

# Countryside Update

April 2004 (issue no. 53)

## Local Campaigns

This month's campaign update has kindly been provided by Mary Robinson who is the Countryside Secretary for the North Wales Area.

The wind swept mountains and moors of Snowdonia and Denbighshire, synonymous with the image of Wales, are increasingly vulnerable to the demands of the wind industry; wind farms are a major issue for the Area's eight countryside secretaries but not the only one.

In Wrexham, in the recent past, the RA has campaigned against two waste disposal plants one in particular involving an incinerator for burning waste and the other for the conversion of waste into fuel pellets. The latter was rejected whilst the controversial incinerator was withdrawn in the face of enormous public outcry. In the southwest corner of the county they have joined with CPRW in a campaign for the Ceiriog Valley to be designated an AONB. The adjacent county of Denbighshire is advanced with plans to extend the Clwydian Hills AONB to the Dee and we are pressing Countryside Council for Wales and Wrexham Council to include the Ceiriog valley in that extension.

In Meirionnydd and into the National Park the main A470 is being upgraded. Geoff Elliott, one of the countryside secretaries in the Area, has called for the plans to include under-grounding roadside cabling and also to incorporate the removal of other unsightly poles and cables in close proximity. In Arfon Dwfor, to the west, Mary and her colleagues have joined in the objection to a proposed fish-farm skirting the Menai Straits and

in full view of the Park whilst to the east in Flintshire proposals for a telecommunications mast on Moel Findig have been vigorously opposed.

And then there are wind farms. The Area has adopted the policy agreed by General and Welsh Council to work with like-minded organisations, in particular CPRW, but also with informed local groups. The Denbigh Moors application above Pentrefoelas was withdrawn following RSPB intervention but the coalition lost at Tir Mostyn above Llyn Brenig after a Public Inquiry.

Currently Mary is also opposing the Moel Maelogen extension at Llanrwst, and together with CPRW are preparing themselves for a spate of applications along the old A5. Braich Ddu, Meirionnydd, Gweddellwern, Denbighshire, Cwm Penanner, Conwy and more.

## Walking Out Starts

The Walking Out walks have recently started in Stoke, Lincoln and Sheffield and will be taking place throughout April, May and Early June.

The project aims to introduce walking to a new audience of people who have not had the opportunity to realise how enjoyable walking can be. The walks are all fairly short, ranging between 2 and 4½ miles and no special equipment is needed for the walks, just a pair of trainers or comfy shoes.

This project has tried a few different approaches to the ones we usually try centrally. We have recruited volunteers from outside the Ramblers' Association using methods such as volunteer

Circular no. Date From	04/33 April 2004 Ramblers' Association Countryside Protection Team – Central Office Sarah Williams – Tel 020 7339 8571 Email <a href="mailto:sarahw@london.ramblers.org.uk">sarahw@london.ramblers.org.uk</a> Emily Richmond – Tel 020 7339 8541 Email <a href="mailto:emilyr@london.ramblers.org.uk">emilyr@london.ramblers.org.uk</a> 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 Countryside Update members
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bureaus, radio interviews and newspaper adverts. We are also targeting different groups in each city. For example, in Sheffield we have contacted refugee organisations, children leaving care and people on probation. In Lincoln we have been in discussions with Mind and Help the Aged (among others).

Funding from the Countryside Agency has allowed us to publicise the walks widely including flyers, posters and an insert into newspapers in each city.

## **Promoting Active Travel**

It seems that hardly a week goes by without another report documenting the growing obesity problem in Britain. One of the Government's responses to this is to draw up a Physical Activity Strategy. The Government has also promised an action plan to promote active travel as part of this strategy.

The Ramblers' Association, along with other organisations such as Transport 2000 and Living Streets has been campaigning to make sure that the strategy will be effective and will promote more walking and cycling. It is calling for 7 key recommendations including:

- Ensure that measures to encourage more walking and cycling are at the heart of wider transport policy.
- Create better conditions for walking and cycling.

There is an EDM tabled which calls on the Government to support these measures. The EDM is number 774, entitled Active Travel Action Plan. So far over 100 MPs have signed it, which is good. It could still benefit from more support. You can help by writing to your MP and asking them to sign up to it.

## **Way to Go campaign update**

The Way to Go campaign is going well. We have received a few letters from people who have got a response from their MP. We have heard that so far over 2,000 postcards have been sent to Kim Howells, who is the Minister responsible for reviewing the transport 10 year plan.

More postcards are still needed to show how strong support for the campaign is. We have more postcards at central office that we can send out. If you haven't signed a postcard yet, please do and encourage friends and family to do the same.

There is also an EDM tabled in support of the Way to Go campaign. EDM number 527 entitled 'The

Way to Go proposals' calls on the Government to take sustainable transport seriously and implement the ideas put forward by the campaign. At the time of writing just over 70 MPs had signed the EDM but it needs more for the Government to take it seriously. Please write to your MP asking them to sign the EDM and letting them know about how transport affects your life.

In support of the manifesto point asking for good quality streets, lanes and paths, the Ramblers' Association is also trying to collect together photographs which show the poor condition many of them are in at the moment.

We hope to be able to collect together as many photos as possible and send them to the Minister for Transport. Examples of bad walkways could include: cracked paving stones, litter, pavements covered in clutter such as scaffolding or bill boards, cars parked on pavements and so on.

You can help by taking photographs of areas which highlight this and sending them in to the countryside team. We need as many photos as possible from around the country in order to make this successful. Although we won't be able to return your photos we can promise they will be put to good use!

## **South Downs update**

The South Downs public inquiry is well underway and going well. The Ramblers' Association, as part of the South Downs campaign, has now submitted some of the proofs of evidence on the boundary areas we would like to see included.

By the time you read this Emily will have appeared at the inquiry to discuss the boundary at Kirdford and Plaistow, where she will be talking about its excellent recreational opportunities.

We also have some copies of the Spring newsletter from the South Downs Campaign at central office. Please contact Sarah if you would like a copy.

## **Bluestone development given go ahead**

Disappointing news came at the end of March when Pembrokehire Coast National Park Authority decided not to reverse its decision to grant planning permission to the Bluestone tourism development. This is despite the proposals being against local and national planning policies. This could set a dangerous precedent for developments in other National Parks and as such proposals should continue to be carefully monitored.

