2027 but it is usually held at a venue local to the current Chair and organised by their group.

- Charlotte mentioned that on her recent walk from West Monkton there were 39 walkers. She said that she was concerned about leading such a high number on a

walk. Trevor had walked in the middle of the group and there was also a back marker. It was decided to monitor the situation and report back at the next Committee meeting as more recent walks have had smaller numbers.

Date, time and place of next meeting:

Wednesday 15th April at 11am at Liz's house.

Meeting closed at 15.15h