

Present were: Nigel Whitlam (Chair), Peter James (Secretary), Jonathan Wilby (Treasurer), Marita Bulto (Communications Officer), Mark Lankester, Barbara Whitlam, Heidi Elliott, Susan Bennett

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Gerald Brooker.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held 1st July 2026

It was noted that the minutes had incorrectly identified the trip away in April as to the Cotswolds rather than the Chilterns.

The minutes had been circulated and it was agreed that they were a true record of the meeting, excepting the above.

3. Matters arising from previous Minutes

- Path maintenance volunteers: it was now too late to recruit volunteers as work has stopped for the winter, and Peter does not know what will be happening next year. It is therefore in abeyance.
- Hi viz: Marita has not given out any tabards since the AGM. The people in charge of the walkie talkies could make sure they are given out with them? It was pointed out that some people refuse to wear them. They can be put on a backpack rather than worn. The back marker is the most vulnerable so should encouraged to wear one. It was agreed they should be offered again at the AGM.
- Walks co-ordinator's report: had Mark been instructed by Gerald on the uploading of walks? Not yet, but there have not been many to upload. Peter and Marita explained that if Mark pressed the "publish" button the walk will go on the national site. He is one of only four people who can do that.
- Some navigation training has taken place. Jonathan thinks there are still some who want training, or a second session. Nigel to check with Gerald.

4. Chair's Report

It was noted at the last meeting in July that the number of walks going into the programme had gone from a trickle to a flood. Unfortunately it has gone back to a trickle, with some Sundays without walks and Wednesday walks being incredibly sparse. The hot weather played some part during the summer but this does not apply now. This will be discussed separately later in the meeting.

The Friday evening walks appear to have been an excellent addition to the events calendar.

Although I was unable to participate fully in the Brecon Beacons away trip owing to injury, it appeared to be very well received and congratulations should go to the organisers. The weather could have been slightly better, to enable enjoyment of the wonderful views from the top of the mountains. The away trip to the Lake District took place in June with good attendance figures. The Peak District trip does of course start from 16th October.

We have the walk leaders open day booked for 31st October and the AGM for 15th November.

5. Secretary's Report, including Membership

There are currently 540 members, little change. Mid Norfolk Ramblers have ceased to exist.

6. Treasurer's Report

It was been quiet, with the most demanding issue being a request for information from the bank while he was away.

The bank balance at 7th October stands at £1,170.79 with £5 held in cash. This is similar to the fund balance at the end of the 2025-2026 financial year. This compares with the bank balance on 1st July of £1,970.79 with £5 held in cash. Since that time a single transaction has taken place ie £800 for footpath work paid on 31st July.

Revenues from Ramblers Association a little higher than the last financial year (£699.50 vs £638.78). Revenues from RWH Travel a little lower than in 2024-2025 (£170 vs £190). Total revenues in the current year amounted to £869.50 compared to £956.78 in the previous year.

Major expenses in the year were £800 for footpath repairs, £236.85 for walkie talkies and £176.18 for training. In total expenses amounted to £1,298.03. This compares to £981.28 in the previous year, although most of that was related to reimbursements for walk leaders on trips away.

The next outgoing as far as I am aware is for the training due to take place at the end of this month.

7. Walks Co-ordinator's Report

Gerald not present, apologies given.

8. Trips Away

Walkie talkies, how well did they work in the Lakes?

They worked well and were also useful in Brecon. Some thought they weren't working as they hadn't read the instructions and weren't using them correctly. They will take a bit of getting used to.

Marita asked Mark to speak as he was in charge of Brecon, and is also organising the Peaks and the Chilterns. There are about 50 booked for the Peaks, but Mark is not expecting that many to walk each day. Only about 20 so far for the Chilterns.

It is always a problem planning for the next year. Mark is organising the Chilterns, and Jim and Marita are in charge of the Lakes. There will not be a trip to Derbyshire next October, as Mark is having a break after several years. In September (from 12th) Jim and Peter Bradford will be leading a trip to the High Weald, with Alison doing the admin. Marita has prepared the paperwork and can publish it after the Derbyshire trip.

Suffolk was suggested as a destination, or a return to Lincolnshire, but it is the organisers that are needed rather than locations.

Marita is gradually passing control over to Mark.

Review of Current Situation

Heidi commented on issues in Brecon where fast walkers were pushing at the front on a walk 2, meaning the group was very spread out in poor weather and visibility. They then had to wait in the cold for the others to catch up. Mark commented that some people may not have been properly prepared clothes-wise for mountain conditions. Judith pointed out that one walk 1 was taken very quickly (even commented on by fast walkers) with those having a problem keeping up having no opportunity to rest and recoup. Jonathan described his walk where someone turned back because of the speed but he assumed he had to keep to a certain pace. Need to consider speed of walks more carefully and stress that the number 2 walk is at a gentler/slower pace. Possibly add an indication of the speed on the walk description. Also stress weather conditions given the ascent.

9. State of walks programme and what action to take

What do we do to kick start leaders putting walks in the programme? Need to ask for walks at the beginning of each walk. We have 40 walk leaders but not many who lead on a regular basis. Previously Nigel has posted on WhatsApp to remind leaders that walks are needed. Do we need someone to do that every month? Peter pointed out that this is not a new problem, and not just for our group. Marita suggested asking for people to offer walks on specific dates and will send a WhatsApp poll. Heidi volunteered to put one on for 8th November and will respond to Marita's poll which may encourage others. There was a suggestion people were put off by the training.

10. Communications Officer's Report

Facebook is fine. Still receiving lots of emails via the website, each of which Marita responds to individually. She would like to make more of the WhatsApp groups. Within the Community for Norwich, only Marita can post on "Announcements". Other sub groups are leaders, car share, social, and walk reccies. Marita does not want to put anything on Facebook as it will attract the wrong people. Meetup would also be a problem as it would be seen by non-members. Notes could be distributed on walks to encourage people to join groups.

Meetup is getting expensive and have a spare group (Norwich, Hike Norfolk and Leg Stretchers plus a spare). Area is paying for two accounts but only need one. Peter to check which groups are in each account to see if one could be cancelled.

11. Leader Document

Marita had circulated her proposed document. She suggested it goes to leaders initially for comments, and if they are happy it will be given to all new leaders, and will be on the website and on the WhatsApp group.

The meeting agreed that just because someone has done the training they are not obliged to lead.

12. Leader open day

Open day for walk leaders on 31st October at Horsford from 11am to 3pm. Discussion format rather than presentations. One question raised was sources of walks ie walk library. Gerald is putting together a list of sources of walks.



Nigel reported that seven people had signed up from Norwich. Need to attract new potential leaders but running out of time. Heidi suggested putting on Meetup but it is not thought it would reach the right people. On the walks programme it says to contact Nigel by phone re the Leader Open Day, but people would prefer email. Marita to add email.

13. Reports on Area

Mid Norfolk have folded. Couldn't get people on the committee or to lead walks.

14. AGM 15th November 2026 Great Witchingham Village Hall

Nigel asked if anyone on the committee was planning to stand down at the AGM. No. Does anyone want to stand as Chairman? Nigel would continue for another year, if elected, but considered that four years would then be enough.

Need a walk beforehand. Nigel to speak to Gerald who was going to come up with one. There will be someone there at 10:00 so we can use the toilets.

15. Any other business

Feedback on socials: Portia has organised imaginative events but not had many takers. Pub one this Friday getting some interest. She was originally only going to do it for one year but now is not going away so may be happy to continue.

Data protection: must make sure any information held is password protected. Put on excel spreadsheet and then password protect.

16. Possible dates for next meetings

February 10th 2027 at Boundary Avenue.

The meeting closed at 20:30

Signed

Nigel Whitlam: Chairman