



A new vision for the Ramblers

October 2014

Since 1935, when the Ramblers emerged from the Ramblers' Federations, our members and volunteers have led a transformation in the way the outdoors is protected and used for recreation, travel and to improve our quality of life.

As we approach our 80th anniversary, we're setting out our vision of what we want to do for Great Britain. It lists what we want to achieve over the next ten years and how we will adapt to achieve it.

Over the last 18 months we have had conversations with people who like to walk, hike, ramble, trek, yomp, scramble or stroll, asking for their views.

Our vision for Ramblers across Great Britain has taken into account Ramblers Cymru and Ramblers Scotland developing their own visions, which will have a different emphasis on a shared overall ambition. They're based on how we want the future to be, but we've been realistic in our ambitions, taking into account resources and the world around us.

You are asked to read the full set as a package before starting to formulate your response. Please do not just tell us yes or no to the suggestions or to a particular idea.

We need to know:

- what you think of the ideas we have come up with;
- how you might improve or change an idea;
- if you have any better ideas;
- any unintended consequences we not have thought of.

You can provide feedback by completing the survey here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ramblersvision2014>

If you don't have access to a computer and need hard copies please email us at vision@ramblersceo.zendesk.com or call the Ramblers on 020 7339 8500.

Naseem Akhtar (vice-chair) and Des Garrahan (trustee)
On behalf of the Board of Trustees.

What we know

We love the great outdoors and being out in it on foot.

We know that there is something inherently special about walking outdoors in a great environment, that can't be matched by walking on a treadmill.

We know that individuals gain spiritual, physical, emotional and mental benefits by being outdoors on foot, and we support people to experience these benefits.

We know that the Ramblers is for everyone, regardless of age, community, background, stage of walking or whether their mobility is aided.

We know the Ramblers is about all forms of walking outdoors, from health walks to hillwalking, rambling to trekking, and scrambling to mountaineering.

We know that a focus on walking brings benefits to communities and society as a whole, whether that's for pleasure, health or travel.

We know that our job as the Ramblers is to make the experience of being outdoors on foot a great one, so that more people do it.

We know that walking works because:

Walking is good for our physical health

Physical inactivity is becoming a public health problem comparable to smoking, responsible for 17% of premature deaths in the UK. In England and Scotland, four out of ten adults don't meet the recommended guidelines for physical activity and only 21% of young people in Wales do. Walking is one of the best ways to tackle this: it is free and a form of exercise which almost anyone can do.

Walking is good for our mental health

Regular walking improves mood, reduces anxiety, aids sleep and improves self-image. People that stay active have a 30% lower risk of getting depression and a reduced risk of suffering from dementia. Being outdoors also improves mental wellbeing, with research showing that people who spend more time outdoors report that they feel happier.

Walking can help reduce healthcare costs

Physical inactivity currently costs the country £10 billion a year in NHS time, sick days and early death. Regular walking would help slash these costs as well as save lives: if everyone did the recommended amount of physical activity, 37,000 premature deaths could be prevented each year.

Walking supports local economies

Popular walking routes are major assets to the tourist industry. In 2012, 52% of overseas visitors to Scotland went for a walk in the countryside and walking now accounts for 16% of all tourism in Wales. In 2011, the 6 million visitors to the South West Coast Path generated £387 million for the regional economy, supporting over 9,700 jobs.

Walking is good for the environment

Walking is the most sustainable form of transport. By walking rather than taking the car, people help to relieve pressure on public transport, reduce pollution, prevent traffic jams and tackle climate change.

Walking is a free and inclusive means of transport

For short journeys, walking is the most reliable and popular option in Britain. In 2012, only 2% of trips were made by bicycle, while 22% were on foot.

Walking is good for your neighbourhood

Getting out on foot allows you to have more contact with your neighbours and your local area. Studies have shown that this helps to improve community cohesion and reduce crime and the fear of crime.

What are we trying to create

The Ramblers is a charity creating a Britain where everyone has the freedom to enjoy the outdoors on foot and benefits from the experience

We want to create a world where the benefits of being outdoors on foot are understood by all.

Where communities are developed with walking in mind; from high quality places to walk in town centres to open spaces and countryside we can all enjoy.

Where people of all ages and backgrounds have the opportunity to experience the great outdoors on foot and people are helped to improve their health and wellbeing through walking.

Where we are able to explore and travel around our entire country, with well-maintained paths connecting communities, well-designed urban spaces and world-class access to the countryside.

There are five key areas which make up our vision for the future. They are:

1: We want everyone to have high quality outdoor spaces close to where they live so they can enjoy them

2: We want everyone to be able to explore our country via paths, open countryside and green spaces

3: We want everyone to have the opportunity to experience the outdoors on foot

4: We want everyone to experience the benefits and fun of walking, with others and alone, more often

5: We want walking to be at the heart of every community

We want everyone to have high quality outdoor spaces close to where they live so they can enjoy them

"We want more people to walk more often everywhere in Britain, from city streets and urban parks to remote wild lands – and everywhere in between.

"Our job as the Ramblers is to make the experience of being outdoors on foot a great one, so that more people do it.

"By protecting the spaces that bring people into contact with nature, we play a role in restoring people's connection with the natural world around them."

This means:

- Everyone will have a green space close to their front door no matter where they live
- Our wild lands, where the imprint of humanity is minimal, will be protected
- Areas of outstanding natural beauty will be protected
- The needs of a community are balanced with the protection and enhancement of the landscape and the need to address global concerns like climate change or habitat loss
- High quality urban spaces will make walking for leisure and travel a pleasure

Our ambition over the next ten years is to:

1. Stop the decline in the proportion of wild land and expand the area of land protected by national parks
2. Increase the density of urban green spaces
3. Safeguard designated places from inappropriate development
4. Create a planning system that can effectively balance competing needs

To achieve this we will:

- Develop a strong network of campaigners able to influence the planning system and lobby for the protection and enhancement of our landscapes
- Campaign for access to high quality urban spaces and green space in our towns and cities
- Work to expand the area of land protected by national parks and stop the destruction of our wild lands

This will require us to:

- Work in partnership with a range of environmental, conservation and heritage organisations
- Understand and be able to influence competing demands on countryside
- Be able to influence local authorities and community councils on planning, transport and tourism
- Understand how to manage the competing priorities within the countryside
- Be able to influence Westminster, national and local government policy and spending agendas

We want everyone to be able to access and explore our nation via paths, open countryside and green spaces

“Securing rights of access to a nation’s land is not simply about public enjoyment of our natural environment. It is at the heart of our economy and prosperity.

“Britain’s system of public paths and tracks which people can walk today is something that’s developed over thousands of years as people – from one generation to the next – have moved about the land for farming, fishing, trade, pilgrimage, and pleasure. Paths have been described as ‘some of man’s oldest inscriptions upon the landscape’ and as ‘evidence of the wedding between man and their environment’.”

This means:

- Our current path network, with its historical and cultural resonance, will remain
- Our path network will have expanded to connect all our communities together, making it easier to walk between them for pleasure or work
- We will have world-class access to the countryside
- Urban space will be redesigned to provide high-quality outdoor spaces and attractive walking routes

Our ambition over the next ten years is to:

1. Increase the path network
2. Identify all unmapped historical paths and protect them
3. Be the lead organisation for monitoring and maintaining the path network and be able to provide up-to-date information on the quality, distribution and effectiveness of it
4. Secure world-class access to the countryside of England and Wales, similar to that enjoyed in Scotland or Scandinavia
5. Ensure each local authority has plans for paths that will connect every community to its neighbour and improve the quality of the walking experience in their area

To achieve this we will:

- Have a strong network of volunteers who monitor, analyse and take action to improve and expand the path network and access
- Provide opportunities for volunteering outdoors that help maintain and improve the environment for walkers
- Campaign to improve our rights of access
- Campaign for government support for active travel

This requires us to:

- Have volunteer path and access volunteers for every part of Great Britain
- Work in partnership with local authorities
- Formalise and increase our direct involvement in expanding and maintaining the path network, seeking to carry out those duties performed by local authorities and other agencies in partnership or on their behalf
- Re-evaluate our strategies on paths to be less constrained by current legislation or funding and more driven by our ambitions for the network

We want everyone to have the opportunity to experience the outdoors on foot

“We want everyone to choose walking for short, everyday transport trips, and more people to choose walking for fun and enjoyment, health and wellbeing; to choose walking as a great way of spending time with friends and family and meeting new people, for discovering and appreciating the outdoors and nature, culture and heritage, or simply for relaxing and getting away from it all.

“Communities that can benefit most from walking often miss out – we need to change that.”

This means:

- Removing the barriers that currently discourage some people and communities from walking more and enjoying a healthy, active lifestyle
- Everyone who needs to get active will have access to short, free and friendly health walking programmes close to where they live
- Young people will embrace walking at all stages of their childhood and into their adult lives

Our ambition over the next ten years is to:

1. Promote walking by young people by providing activities that inspire and motivate them to walk
2. Support a minimum of 100,000 new people to take up walking each year
3. Help establish a health walking scheme in every community of more than 10,000 people, targeting communities that can benefit most, including black and minority ethnic people and deprived communities
4. Expand our programme of group walks to every community of more than 5,000 people
5. Provide five million people with the knowledge and encouragement to take up walking, whether through practical advice, information about good places to walk, personal support and encouragement or organised walks

To achieve this, we will run the following activities:

- Diverse, high-quality led walks and associated social activities programmes
- Provision of information, advice and support to walkers
- The first place people come to when they want to go walking informally with friends and family
- Walking and health programs, including Walking for Health, Lets Walk Cymru, and Medal Routes
- A national and accredited system of training
- Activities that inspire and motivate young people to get involved in walking

This work will require us to:

- Work in partnership with a range of young people's organisations to enable young people to engage in walking for physical activity, personal development, campaigning and protection of the countryside
- Have a clear understanding of the best ways to engage young people at all stages of their youth
- Make it as easy as possible for groups of Ramblers members to come together to undertake led walks and socialise
- Increase our ability to work with local authorities and community councils to influence planning and transport policy
- Diversify our supporter and membership base to reflect the communities we are working with

We want everyone to experience the benefits and fun of walking, with others and alone, more often

“The huge selection of routes, walks, support and social activities play an important role in bringing communities together and keeping people connected to one another and the world around them – and most important of all, it’s fun! Something so simple, which can make you feel so good, has to be worth doing.

“Exploring the beautiful countryside that is just on my doorstep, which I never knew existed before, I’ve met some lovely people and look forward to walking every week.”

This means:

- Most people will choose walking for short, everyday transport or go walking more often for fun and enjoyment, health and wellbeing
- We will create a range of activities, support and information that allows people to enjoy a healthy, active lifestyle and explore the world around them on foot
- Everyone who has come through a short, free and friendly health walking programme is offered an opportunity to carry on walking

Our ambition over the next ten years:

1. To help hundreds of thousands of people go walking in groups, with families and on their own by providing training, routes and information
2. To help hundreds-of-thousands of people to explore the outdoors through outings and holidays
3. To have the largest and most diverse organised social walking programme in the country
4. To help hundreds-of-thousands of people to progress from health walks to ongoing, regular physical activity

To achieve this we will:

- Run diverse, high-quality group walks and associated social programmes
- Organise holidays and trips to expand the range of places in which people enjoy the outdoors with us
- Support health walkers to progress onto Ramblers walks
- Support standards across the sector

This work will require us to:

- Make it easy for groups of members to come together to walk and to socialise
- Train people to guide the walks they want to lead and provide a positive experience for their walkers
- Decide whether the name ‘Ramblers’ helps or hinder our work on group walks and whether we need to establish a sub brand(s) to undertake this work
- Work closely with other organisations that support walkers

We want walking to be at the heart of every community

“We know walking can play a huge part in helping people to get fit and healthy, reducing the number of journeys made by car, improving a person’s connection to their own community and understanding of the world around them.

“By working with communities to connect them with their local landscapes, opening up new places to discover, and creating high-quality places to walk, we can increase our well-being.”

This means:

- Walking will be seen by government, society and professionals as the answer to some of the major challenges Britain faces
- Planning, transport policies and public health strategies will support walking
- Most people will live in places with safer, healthier and a more attractive walking environment

Our ambition over the next ten years:

1. Create communities that demonstrate the positive impact of making walking a priority
2. Ensure walking is at the centre of strategies to overcome physical inactivity
3. National walking strategies are implemented in England, Scotland and Wales
4. Ramblers activities within the community are integrated and recognised by partners and the public as a valued contribution to society

To achieve this we will:

- Campaign for government support on health and walking
- Have a network of volunteers who can advocate for the expansion and improvement of the path network and for improvements to the walking experience
- Be able to campaign and advocate for walking to local, regional and national government
- Create networks of activists who can work with communities to improve the walking environment

This work will require us to:

- Strengthen our area structure to create a leadership group who can, in partnership with staff, work on implementing all the parts of our mission within communities
- Support and expand our team of 25,000 dedicated volunteers through a well-defined approach to volunteering
- Make sure our volunteers are able to access the right skills, knowledge and support so that they are confident and competent to undertake their role
- Have a clear identity that is consistent locally and nationally, and a credible and respected brand
- Empower people to be active participants in the creation of their outdoor environment