

Countryside Update

November 2003 (issue no. 48)

Campaign for a National Walking Strategy Continues

The Countryside team have been meeting this month with civil servants and the government Minister responsible for walking to try and push for a national walking strategy. The consultation on *On the Move: By Foot* closed at the end of September and the Department for Transport are currently reviewing responses.

There was good news and bad news coming from the meeting. The good news is that the Minister has agreed to act as walking champion. The bad news is that they are trying to pass the buck to the Department of Health by mixing walking in with other means of getting healthy in a bid to stem rising obesity levels. Unfortunately this essentially means the Department of Health will be pushing for people to do at least five sessions of exercise for 30 minutes each day. Not a bad scheme, but this could easily mean people driving to the gym to spend 30 minutes on a treadmill and causing increased pollution and congestion along the way!

We are trying to make the Department for Transport recognise that they have to take the lead for this in order that walking is taken seriously. You can help by writing to your MP and asking them to forward your views to Kim Howells, the Minister responsible for walking. Point out that

- Getting people walking is an excellent and cheap way of cutting congestion. The Department for Transport have targets on

cutting congestion that currently they are unlikely to meet.

- The National Cycling Strategy has produced great results, a National Walking Strategy could do the same.
- People who promote health are already more likely to support walking, but people who work in transport planning are not. This is why the lead has to come from the Department for Transport.

Decisions on the strategy are getting closer so now is the time to help.

Consultation Opens on Changes to Planning in the Countryside and on Renewable Energy

The government is currently consulting on changes to the planning guidance on countryside and renewable energy issues. Planning Policy Statements (PPS) 7 and 22 will replace the current guidance and it is imperative that the policies give the best protection.

The Countryside Team is currently working on responses to both of these documents. The consultation on PPS 7 closes on 12th December. There are some very worrying omissions. The government's policy of "the countryside should be protected for its own sake" has been omitted, principles of sustainable development have been omitted and the clarification of what constitutes the need for a major development has also been omitted. That list is by no means exhaustive.

Circular no. Date From	03/ 117 November 2003 Ramblers' Association Countryside Protection Team – Central Office Sarah Williams – Tel 020 7339 8571 Email sarahw@london.ramblers.org.uk Emily Richmond – Tel 020 7339 8541 Email emilyr@london.ramblers.org.uk NB – Please contact Sarah if you would like to add others to the circulation list	For To	Information Area and Group Countryside Officers Area and Group Secretaries Area Media Contacts England and Wales (Scotland for information only) Staff and EC
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A copy of this document is available on the website of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister www.odpm.gov.uk or by calling 0870 1226236. You can help by responding to this consultation using the draft letter on our website, or if you don't have access to the Internet you can call the Countryside Team for more information.

PPS 22 will affect renewable energy planning, including wind turbine development. This consultation document looks set to promote wind turbine development considerably. Although, at the time of writing we have not been able to study this consultation, we will be updating our website shortly. As always, if you do not have access to the Internet then please call us for more ideas and information. Consultation for this closes on the 30th January and we will have more information in the next Countryside Update.

Your Campaign Results

At central office we are always keen to hear whether or not your campaigns have been successful.

The results of campaigns can help other volunteers who are facing similar issues find out how people have succeeded or why the campaigns were unsuccessful.

Please contact Sarah with any results that you would like to share. We are particularly interested in hearing about wind turbine campaigns as these are of increasing concern across the country.

South Downs Public Inquiry Opens

The Countryside Protection team attended the opening of the Public Inquiry into the proposed South Downs National Park on the 10th November. The Inquiry is expected to last a year.

We are working closely with the South Downs Campaign to get the best evidence possible on areas of the boundary which we feel have been misjudged. We have also written a short paper on the cultural history of the South Downs, giving some details of great artists and writers who have been inspired by the area. If you would like a copy of this paper then please contact Sarah

National Day of Action on Road Speed

Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative are organising a national day of action on road

speed across the country and are keen for you to get involved.

Reduction of road speeds is something which the Ramblers' support for safety reasons and to promote a better living environment for all. The day of action is on the 10th December 2003 and the plan is for people to campaign locally, in areas near to them by peacefully demonstrating on or near areas where speeding is a problem. It is up to you if you campaign all day for half an hour.

More information is available from Julia Samson on 020 7613 0743 (extn. 124) or by email julias@transport2000.org.uk.

News From Wales

Motorised activity on Forestry Commission Land

A number of incidents have taken place across Wales where the public have found themselves caught up in motor rallies. Several of these have occurred when walkers have been following rights of way.

If you have a case history of such an incident the RA Wales office would like to hear about it.

A meeting is being arranged with the Forestry Commission and local authorities to discuss this issue.

Poll Results Show Car Free Day is Popular

Nine local authorities (Camden, Fife, Greenwich, Kirklees, Liverpool, Poole, Redbridge, Redditch and Waltham Forest) polled some of their citizens on the In Town Without My Car day, which is supported by the Rambler's Association.

92% of people think it's a good idea. 69% of people say it should be repeated at least quarterly. 63% say that the car free zone should be bigger and 85% want car use limited in their towns.

The statistics show how popular the day is and how successful it could be with greater promotion. The Rambler's Association will continue to support and promote this day, hopefully helping to go from strength to strength!