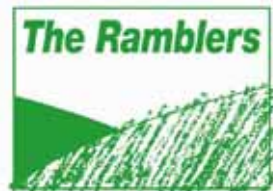


Working for Walkers

THE CHARITY
WORKING FOR
WALKERS
www.ramblers.org.uk



Issue 3

May 2007

Alley-gating - a new threat to walkers

Since the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 inserted section 129 A-G into the Highways Act 1980, the Ramblers' Association (RA) has become increasingly concerned with the use of alley-gating as a means of tackling crime and combating anti-social behaviour.

Increased levels of crime and youth related anti-social behaviour in our towns and cities has resulted in the gating of urban footpaths, alleyways and ginnels between houses to the public at large in an attempt to tackle the problem.

In general public rights of way do not cause or facilitate crime, however, public rights of way officers with responsibility for urban areas have been under pressure from the police, local councillors and residents to close alleyways on the grounds that these routes provide an easy means of access for crime and anti-social behaviour.



The RA is of course sympathetic to genuine concerns about security and public safety, but we do not believe that the way to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour is by closing or diverting public rights of way. Criminals will not be deterred by the closure of a path, and those indulging in anti-social behaviour will simply move elsewhere.

Urban paths can be of special importance to the community as convenient 'short cuts' to local facilities (especially to elderly and disabled people without access to cars), and they have their part to pay in an integrated system of transport, providing the opportunity, however brief, for people to walk elsewhere that by busy roads. It is surely unfair on the law-abiding majority that such a facility should be withdrawn because of the actions of an anti-social or criminal minority whose activities will not cease but simply be transferred elsewhere once such a way is closed.

Closing urban paths is also incompatible with other policies such as encouraging walking for health and

sustainable transport, and has serious implications for the historic network of minor highways within our towns and cities (the ginnels and other alleyways which are part of the urban heritage).

The Ramblers has therefore asked its members to keep a close and watchful eye on the situation, and will continue to take appropriate action to protect and preserve the public's right to access these vital routes.

Planning reforms threaten the right of the public to be heard

The Ramblers' Association has joined forces with other environmental organisations to campaign against some of the most damaging proposals for reform of the planning system announced by the government.

The Barker Review of Planning and the Eddington Review of Transport both contain recommendations which we believe would seriously damage the countryside and the local right to be heard. Major roads, airports, power stations and out-of-town developments could be given the go-ahead by a new national planning commission, over the heads of existing local authorities, so removing consultation with local people. Green belt land is also under threat, and reviewing these boundaries could damage important wildlife habitats and popular walking areas.



Together with Friends of the Earth, the RSPB, Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Woodland Trust, we are asking members to write to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to prevent this 'planning disaster' via the website www.planningdisaster.co.uk.

Read more at:
www.ramblers.org.uk/countryside/planning/

Renewable energy: policies of change

The impact of wind farms on the landscape has presented difficult - and controversial - choices for the Ramblers' Association. But don't believe everything you read in the papers about our policies!

The RA believes wind power has an important role to play in providing clean, renewable energy. However, we feel that it is possible to develop a wide range of renewable energy technologies, including wind power, which can tackle climate change and protect our most unique and beautiful landscapes.

The RA position on wind farms

Our wind farm policy reads as follows:

"[The Ramblers] call upon government to invest immediately and substantially in industrial and domestic energy conservation, and environmentally sensitive sources of renewable energy. When wind power is developed, alternatives should be found to the siting of wind turbines in National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other scenic areas".



We are not calling for a 'ban' on wind farms, instead we would like to see the Government change its policy so that power companies invest in a range of different technologies so that it becomes unnecessary to concentrate on large-scale wind turbine

construction. Local Ramblers Groups and Areas sometimes oppose developments they feel damage the countryside in which they walk.

Walking and the environment

Using your feet is the most environmentally friendly form of transport and recreation there is. However we also encourage our members to do all they can to reduce their 'carbon footprint', such as using public transport to get to and from walks where possible, along with car sharing.

The Ramblers' Association believes that the countryside is a national treasure and a place where people can peacefully enjoy the landscape and beauty of their environment, and not a place where it is appropriate for industrial-scale intrusions. Ours is not a NIMBY position, we simply continue to campaign for the 'protection and enhancement of the countryside' - a charitable aim

of the RA since its foundation in 1935.

Copies of our energy policy are available at www.ramblers.org.uk/countryside/energy

RA teams join forces

November 2006 saw the creation of the Footpaths Team at Ramblers' Association Central Office, bringing together the Footpath Campaigns Team and the Footpath Policy Team. The aim of the merger was to combine the expertise and skills in campaigning and rights of



way law to create a new team dedicated to the protection and preservation of the national rights of way network.

The new Footpaths Team will be campaigning for all rights of way in England and Wales to be open, and to ensure that the existing rights of way network is protected and available for everyone to use. They will also campaign for improved rights of way legislation, and seek to ensure that the existing legal framework is properly implemented.

If you would like to discuss the work of the Footpaths Team with one of the Team members please see the contact details below.

We'd love to hear any comments or suggestions you have. Simply contact us at:



sarahp@ramblers.org.uk



020 7339 8582



Footpaths Team, The Ramblers' Association,
2nd Floor, Camelford House,
Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TW



www.ramblers.org.uk/footpaths