

2026 COUNCIL MEMBER MOTIONS

[1] Members' allocation to Ramblers' Groups and Areas submitted by Wiltshire & Swindon Area

[2] Modification of Walk Leader to Walkers ratios submitted by Oxfordshire Area

[3] Guidance on addressing complaints of unacceptable behaviour and sexual harassment on Group walks submitted by Merseyside and West Cheshire Area

[1] MEMBERS' ALLOCATION TO RAMBLERS' GROUPS AND AREAS

This General Council is concerned that many members are not affiliated to a local Group and may therefore not be fully aware of the walking, volunteering or social activities available to them. General Council therefore calls on the Board Trustees to remove the Area Group (Group 96) membership option from an Area that does not organise activities at Area level if that Area requests it. Existing members currently allocated only to the Area Group in that Area should also be allocated to their local Group.

Submitted by Wiltshire & Swindon Area

Background notes from Area

Wiltshire & Swindon Area currently has over 140 members (~10% of the total membership for the Area) who are not assigned to an active Group, of which there are five covering Wiltshire and Swindon. Nationally around 18% of new members do not join a group at the point of joining Ramblers.

These members are in effect disconnected from local Ramblers activities which are organised by Groups only in this Area. While many walks are published on Ramblers websites, other volunteering and social activities are not. These members are therefore less able to benefit from the full range of membership activities, do not receive Group communications, and are in effect invisible to their local active Group(s) as such Groups are to some extent to them.

The wording of the above motion takes into account that in some locations Areas may organise more activities, and membership at that level may be more appropriate.

Relevant clauses in Ramblers Standing Orders: B7 The board of trustees will also be responsible for: (g) allocating affiliated local organisations and individual members to areas, and individual members to groups or areas; Page 113 Item 10 – 2026 Council member motions

[2] MODIFICATION OF WALK LEADER TO WALKERS RATIOS

This General Council believes that the recommended Walk Leader to Walker ratios specified in the Walk Leaders Handbook are too restrictive and are not representative of the actual ratios used by our Walk Leaders. General Council therefore urges the Board of Trustees to carry out a survey of Groups to determine what ratios are successfully used by our Walk Leaders, and to modify the Walk Leaders Handbook to reflect this.

Submitted by Oxfordshire Area

Background notes from Area

The Walk Leaders Handbook recommends ratios of Walk Leader to Walkers of between 1:10 and 1:4 depending on the grade of walk. We feel that these ratios are too restrictive and do not align with current safe walking as practised by the majority of our walk leaders. It is important that the Handbook reflects actual practice. Some Walk Leaders have concerns that the Ramblers insurance may be invalidated if they are not meeting the ratios in the Handbook and walkers may be concerned that their leader is not meeting the recommendations.

Typically, our leaders appoint a backmarker if the number of walkers gets into double figures up to perhaps 15. The majority of walkers on Ramblers walks regularly walk with the Group, know the local area and the leader is aware of their capabilities and experience. More challenging walks tend to attract more experienced and better-equipped walkers whereas easier walks attract a wider range of abilities. There will be some instances where a lower ratio of Walk Leader to Walkers is required, such as introductory walks for new members, and walking festivals, and this should be mentioned in the handbook. We also have been in touch with another walking organisation, who mention similar ratios.

As the UK's biggest walking organisation Ramblers should be relying on its vastly experienced walk leaders' advice on the Walk Leader to Walkers ratio required to deliver walks safely.

[3] GUIDANCE ON ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON GROUP WALKS

This General Council calls on the Board of Trustees to provide guidance for Areas, Groups and Walk Leaders on addressing complaints of unacceptable behaviour and sexual harassment on group walks, other group events and on social media platforms.

Submitted by Merseyside and West Cheshire Area

Background notes from Area

We want group walks to be inclusive and enjoyable for all. Many walkers join group walks to discover new places to walk and to meet people safely and inappropriate behaviour undermines this. Some join a group seeking romantic relationships, which can lead to behaviour on walks which could constitute sexual harassment. There have been incidents on walks where members have behaved in ways that have made other walkers feel uncomfortable, to the extent that walkers have either made a complaint and/or left a group.

Sexual harassment is a social issue which has permeated walking and can discourage walkers (particularly females) from gaining the wellbeing benefits of group walking. Walk magazine mentions Page 114 Item 10 – 2026 Council member motions that Ramblers have supported walks to encourage women into walking specifically with women only groups. This can help women feel safer and is a positive step in supporting women who are less confident to get involved in walking. However, it does not fully address the challenge of some walkers' behaviour making other walkers feel uncomfortable on walks.

We have consulted the Ramblers' safeguarding procedure and Liverpool Ramblers' complaints procedure. However, the guidance these offer for supporting walkers in these situations is insufficient; this particularly applies to female walkers, although males can be targeted as well. More robust guidance will help Area and Group committees and Walk Leaders alike to deal with such inappropriate behaviour and will thereby help make group walking a better experience for all.