



SOMERSET RAMBLER



COUNTDOWN 2026

Unless action is taken to stop it, in 2026 an unprecedented removal of public rights will take place and thousands of rights of way will be lost forever.



Many of the public rights of way under threat are used every day and some are British institutions,

being part of much-loved national trails. In fact it's even possible that a path you've been using for years to get to the shops or walk the dog is on the list.

What the RA is doing about it and how you can help

The RA is lobbying Government to get the law repealed. You can help by signing the RA's petition on Number 10 Downing Street website. If you have internet access go to the RA's website (www.ramblers.org.uk) and click on the Countdown 2026 button where you will find instructions on how to sign the petition.

Countdown 2026 briefing

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How did this come about?

In 2000 the Government passed a law following pressure from landowning groups which says that all public rights of way which:

- a) came into existence before 1949; and
- b) have not been formally recorded as rights of way by 1st January 2026

Why is this a serious threat to our rights of way network?

It's been estimated that around 20,000 public rights of way are not formally recorded, and many of these were established centuries back, long before 1949. If these rights of way are not recorded by 2026 the law says they'll be extinguished forever, meaning nobody will have a right to use them. Even if the public has used an old, unrecorded right of way for centuries, and continues to use it right up to 1st January 2026, the owner of the land will still be able to turn people away on that date, or gate it off.

Why did the Government introduce the law?

The landowning lobby pushed hard for the law to end the process of recognising historic rights of way, arguing that it only be a tidying exercise, which would remove those rights of way which have fallen into disuse over the years and are no longer physically visible on the ground. But the law goes much further than that: it threatens all unrecorded, pre-1949 rights of way, many of which are well-used and celebrated, like parts of our national trails.

Because of the potentially disastrous consequences for rights of way, the Government simultaneously introduced the Discovering Lost Ways Project, a scheme to record as many unrecorded, pre-1949 rights of way as possible so as to save the effect of its law. But the project proved far too complex and cumbersome and the political will to see it through evaporated. The RA think discontinuing the project but keeping the law is a bad deal for the public.

What does the Ramblers' Association think about the issue?

The RA think the 2026 'cut-off date' is unfair to the public and a bad idea. Whilst they agree that there may be some old, unrecorded rights of way which are no longer useful for getting from A to B, they may nonetheless have potential for a pleasant recreational route. The fact that some rights of way are no longer visible because they have become overgrown does not necessarily indicate that they are not valuable to the public – many rights of way become overgrown and invisible because they have been illegally obstructed for a long time, and the public has never been able to use them. The point is they belong to the public.

How do I find out whether a path is under threat?

You need to check a document called the definitive map which is held by your local authority. You can arrange to see the definitive map for no charge during normal office hours and some authorities may be able to show you an online version. (Somerset County Council Rights of Way interactive map has

has been produced by digitising the Rights of Way Definitive Map) if a path is shown on the definitive map there's no need to worry – it's safe. If it isn't shown you should make an application to have it recorded on the map as soon as possible, because if you don't and the right of way has existed since before 1949 (it's not always possible to find this out for sure) it will be lost in 2026.

How can I save a path that's under threat?

By making an application to have it recorded as a right of way. To do this you'll need evidence that the public have gained a right of way over the path, which might be user evidence or documentary evidence, or both.

Contact Janet Davis at RA HQ to find out more.

Email: janet.davis@ramblers.org.uk

MENDIP WALKING FESTIVAL

The Mendip Ramblers Walking Festival held over the August Bank Holiday weekend at Wookey was once again a huge success – thanks to all those who took part: The photos are now on the website, www.mendipramblers.co.uk, if you want to take a look.

We were unbelievably lucky with the weather, having three days of almost dry weather and quite a lot of sunshine (as you all know, this didn't happen very often this year!). The number of walkers totaled almost three hundred this year with the major increase being in the afternoon walks which we were very pleased about as this meant more local villagers taking part than



previously and the other three walks each day appeared to offer enough variety to give everyone an adequate choice.

Although each walk had a coffee and lunch stop, the tea and cake on offer in the village hall at the end of each walk, was enthusiastically taken up – it also offered the opportunity for everyone to relax and chat before making their way home. The village hall was an ideal venue at the start of the day when walkers were able to look at the maps and brief walk descriptions before making a final choice and, probably more importantly, were able to make use

of the “facilities”.

The car parking field was a huge benefit to us, as cars drivers did not have to park around the village - which inevitably would have caused annoyance to local people – and Mendip Ramblers are extremely grateful to the owners of Court Farm for allowing us this facility.



On behalf of Mendip Ramblers I would like to say a big thank you to all the members of the Somerset Area groups who supported us and contributed to the enjoyment. I would also like to take the opportunity to let you know that next year's festival will again be over the August Bank Holiday weekend at Oakhill, not far from Shepton Mallet. Finally, if you would like a Wookey Walking Festival booklet, (which covers all the walks: 4 walks less than 5 miles; 5 walks of between 5 and 10 miles and 3 walks over 10 miles) they are £2.00 each:

Please contact Paula on 01458 860751 or paularuddock@btinternet.com.

MIND YOUR HOOKS AND LOOPS

Did you realize that if the loop of one boot catches in a hook of the other boot it throws you to the ground immediately and without warning?

One rambler I know badly injured her face and teeth, another broke an arm.

I was lucky, just a few bruises and a broken finger.

I suggest you hook the inner loop onto an outer hook to prevent it catching the other boot.

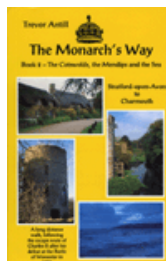
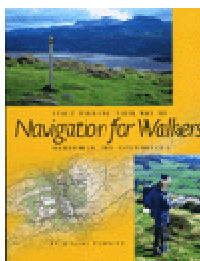
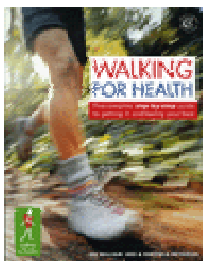
Daphne Denney - West Chinnock

Ramblers Shop

Did you know that you can help raise money for the RA's charitable work without putting your hand in your pocket? You just have to buy those things you would buy anyway from the Ramblers Shop – and many of these are available at a significant discount to you!

As a direct result of the donations the RA receives when you buy from their corporate friends they are able to keep up the fight to protect our unique path network, safeguard the beauty of the countryside and promote the joys of walking to audiences. How many other shops can offer that?

You can visit the Ramblers Shop at the RA website: www.ramblers.org.uk. In the shop you will find maps, compasses, and pedometers. You can also purchase cycle insurance and breakdown cover as well as home, travel, motor and pet insurance, arrange cottage holidays from cottages4you and even change your credit card to the Ramblers credit card.. The separate Ramblers' Bookshop offers a fantastic range of specialist, general and reference books on walking, long distance paths, short walks, accommodation guides, and more.



With Christmas fast approaching the Ramblers Shop might well help to solve that difficult gift problem.

Too much wind, not enough action Ramblers criticise narrow focus of Government energy plans

The RA have warned that walkers will face a trebling in the number of large scale wind farms in the countryside in the next three years under Government's new wind-focussed energy plans. They have called for the Government to instigate a pyramidal approach to energy based on the 3 E's: Energy conservation, Energy efficiency and the development of Every renewable energy source.

In response to the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform's draft UK Renewable Energy Strategy, a plan that will see thousands of large scale onshore wind farms erected at the expense of developing other renewables, the Ramblers have criticised the government's "pile 'em high approach" to wind energy that "neglects the plethora of other technologies that could be used". Such an approach will only contribute to the government's own failure to effectively address climate change.

Ramblers Renewable Energy Campaigner, David Black, comments: "At this time when renewable energy is a national priority, the Government is tying one hand behind its back with a pile 'em high approach to wind energy that does little to encourage other technologies. The stop-and-start nature of power produced by huge wind turbines will do little to replace fossil fuels driving climate change, whilst damaging the character of the countryside we are all trying to protect."

Davie continued: "Three times the number of wind farms are planned for England and Wales than already exist, mainly concentrated in areas of exceptional natural beauty such as Northumberland, Yorkshire and Devon. In Scotland 12 separate wind farm proposals will create a 'ring of steel' around the Cairngorms National Park which will be visible from the summit itself".

Ramblers have particularly criticised the Renewable Obligation Certificates system that over-subsidises low cost technologies like large scale onshore wind, while doing little to incentivise a broader range of technologies that are needed. Ramblers Director of Campaigns, Keith Roberts, comments: "With climate change a national priority, the Government must renounce their narrow wind focus and take a multi pronged approach to fossil fuel reduction, promoting energy conservation and reduction measures and backing every renewable technology at their disposal. Measures include creating a small scale energy infrastructure for local consumption to avoid huge transfer losses, and massively reducing road pollution by investing in walking and cycling schemes. Finally, government must look to many technologies that exist to capture renewable energy instead of simply being winded by one".

MACMILLAN WAY WEST - SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS COMPLETE THE WALK



" Pictured are a small number of Sedgemoor Ramblers walking the final leg over three days (35 miles) of the Macmillan Way West from Dunkery Beacon to Barnstaple recently. The previous section, starting from Castle Cary, had been included in a number of circular walks in the group weekend walking programme (led by Chris and Nicky Hewett) over the past two years.

Donations and collections have totalled over £520!

Very many thanks to all who have supported and contributed during this time.
Nicky Hewett."

Statement from the Ramblers' Association commenting on Government response to pre-legislative scrutiny and public consultation of the Marine Bill

"As Britain's leading walking charity, the Ramblers' Association welcomes the Government response to pre-legislative scrutiny and public consultation of the Marine Bill particularly the positive provisions supporting greater coastal access. As key stakeholders in the consultation process, the Ramblers gave

evidence to both scrutiny committees and we are pleased that Government has accepted our arguments to allow greater public access to the coast.

On behalf of both our 137,000 members and the wider public, we believe that the Governments endorsement of greater coastal access is logical, timely and benefits walkers, landowners and farmers alike. Similarly, the conclusions of the EFRA Committee's own report confirming the solid economic, health and social benefits from more people visiting, and enjoying, the coast echoed our findings.

The Ramblers' Association hopes the special considerations which Nature England may be obliged to make in respect of provisions for coastal access at estuaries will not compromise the spirit or letter of enhancing coastal access for all.

We are pleased that the Government has decided that a formal appeals process is not appropriate since a fair balance will be struck between the rights of the public and those of landowners, partly because the necessary safeguards to ensure balance already exist in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

We agree the Government's view that the framework of the draft Bill is flexible enough to avoid situations where access rights result in significant financial loss. In respect of coastal parks and gardens, the Government is right to state that further parliamentary discussion and consideration will be needed and we will play a full part in those discussions.

Finally, on the question of funding and long term maintenance of coastal paths and spreading room, the Ramblers approves of the Government's recommendation that after 10 years, Nature England should contribute funding".

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Many thanks to all contributors to this issue. All contributions are very welcome and I look forward to receiving your contributions for the next issue.

Entries for the next issue before 1st February 2009 please to:

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Or by email to: edwrlevy@aol.com



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