

Covid-19 Coronavirus Ramblers Activities Restart



Ramblers led walks can now restart as they're treated as a sporting event. Government sets a top limit of 30 people which should suit most walks of about a dozen. Check to see if you need to book in advance. Social distancing applies and contact details will need to be kept for 21 days by the leader for NHS track and trace.

A417 Missing Link at the Air Balloon New Consultation 13th October – 12th November



Highways England has updated its plans to try to meet the requirements of a road scheme in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The scheme is supposed to be landscape led. Is the Air Balloon considered a part of the landscape? Can the new A417 take through-traffic underneath the car park and below the Cotswold Way (shown above)? Please turn to page 4 for further details >>>>

Path Maintenance Unsung Heroes



With members walking more out on their own, these photos show what can be done in a quiet moment. Amongst the undergrowth was the missing finger sign.

Ramblers has a new CEO



Tanya Curry is the interim CEO until General Council April 2022

Diary Dates

Gloucestershire Ramblers
Annual General Meetings
Tue 10 Nov - GWG
Tue 17 Nov - Cirencester
Thu 19 Nov - Gloucester
Other Group AGMs TBD

Wed 25 Nov - Area Council
All 7:30pm using Zoom

Sat 16 Jan 2021 10:30am
Gloucestershire Area AGM
Wed 27 Jan 2021 7:30pm
GR Area Council Meeting



Find us on Facebook & Meetup



Walking and Cycling Initiative

Government is making some investment in a walking and cycling strategy with a new document 'Gear Change'. The aim is to increase both walking and cycling.



Naturally Ramblers role is to make sure that any improvements are not to the detriment of walkers. In the past, Shared Use schemes have given some issues:- walkers having to keep an eye open for cyclists coming up from behind and cyclists need to watch out for walkers that are unaware of their presence.

The new strategy funds Segregated Use. New schemes should allow widths of at least 2 metres for walkers and 3 metres for cyclists – cycles should be treated as vehicles separate from people & cars. It'll unlikely affect bridleways or towpaths.

There are already proposals being considered for Stroud and Tewkesbury. Next will be a Cheltenham and Gloucester link. If you'd like to know more or let us know your views, please email walking-cycling@gloucestershireramblers.org.uk

Countryside Matters

Further large scale housing developments are in the pipeline. Ramblers campaigns to keep footpaths on their historic route within a green corridor through developments and to maintain access to the countryside and local amenities for residents. Responses are submitted to the local authority to provide feedback and suggest improvements.

There are also neighbourhood development plans and open space strategies to review. Recently a response was submitted to the City of Gloucester to highlight the importance of maintaining footpaths within the open green spaces.

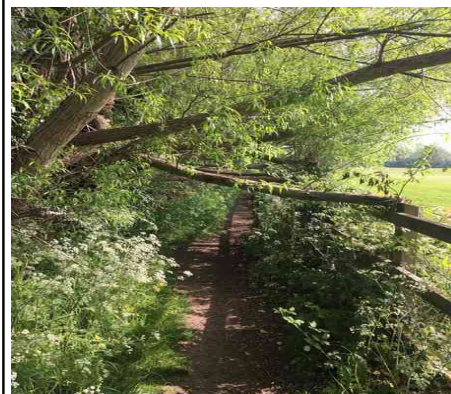


This site near Fiddington is being considered for a large scale solar farm. Ramblers does not object to increasing capacity for solar energy production as long as sites are sensitively placed, footpaths crossing through the development have sufficient width and countryside access is retained.

Colleagues at CPRE the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England have initiated a call for a definitive list of stone stiles. These can mark ancient pathways prior to land enclosure.

If you see a step, slab or slit stone stile on a walk and would like to help in the gathering of photo and location data, more details are available at

www.cpreglos.org.uk



A fallen tree on the Cheltenham Circular Path, reported via Pathwatch, has recently been cleared

Planning Reform

Proposed government reforms to speed up the planning process, "Planning for the Future", could weaken environmental protection measures and place wildlife, heritage and green open spaces at risk. Ramblers is preparing to submit to the consultation which closes 29th October.

The government proposal is to establish a method that fast-tracks approval for large numbers of new homes across the country. There are currently many proposed and new housing developments that are expanding towns in Gloucestershire. For our Area submission it would be good to hear from you.

Have there been new developments within your neighbourhood recently? If so, were they sympathetic with the local environment? Did they promote well-being, with good walking access to amenities and countryside? Was the local community involved with the design and planning? Did they connect well with existing development?

What is your priority for sustainability? Is it open green space, energy efficient and healthy buildings, more walking and cycling routes, protection of heritage and footpaths or something else?

Please contact Countryside@gloucestershirerambles.org.uk with your comments

Discovering a possible Lost Way

The snippet right, taken from Pathwatch, uses OS maps.

The bridleway shown has quite an angular turn. Is there any indication that it may have continued straight on in the past? Further north a dotted track appears to end for no reason. Does that continue to another bridleway or a road? A site visit could show field gates in line with the route. Old maps can be checked too but bear in mind that a map may not indicate everything. If it exists on the ground but doesn't appear on the map, the chances are more likely than not that it exists.

Pathwatch can be used to report a possible Lost Way from a smart phone. Click through the menus to 'Other' and describe the route. It's useful to add some photos too, and take a screen shot to remember what you've sent.



Some Group and Area News

Gloucestershire Ramblers Area includes eight Ramblers Groups and a number of Affiliated Organisations. Over 60 Ramblers' Areas join together to form the Ramblers Association.

2020 Area AGM (Jan 2021) - Motion on Area Officer Term Limits

The issue of length of time in post of Area Officers has been discussed throughout the year. Eventually a change to the Constitution was proposed so that the current array of maximum term lengths is rationalised to 3 years for the Chair and 4 years for everyone else.

The Motion is only for Area Officers but it's recognised that some Groups already limit terms to give some rotation in posts. The aim is to help make the roles attractive to prospective post holders and also to bring in fresh faces. It was realised this may initially give some difficulty in changing over roles but it's felt the benefits could outweigh the downsides. Members might be encouraged to try a post for a year or so if they know that there is a useful time limit. Despite or perhaps because of the virus issues, meetings have been better attended recently, with some members attending as visitors. As an inclusive democracy to benefit the wider walking public, we're grateful to all our members, volunteers and officers for whatever time and effort can be given.

Cirencester Group

On Saturday 22 August Path Maintenance Volunteers travelled to Poole Keynes to begin their first clearing task since the Covid lockdown.

The village had approached our Footpath Secretary Richard to ask for our help in what I think was our most difficult task to date. The footpath was actually a road, not a footpath, but I don't think anyone would attempt to drive down it. It was completely blocked and it took a lot of tree lopping and cutting back the undergrowth until a path eventually emerged.

We split into 2 socially distanced groups to begin at both ends and after breaks for coffee and lunch the task was completed. We were thanked by passing villagers who appreciated our efforts. The weather was kind to us and an enjoyable time was had by all.
Pat Beckley



Gloucester Group

Our Group AGM will use Zoom on 19 November.

There have been no led walks since March due to virus measures but Nigel Bone continued to issue the popular Exercise Updates about local members going on individual walks. It ran from April to July - a total of 16 editions. Gloucester Group has issued a programme of official weekend and midweek walks for October with a max of 15 people. Our first walk will be Wednesday October 7th and attendees must book in advance. A request has now gone out for proposed walks during November and December including the popular "Christmas Hats, Jumpers and Masks" walk, which will be on Thursday December 17th. For further photos see our website.

John Bent-Marshall

Cleeve Group

Thanks to our volunteer walk leaders a socially distanced walk is now taking place every two weeks. Please check the website for booking arrangements or whether it's 'first come first served'. Below at Dowdeswell.

Brian Payne



A417 Gloucester Beeches Layby – Bridleway

In the last 10 years have you used this wooden side gate to reach the bridleway from the layby? The gate is now a fence and barbed wire. Our colleagues in the British Horse Society are seeking user evidence for it to be re-opened. Email grnews@gloucestershireramblers.org.uk



Sign: Public Bridleway No Motor Vehicles

A417 Missing Link Air Balloon – Public Consultation 13th October - 12th November

Have your say:- <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/a417-missing-link/>

Email us at A417@gloucestershireramblers.org.uk

Highways England is carrying out a public consultation to verify its plans before applying for planning permission (Development Consent Order). GRNews is published before the full information is available but this is the time to make sure the proposals are best for the Cotswolds.

The Cotswolds AONB has been renamed the Cotswolds National Landscape. If it is a precursor to a Cotswolds National Park, is this still a suitable road scheme?

Background

12 months ago, Highways England presented its pastel shaded plans that included a wide green bridge for a diverted Cotswold Way. However building a concrete bridge in a Site of Special Scientific Interest wasn't met well and diverting the Cotswold Way away from the Air Balloon wasn't proposed by walkers.

It's some twenty years since Ramblers protested outside the landmark Inn to remove through-traffic from local roads - a tunnel would retain the landscape.

A low cost tunnel, such as at Hindhead, could still be a good solution. While Highways England plans show non-tunnel options, a 150 metre green bridge under the Air Balloon car park could be a useful compromise.

Landscape-Led?

When Ramblers display Highways England proposals at events the first thing asked about is the Air Balloon.

Once people have seen the plans, the next concern is severance - footpaths and tracks either extinguished or diverted and how will wildlife cross the road.

Thirdly disconnect – how will local people move from one place to another avoiding the busy new road?

Would a truly landscape-led scheme demolish the Air Balloon, and remove footpaths, tracks and local roads?

If the gradient of the road is to increase, does that mean embankments to carry it over the countryside? Is that more or less landscape-led than with the road in a cutting?

Highways England is looking for responses to the following points about the new scheme. Here are some questions:-

New Crossing Cotswold Way.

Does this crossing retain the well known Air Balloon as a landmark alongside the Cotswold Way?

Increased gradient of A417 climbing Crickley Hill

Does it mean a tree-height embankment going past Cold Slad turn and onwards up to the Air Balloon?

Rerouting the B4070 to Birdlip via Barrow Wake

An alternative direct route has been proposed from Shab Hill junction to Birdlip (shown dashed at G) to keep the road, into Barrow Wake view point, clear for all day parking for walkers, cyclists, horseboxes etc.



(Map Images OS and HE)

The change in environmental effects as a result of the new design.

Are the changes beneficial? Is the road raised on an embankment with visibility and noise issues eg leading up to the Air Balloon or flyover at Shab Hill.

Or is the road kept low in the landscape with over bridges for crossings or places of interest? How does wildlife connect from one side to the other?

New Crossing Gloucestershire Way

Is this crossing, north of Shab Hill and the kennels, flat across the the top of the new road which is in a cutting?

The Design of Cowley junction

Does the junction keep Nettleton to A417 traffic away from quieter local roads such as Watercombe to Cowley? This type of junction using the quarry has been suggested.



Improvements for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, including disabled users

Do these improvements include bridges over the new road for footpaths & bridleways between Bentham and the Air Balloon, and other bridges to keep in place routes (K) and onwards to Cowley junction? Retain local roads as low traffic routes for walking, cycling and riding e.g. the Birdlip Bypass (H) and to Cowley village above. Is a surfaced route maintained for walkers, cyclists and disabled from Bentham past the Air Balloon to Barrow Wake and on to Birdlip?

Replacement of Common Land, a type of green space

Is this to overall break-even on land-take for the new road?