

Countryside Update

November 2004 (issue no. 60)

Changes to the Countryside Team

After five years working at the Ramblers' Association, Emily will be leaving at the end of November to work for the Red Cross. Emily would like to thank all the volunteers she's worked with and to wish you all well for the future.

The campaigns department at Central Office is taking this opportunity to restructure some parts of the department. A new member of staff, Jessica Memon, has just started in the promoting walking team. Jessica will be working on the Walking Out project, as well as other issues which are involved in making sure that we are doing as much as possible to promote walking to a wide range of people.

Over the last few years the work of the Countryside Team has increasingly involved issues relating to promoting walking and central office is using this as an opportunity to split the two teams. After Emily leaves, the Countryside Protection team will be reduced to one person. Sarah will be Head of Countryside Protection and will be dealing with all countryside issues. Most promoting walking issues will be dealt with by the new team. We are currently looking at the priorities for countryside protection over the next few months.

Date set for Whinash Wind Farm Public Inquiry

As the public inquiry into the proposed wind farm on Romney Marsh draws to a close, a date has been set for the public inquiry into Whinash Wind Farm. The inquiry will start on April 19th 2005 and

will be held at Shap Wells Hotel. A pre-inquiry meeting will be held at Kendal Town Hall on Monday, 29th November. We have representatives who have put in objections and plan to speak at the inquiry.

We are currently updating our Countryside Guidance Note on renewable energy to take into account changes to the planning system from PPS 22 (the statement that refers to planning for renewable energy). We are also meeting with a range of organisations to discuss how we can campaign on issues linked to climate change and renewable energy and we will keep you updated as our policy develops.

South Downs Update

The South Downs public inquiry will be drawing to a close on the 17th December. The inquiry has been going on for just over a year.

The Ramblers' Association has appeared on a few occasions and we have spoken in support of the National Park, calling for boundaries bigger than those proposed by the Countryside Agency in a number of areas, as part of the South Downs Campaign.

We have also appeared with the Council for National Parks on administrative issues, calling for a National Park Authority with full planning powers and of course during the time this inquiry has taken place, we have seen the New Forest designated as a National Park and we have yet to see how this will be taken into account by the Inspector.

Circular no. Date From	04/110 November 2004 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 Countryside Update members Extra Countryside Secretaries
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A recent poll in 'The Insight', a Brighton arts publication, found that 100% of respondents were in support of the National Park. While it may not have been the most scientific of polls, it shows how strong the local support for the park is. The winter edition of the South Downs Campaign newsletter has just been printed and we have some copies at central office. Please contact Sarah if you would like a copy.

Consultation on MPS 1 to be Issued Soon

A consultation on planning for minerals extraction will be issued on the 25th November. Minerals Planning Guidance 1, General Considerations is the current planning guidance which covers the main issues which affect all minerals extraction.

It will be issued as a consultation on Minerals Planning Statement 1, in line with the new style of planning guidance which is being issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

The Ramblers' Association will be submitting a response and working with other organisations through Wildlife and Countryside Link and you may want to respond yourself. After the consultation is issued there should be more information on the ODPM's website, www.odpm.gov.uk. If you would like any advice on submitting a response, please contact Sarah at central office.

Airportwatch Launches New Email Bulletin

Following the training day into campaigning on aviation expansion, Airportwatch has started a new email bulletin which goes out two or three times a week.

The bulletin covers Parliamentary updates, including questions which have been asked and what select committee have been doing on issues surrounding aviation. The bulletin is very short, but a good way of keeping up to date with general developments and you can see if your MP has been keeping up with the issues.

Airportwatch also produces a longer newsletter which includes updates from airports round the country, what campaigns are being planned and what consultations are being issued. This is another good way of finding out what's happening in your area, again in an easy to read format.

If you subscribe to the email bulletin you'll receive the longer newsletter when it's produced. You can

subscribe by emailing info@airportwatch.org.uk or by visiting the airportwatch website: www.airportwatch.org.uk

Democracy in the Regions?

You may have seen in the news recently that the first referendum on regional government was a decisive 'no' vote. The referendum was held to see whether voters in the North East wanted an elected regional assembly.

The result was a blow for the government who have placed regional structures at the heart of their new planning guidelines and at the heart of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. The government has now dropped plans to hold referenda in other parts of the country.

There is a regional assembly in every English region, but only in London is this an elected body. The others are made up of appointees from local authorities, business interests, community groups and other key people in the region. The regional assembly is also the regional planning body in each region.

This leaves the possibility for a democratic deficit between those who submit the regional plans (such as the Regional Spatial Strategy and the sustainable development frameworks) for the region and those who live within the region that will be affected by the plans.

County and unitary authorities must still be consulted on the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and must provide advice. This provides an opportunity to close the gap between the unelected regional assemblies and the electorate within the region.

Updates From Round the Country

As you may have noticed we sometimes include an update from different Countryside Secretaries in different Areas and Groups. We are currently trying to find people to write articles for Countryside Update in 2005.

So far we've had articles from Areas including the Isle of Wight, Cornwall and Essex as well as lots of others. We ask for about 200 words on the issues that have been of most importance in your area, whether or not these are campaigns which central office is involved in. This gives other campaigners an idea of what's happening around the country.

If you are interested in writing an article, it doesn't have to be for immediate publication, please contact Sarah at central office.