

LDWA - LOCAL GROUPS WEEKEND – 7TH – 9TH NOVEMBER – 2025

Venue – Woodland Grange Hotel – Leamington Spa

43 people took part in some or all the weekend. 35 people completed an evaluation form. 27 local groups were represented and 8 NEC committee members attended. On Sunday Phoebe Smith, President of the LDWA spent the morning and lunch with the local groups.

Friday 7th November

- Formal Welcome - Overview of the Local Groups Weekend – Penny Southern
- Evening meal followed by

“End to End – Now & Then” – Ken Falconer. Ken's talk on the Friday evening was a bit hit, receiving top marks and lots of fabulous comments. ‘Excellent slides’ interesting and well presented’ ‘awe inspiring’ ‘one of the best LDWA talks ever’

Saturday 8th November

After a delicious breakfast, the hotel had great feedback, especially the food.

There was a choice of two walks – Walk A 22 miles & Walk B 16 miles

Walk A led by Anne Wade and Walk B led by Richard & Sally Hicks

Discussion Topics for the Walk & Talk were as follows:

- Why do you volunteer & what motivates you to do so?
- What do you hope to see delivered in the Volunteer Support role over the next four years?
- How does your group maintain current volunteers and how you recruit new ones?
- Thoughts on the annual volunteer awards – do you love or loathe them?

The walks led by Anne, Richard and Sally, everyone enjoyed, especially exploring the surrounding countryside, accompanied by exceptional weather. There was a lot of conversation generated by the walk and talk topics. The evaluation forms had a lot of praise for the opportunity to discuss with other members of local groups. Having the opportunity to spend time with each other, sharing, creating links, and coming up with excellent ideas to incorporate in the future of our voluntary led organisation.

After the evening meal there was a session on - Updates/Question and Answer session with NEC members – in some of the evaluation forms it became apparent that this session wasn't fully understood by all group members and the Q&A deadline for NEC questions led to some confusion, this has been noted for next time as a lesson learnt.

Topics and questions covered are below, these were accompanied with several reports, data and information sheets to further explain these topics and for local group members to ask questions or have an individual discussion.

A few of the evaluation forms reflected on how useful they found the availability of NEC Committee members at the weekend and the time available to meet some of them individually to discuss a specific and relevant to their group.

- LDWA priorities - Madeleine Watson
- Communications – Julian White
- Website - Richard May
- Finance – Elaine Oddie, money, insurance etc. (Slide presentation)
- 100 update – Anne Wade
- Long Distance Paths Update - Iain Connell
- Volunteer Support/ Local Groups – Penny Southern

Sunday 9th November

After breakfast, Phoebe Smith - LDWA President - Phoebe spoke to the group about her passion for long distance walking and what she had been involved in across the country with LDWA groups. This was an excellent introduction to the mornings workshop on volunteering led by Penny Southern – volunteer support officer – NEC.

Remembrance Sunday and a two-minute silence was observed at 11 am followed by John Clarke from West Lancashire who had written a poem he read to the group.

The LDWA is a volunteer-led organisation – how do we continue to ensure we are?

1. Thoughts on the annual volunteer awards – do you love or loathe them?

There was overwhelming support for volunteer award(s) but the majority want the current model changed. This exercise generated a lot of ideas on how to take this forward, and this will be considered and recommendations will be presented at a local group meeting which will result in a new volunteer awards model for 2026.

2. Volunteer Roles

Current volunteer roles across the LDWA and future volunteer roles across the LDWA. This workshop generated a list of these roles with dialogue on why. It was recommended this piece of work should lead to identifying gaps and work with local groups to fill these. To create a volunteer register and their roles.

3. Reward & Recognition - Recruitment & Retention – facilitated by Sara Down

4. Roles & Responsibilities - Communication & Networking – facilitated by Steve Hewitt

5. Training & Development - Toolkit & Resources – facilitated by Richard May

All 3 groups generated a significant amount of discussion, ideas and a way forward. Each workshop notes have been written up and will be shared at the NEC meeting in January. The intention from this work is to agree a list of priorities with an action plan and timeframe for implementation. This work will form part of the Volunteer Support Officer AGM report for March 2026.

Madeleine Watson – NEC Chair gave the closing remarks and spoke about what next and how the NEC plan to take the weekends actions forward before thanking everyone for their time and wished everyone a safe journey home.

