

Chair Report July 2026

Firstly, my apologies for my unexpected absence. The summer has been busy with Time out Tuesday, though this has not been as popular this year as last year. I wonder if this is due to the lack of physical flyers though last year I felt these had very little impact. I will repeat Time out Tuesday next year but I will focus on physical flyers alongside online advertising to hopefully get the numbers up. The extreme weather on either end possibly hasn't helped! Additionally, I have come to believe that 4 locations are too much and will reduce this down to 2 next year – if anyone has any suggestions, that would be much appreciated as Barnstaple and Bideford may have run their course. Braunton has been reasonably successful, Ilfracombe less so.

As Mo mentioned in her report, after we met with the CEO, Chair and Archaeologist at Exmoor, I was invited to apply for an open position on the board. Unfortunately, I was not able to apply this time around however I will be keeping an eye out with the intention of applying next time these positions open as I believe it would be beneficial to have another walking voice on the board. This may also help us to discover more opportunities within Exmoor that we can participate in.

I must apologise that I have not been able to progress the walks grading issue yet due to work commitments over the past couple of months but I will be putting together my proposal to submit to walks leaders ready for the next programme submissions.

We had a joint walk with Wander Women which went well. This also helped us make contact with the Naturally Healthy May project which I would like to reach out to at the start of next year as this may be a helpful space to advertise our May walks. We also had one TOT walk as part of Ilfracombe Coast Week though unfortunately we had no non-Rambler attendees. However, if the opportunity comes to participate next year, I don't think there's anything to be lost by trying again.

I have unfortunately not had any further information to suggest that anyone has stepped forward for the Devon Area Committee positions. John Howell (Chair) shared a report on General Council which I have asked Janet to share with you all. The key point was the Board of Trustees restructure which, while it likely will not affect us, may be helpful to know. The proposal was that the shape of the board would change so that 6 members would be elected by members and four appointed by trustees due to their special skills (plus Chair and Treasurer). Devon area had agreed with this proposal at last year's AGM. This was defeated narrowly but the motion will return at the next General Council.

Response to points raised in reports:

Number of committee meetings reduction

I am happy either way on this one – we just have to ensure we meet prior to important dates which I believe is really the AGM – Feb, June and October feel like sensible months though I also note the proposal of Jan, May and September. It can also be helpful to have a committee meeting soon after the election of new committee members hence late November/early December might also be a good date. In such case, April, September and December might work.

Major expenditure

I do think it would be great to take advantage of this funding though at present I am not sure how we would do this. Ruth, as you mentioned the deadline will have passed, would it be possible to submit for this year, if so, what would be the last day for this? If not, it would be great if this could be a discussion point at the meeting or for the next one (to give people time for idea generation!)

In principle I do agree with increasing the programme frequency. However, I think this is something that we need to run by the members at the AGM as it would be helpful to understand preferences of walkers and walk leaders.

I am happy to remove the month ahead deadline immediately (provided this gives Peter sufficient time to create a PDF and put it on the website). This might help with the above issue as it would mean WLs only have to think 3 months in advance latest rather than 4. Another question that could be asked at the AGM is whether walkers use the PDF programme on the website or if everyone accesses the “walks programme” tab on the website which may eliminate the need to have a PDF version at all.

WLs using walks manager – agree with encouraging as many WLs as possible to begin submitting walks on walks manager. Perhaps as part of the AGM we could offer a session to demonstrate walks manager and how to use this. It wouldn't be obligatory but if even a few of us could do so, this may ease the burden on walks programme sec.

Data protection – I am sure this issue will be discussed but those of us with access to members' personal details have received an email requesting that we complete data protection training every year. It may be possible to reduce the number of us with this access but for some it will be unavoidable. I do not imagine the training will be too onerous.