

# Countryside Update

March 2004 (issue no. 52)

## Local Campaigns

Allen Pestell from the South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area (SYNED) has sent us an update of campaigns that he has been involved with locally.

The long running campaign against environmental devastation arising from the disposal of refrigeration equipment appears to be coming to an end. Many of the electrical retailers have now reinstated the removal of old appliances and the fridge mountains are starting to shrink. However, dumped appliances are still to be found in the countryside and need to be reported to local councils for removal by them.

Crop planting is now taking place and Allen is investigating if any of the controversial genetically modified maize is being planted in the South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area. Allen is also concerned by the increase in Oil Seed Rape and some of the associated problems that have been suffered by walkers such as pollen allergies. Allen doesn't feel that this crop is suitable for GM trials and is working to make sure that farmers leave the minimum width for the footpath so that walkers can keep pollen disturbance to a minimum.

Some years ago the South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area had a spate of wind farm development proposals which they became adept at fighting, so much so that developers have made a lot fewer applications recently. However, recent Government guidance is encouraging the growth of wind power and as a consequence no less than

three plans are now being discussed in the area. By far the most controversial of these is Sheffield Council's offer of council land on the fringe of the Peak District National Park for development as a wind farm. A motion at SYNED area's AGM commits the area to fighting the development.

## A Big Thanks!

Margaret Thomas, the Countryside and Access Officer in the West Riding Area is moving to Wales shortly and will be ending her time volunteering for the Ramblers' Association.

During her time with us Margaret has done an incredible amount, using her excellent skills and knowledge to achieve a lot in the West Riding Area which has been of great value locally and nationally.

She has appeared at several public inquiries, including representing the Ramblers' Association at a regional level at the examination in public into Yorkshire and Humber regional development plan.

We would like to say thanks on behalf of the countryside team at central office. I'm sure Margaret will be missed by both staff and volunteers alike. We wish her lots of luck in the future.

## Guide Dogs Lead the Way

A National Walking Action Plan has been published and endorsed by the Transport Minister, Tony McNulty. The Action Plan has been published by Guide Dogs for the Blind as part of their Safer Streets campaign, and was put together by a

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coalition of organisations including the Ramblers, Living Streets and Transport 2000.

Following the Government's refusal to publish a National Walking Strategy, we thought it was time we produced our own, and with perfect timing, the Guide Dogs came up with the resources to make it happen. Despite not publishing their own strategy, the Government welcomed this one. On launching the document, McNulty said " Walking is central to the transport system".

The National Walking Action Plan sets out the action needed if we are to achieve a reduced impact of traffic, well maintained streets and walkways, attractive and interesting public spaces, enhanced safety and effective promotion of walking. Most of the actions need to be carried out by the Department for Transport or by local authorities.

You can view the plan by looking at [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk).

## Way to Go update

The Way to Go campaign has had a successful start and postcards are starting reach MPs. Due to an error in the print run we are aware that some people did not receive a postcard with their issue of Walk magazine. If this is the case for you, or you would like more postcards then please contact Sarah at central office.

We will be composing a reply shortly to the standard reply given by the Department for Transport in conjunction with Transport 2000. In the meantime please let us know if you would like help in taking the campaign further in your local area.

You can help by writing an individual letter to your MP reiterating your feelings on transport in this country and stressing your support for the Way to Go campaign.

## Walking Plan for London Launched

Transport for London launched its walking plan at the end of February. The plan aims to increase the 'walkability' of London and make it a better and more enjoyable place to walk.

The Ramblers' Association is pleased to see the strategy launched and is broadly happy with its contents. It sets ambitious, but achievable targets and looks at walking as part of the whole transport infrastructure.

It encourages the plan to be adopted on a borough by borough basis, with each area aiming to improve the conditions for walking.

We shall be using the London Walking Plan to encourage the Government to adopt a national strategy for walking.

## Green Lanes consultation draws to a close

The recent consultation into motorised vehicular rights is drawing to a close. The consultation entitled *Use of mechanically propelled vehicles on rights of way* aims to introduce legislation which would close the legal loophole that allows modern vehicles to drive on tracks which were designed before the modern combustion engine was introduced.

The Ramblers' Association has been heavily involved in this campaign taking advantage of recent Government support to push for a change in legislation. It has received massive support from many of our members who have the misfortune to see how badly areas of our countryside have been destroyed by motorised vehicles.

## Hastings to Bexhill Bypass resurfaces

Plans for the controversial Hastings to Bexhill bypass have resurfaced, despite the scheme being turned down more than once in the past for being too environmentally damaging.

The bypass was first rejected in July 2001. The scheme was proposed again in the South Coast Multi Modal Studies in 2001. The Government again refused permission, asking East Sussex County Council to further develop the scheme in order to minimise the environmental impact.

However, the recent consultation on the road proposals still included four options that would damage the Combe Haven Site of Special Scientific Interest. It also did not include a 'do nothing' option and did not give serious consideration to improving more sustainable transport links in the area.

The consultation period was five weeks, a very short time period – most national consultations have a period of three months. Local campaigners are very concerned that the road will lead to another bypass which would cut through the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.