

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF  
GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT  
AT CANTERBURY, 14th-16th APRIL 2000**

\* denotes a member of Council (voter)

**PRESIDENT**

Andrew Bennett MP\*

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

John Bunting\*  
Geoff Eastwood\*  
Chris Hall\*  
Jack Ibbott\*  
Gerald McGuire\*  
David Rubinstein\*  
David Sharp\*  
Paddy Tipping MP\*

**CHAIRMAN**

Cath Mackay\*

**TREASURER**

David Hunt\*

**HONORARY SOLICITOR**

Jerry Pearlman\*

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Kate Ashbrook\*  
Peter Ayling\*  
Jo Bird\*  
Peter Harwood\*  
John Holms\*  
Kevin Matthews\*  
Brian Reader\*  
Mavis Rear\*  
Mary Robinson\*  
Terry Squires\*  
Des Whicher\*  
Geoffrey Williams\*

**AGENDA COMMITTEE MEMBER**

John Capes\*

**Circular: 00/72**

Tony Clarkson\*  
Sylvia Franks\*  
Ron Moore\*  
Sylvia Popham\*

**AVON AREA**

Geoff Mullett\*  
Sharon Toase\*  
Bob Hicks  
Julia Mullett

**BEDFORDSHIRE AREA**

Ian Gradwell\*  
Ian Lindsay\*  
Chris Meadows

**BERKSHIRE AREA**

Cliff Lambert\*  
Stuart Shurlock\*  
Pam Hall  
Jane Kiely  
John Moules

**BUCKS & W MIDDX AREA**

David Bradnack\*  
John Esslemont\*  
Heather Lee

**CALEDONIAN (H&I) AREA**

Ken Davidson\*

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA**

Janet Cartwright\*  
Steve Horner\*  
Tessa Capes

**CENTRAL, F & T AREA**

**CORNWALL AREA**

Ken Dawe\*  
Christine James\*  
Brian Jennings  
Hazel Perham  
Duncan Thurnell-Read  
Mary Weston

#### **DERBYSHIRE AREA**

John Hayes\*  
Keith Walkerdine\*

#### **DEVON AREA**

Joan Long\*  
Jean Mills\*

#### **DORSET AREA**

Mike Heckford\*  
Brian Panton\*

#### **DYFED AREA**

John Morgan\*

#### **E YORKS/DERWENT AREA**

Chris Bush\*  
Dennis Parker\*  
Michael Addy  
Ann Cumberland

#### **ESSEX AREA**

Kevin Ascott\*  
John Dowding\*  
Adrian Vincent-Jones\*  
Michael Cullen

#### **GLAMORGAN AREA**

Ian Fraser\*  
Alex Marshall\*  
Danny Lewis  
John Thomas

#### **GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA**

Tony Drake\*  
David Low\*  
Charlie Morriss  
Ann Poole  
Michael Poole

#### **GRAMPIAN AREA**

Jane Catto\*

Alison Mitchell\*

#### **GREATER GWENT AREA**

John Ridley\*

#### **HAMPSHIRE AREA**

Ian Duffin\*  
Owen Plunkett\*  
John Thackray\*  
Brenda Parker

#### **HEREFORD & WORCS AREA**

Trevor Antill\*  
Derek Starkey\*

#### **HERTS & N MIDDX AREA**

Annette Cotter\*  
Robin King\*  
Eunice King

#### **INNER LONDON AREA**

John Archer\*  
Les Douglas\*  
Derek Purcell

#### **ISLE OF WIGHT AREA**

Tim Hough\*  
Geoff Long\*

#### **KENT AREA**

Chris Barrow\*  
Michael Collins\*  
Peter Skipp\*  
Brian Arguile  
Diane Ashdown  
Mary Barratt  
Tony Bilbrough  
Richard Blackford  
Jean Bomber  
Dennis Briddock  
Ian Butler  
Robin Cooper  
Carole Crowley  
Joy Davies  
Michael Finnimore  
Norma Franklin  
Norman Franklin  
Kath Gill  
Annie Graw  
Brian Heath  
Jenny Keaveney

Lynda Knott  
David Law  
Peter Miller  
David Noakes  
Rita Parkinson  
Ron Partridge  
Sarah Pendarves  
Keith Potter  
Cathy Sargent  
Margaret Sharpe  
Michael Sharpe  
John Smout  
Shirley Solly  
Michael Stokes  
Stuart Tilley  
Peter Whitstone  
Christine Wileman  
Jo Williams  
Ken Wright

#### **LAKE DISTRICT AREA**

Harry Hawkins\*  
Peter Jones\*  
Jean Gilligan  
Edward Harle  
Elizabeth Hawkins  
Joan Hibberd  
Audrey Shaw

#### **LEICS & RUTLAND AREA**

Terry Bates\*  
Brian Taylor\*  
Richard Angrave  
Bill Brown

#### **LINCOLNSHIRE AREA**

Pat McClure\*  
Ron White\*  
Mohamed Sayed  
Barbara White  
Len Wilson

#### **LOTHIAN/BORDERS AREA**

David Grosz\*  
Fred Lawson\*  
Kate Armstrong  
James Harrower  
Andrew Ralton

#### **MANCHESTER AREA**

Gloria Gaffney\*  
Terry Perkins\*  
Sue Liptrot

Laura Ogden  
Keith Pennyfather

#### **MERSEYSIDE AREA**

Gloria Thayer\*  
Vi Williams\*  
Dennis Fallon  
Joan Rostron

#### **MID LANCASHIRE AREA**

Mike Bloomfield\*  
David Kelly\*

#### **N YORKS/S DURHAM AREA**

John Brock\*  
John Holmes\*

#### **NORFOLK AREA**

Barbara Goulding\*  
David Goulding\*

#### **NORTH EAST LANCs AREA**

Susan Baxendale\*  
Bill Clegg\*  
Joan Clegg

#### **NORTH WALES AREA**

Pete Bland\*  
Doug Whitehouse\*

#### **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AREA**

Peter Ellement\*  
Jean Perkins\*

#### **NORTHERN AREA**

Tony Jones\*  
Terry Pollard\*  
Mavis Harris  
Ann Key  
Maggie Ramsdale  
Neil Tulloch

#### **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA**

Alan Beverley\*  
Alex Staniforth\*  
Ellen Bishop  
Sarah Rich  
Marian Staniforth  
Chris Thompson

**NTH/MID CHESHIRE AREA**

William Fraser\*  
Tony Wakefield\*  
Paul Lawton

**OXFORDSHIRE AREA**

Margaret Ibbott\*  
Patricia Kingsnorth\*

**POWYS AREA**

Alan Howard\*

**S & E CHESHIRE AREA**

Harry Hadfield\*  
June Mabon\*  
Jane Hadfield

**S YORKS/NE DERBY AREA**

Terry Howard\*  
Allen Pestel\*  
Jack Burling  
Chris Lansdown

**SHROPSHIRE AREA**

Vivienne Hodges\*  
William Hodges\*  
Olive Bishop

**SOMERSET AREA**

Mary Henry\*  
Pam Roberts\*

**STAFFORDSHIRE AREA**

Charlie Bigley\*  
Andrew Griffin\*  
Colin Statham

**STRATHCLYDE, D&G AREA**

Elizabeth Lawie\*  
Kate Walsham\*  
James Riddell

**SUFFOLK AREA**

Dick Leech\*  
Ian St John\*

**SURREY AREA**

Graham Butler\*  
Kate Colley\*  
Margaret Sharp\*  
Eric Scadeng

**SUSSEX AREA**

David Barber\*  
Janet Barber\*  
Brian Cheater

**WARWICKSHIRE AREA**

Michael Bird\*  
Steven Wallsgrove\*  
John Hall  
Frank Mackey  
Janet Satchwell

**WEST RIDING AREA**

Frank Reynolds\*  
Keith Wadd\*  
Judith Reynolds  
David Verity  
Pat Verity  
Diane Willson  
Ken Willson

**WILTS & SWINDON AREA**

Pat Crabb\*  
Christopher Perraton\*

**CAMPING & CARAVANNING CLUB**

Jim Perry\*  
Sylvia Perry

**COUNTRYWIDE HOLIDAYS ASSOCIATION**

Vincent Pedley\*  
Rita Perkins

**DISABLED DRIVERS ASSOCIATION**

Mike Bruton\*  
Roger Fitzwater  
Robin Helby

**HF HOLIDAYS**

John Cass\*

**LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOC**

Edward Marsh\*  
Tom Sinclair

**OPEN SPACES SOCIETY**

Donald Lee\*

**RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SERVICES**

Stuart Alderman\*  
Kathryn Gregory  
Andrew Roberts

**RED ROPE**

Barrie Dobson\*  
Don Kinnibrugh

**YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION**

John Templeton\*  
Sue Cassell

**GUESTS**

Didier Bloch  
Irene Bunting  
Len Clark  
Henk Dikker Hupkes  
Alan Gaskell  
Elsie Gaskell  
Ann Holt  
Arthur Howcroft  
Cameron Mcneish  
Malcolm Petyt

**VISITOR**

Penny Kempe  
Malcolm Mackay  
Richard Parr  
Irene Tipping

**STAFF**

Barrington Bowes-Smith  
Julie Brooks  
Rachael Bryett  
Lucy Burnett  
Gwen Campbell  
Salli Carson  
Reena Chadha  
Kate Conto  
Vanessa Crawford  
Janet Davis  
Jacquetta Fewster  
Vicky Furnival  
Des Garrahan  
Sue Gittins  
Carol Harding  
Murray Hatcher

David Joseph  
Olive Lacey  
Sandra Law  
Claire Madron  
Alan Mattingly  
Adrian Morris  
Dave Morris  
Beverley Penney  
Charlotte Prager  
Paul Rees  
Emily Richmond  
Adrian Ritchie  
Bruce Samuel  
Janice Samuel  
Jackie Sanders  
Christopher Sparrow  
Paul Strong  
Eugene Suggett  
Nicky Warden  
John Watkins  
Julie Wildey

**1. WELCOME**

1.1 Chris Barrow, Kent Area Chairman, welcomed delegates and visitors on behalf of the Area. He spoke about the city of Canterbury and hoped that the delegates would have the opportunity to walk around the city and visit the cathedral. He also spoke about the Millennium Walks, a “daisy-chain” of walks around Kent which were to be launched on Sunday at the end of Council, and which would continue until late August. An invitation to all delegates to participate in the first walk was extended. He finally wished everyone a good conference.

**2. APOLOGIES**

2.1 Council noted apologies from Wally Smith (vice president), Richard Lloyd Jones (vice president), and Pat Lloyd Jones, John Riddall and John Foster (vice president).

**3. APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS**

3.1 The following persons were appointed:

<b>Tellers (Saturday):</b>	Peter Whitestone Tony Bilborough Mary Barratt Sarah Pendarves	<b>(Sunday):</b>	Peter Whitestone Cathy Sargent Brian Heath David Law
<b>Scrutineers:</b>	Stuart Tilley Peter Miller		Norma Franklin Norman Franklin
<b>Timekeepers:</b>	Richard Blackford Tony Bilborough		Ken Wright Peter Miller

**4. MINUTES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL 1999**

4.1 There were no corrections to be made, and the Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of General Council 1999 as a correct record. This was proposed by Brian Reader and seconded by Mavis Rear.

**5. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

5.1 Andrew Bennett MP, President of the Association, told Council how much he was enjoying his term of office. He thanked staff and volunteers for their work and gave a special mention to Frank Syrratt, whom Andrew had been sorry to see leave. However, he welcomed Alan Mattingly back to central office, and praised the access team for their work in lobbying MPs so effectively for the RA cause. He had never known so many MPs to show support for the Association.

5.2 Andrew praised Paddy Tipping MP, vice-president of the Association and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, whose influence had been crucial in getting the freedom to roam legislation to the stage it had now reached.

5.3 Andrew went on to ask how the Association could broaden its membership in order to compete with groups such as the National Trust and the RSPB. Mass membership would result in the Association wielding real political power, and it was time to look to the future and consider what services could be offered to members. Use of new technology to promote the Association’s aims and reach new members was essential.

5.4 Andrew then spoke about the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, and how the Association should be prepared to act to minimise restrictions on the freedom to roam. The Ramblers’ Association’s case for a right of appeal on mapping, closures, and the like could be supported

by reference to the new Human Rights legislation if necessary.

- 5.6 Andrew also spoke about a specific clause in the Bill, Clause 51, Schedule 7 - closing footpaths to reduce crime. Andrew's advice was that it was unlikely that the clause could be defeated as it was such an emotive issue, but that safeguards should be demanded, for example, absolute proof of cause and effect, support of local residents, alternative routes being provided and safety for users being taken into consideration. It might then be possible to "seek to kill the damaging effects with kindness".
- 5.7 Andrew also spoke about a new approach to the countryside. Reforming the Common Agricultural Policy, so that its emphasis changed from food production to conservation of the environment, was a matter with which the Association should concern itself.
- 5.8 A brief question and answer session took place, in which Andrew reinforced his earlier words, emphasising the importance of appealing to all walkers, building membership, and increasing the range of services and support offered to members.

## **6. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

### **Annual Report**

- 6.1 The Chairman moved the adoption of the annual report and, in a new departure, members of staff spoke briefly about the work of the Association over the year.
- 6.2 Paul Rees, Head of Communications, introduced the session, describing the year as one of the most momentous in the history of the RA. The Government had acted in favour of freedom to roam; the Association had initiated legal proceedings against Nicholas van Hoogstraten in a high-profile case; and John Prescott had called for national parks to be created in the South Downs and New Forest.
- 6.3 Nicky Warden, Freedom to Roam Campaign Coordinator, spoke about the progress of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, thanking members for all the letter writing and lobbying done so far. Nicky also asked for more volunteers to join the Rapid Response E-mail group and the Concerned Ramblers group.
- 6.4 Jacquetta Fewster, Head of the Footpaths Campaigns team, spoke about the failure of local authorities to meet Target 2000, and the work being done in the areas where the problems were worst. The "Big Hit" campaign had so far targeted North Yorkshire, with Cardiff, Lincolnshire and Suffolk next in line.
- 6.5 Janet Davis, Acting Head of Footpaths Policy, spoke about the work of the policy team and the Association's legal panel. Janet described how the Association had responded to the consultation paper *Improving Rights of Way in England and Wales*, which was published in July 1999, and how the rights of way proposals contained in the Bill were not as bad as first feared, thanks to the vigorous opposition of the RA and many others. She also announced that a new version of the blue book was being written, which would cover the new legislation.
- 6.6 Emily Richmond, Countryside Protection Officer, talked about the campaign successes of the last year, including the proposal for new national parks in the New Forest and the South Downs, the Barningham High Moor wind farm application being defeated, and the imposition of a speed limit on Lake Windermere. Over the coming year, there was much work to be done, including the preparation of the Association's responses to Regional Planning Guidance, and lobbying for greater protection for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To help in this work a new member of staff for the Countryside Team would be recruited.
- 6.7 Murray Hatcher, Head of Development and Outreach, talked about the challenges facing the Association if it was to become the inclusive and representative body described by Andrew Bennett. He asked members to question the assumptions made about the accessibility of the

Association to those sections of society currently under-represented, and praised the Areas who had supported the formation of pilot groups catering for the needs of younger people. He went on to describe work being done in partnership with other organisations to help less-able people gain access to the countryside, and announced details of the volunteers' conference in July which would focus on Encouraging Walking.

- 6.8 Beverley Penney, Director (Wales), described the hard work done to secure support for the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, with both the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Assembly for Wales. The last year had seen the launch of a major campaign in Cardiff to improve paths and get them onto the definitive map, and also a court victory which confirmed that Monmouthshire County Council's application to divert a cartroad bridleway was wrong. The magistrates threw out the application and awarded costs to the RA. Welsh RA groups had organised more than a thousand walks in Wales in the last year, and the office, with support from volunteers, was preparing a new Welsh language scheme in line with the Welsh Language Act.
- 6.9 Dave Morris, Director (Scotland), talked about the achievements of the last year in Scotland. These included the "Enchanted Wood" project which encouraged primary schools to plan footpaths around their schools to give access to existing local woodlands, and extensive campaigning for the establishment of national parks in Scotland. Dave welcomed to council Cameron McNeish, newly elected RA Scotland President. The draft Bill and associated Scottish Outdoor Access Code were expected to be published in June, and much work would be done on this. In addition there would be new measures to protect footpaths and develop footpath networks around local communities. In general, it was felt to be a very positive time for the Association in Scotland.
- 6.10 Adrian Ritchie, Head of IT and Membership, thanked all the Association's volunteers for their time and commitment. Without its members, the Association was powerless. It was also important to remember the generally unpublicised work done by support staff in the Association's offices. None of the campaigns could be pursued without an effective support infrastructure.
- 6.11 Paul Rees closed the presentation. He stressed the importance of the coming months, both in campaigning terms and organisational ones, as central office would shortly be moving to an open-plan environment to allow people from different departments to work more closely with each other. Paul also emphasised the need for the Association to look to its image and its perception by the wider public, so that it was seen as welcoming, inclusive and relevant to the modern world, without, of course, alienating our existing members. The redesign of the magazine and the website had been the first steps in this continuing process.
- 6.12 Council agreed to adopt the annual report for 1999.

## **7. Questions on the Annual Report**

- 7.1 Alan Howard (Powys Area) praised the presentation of the report and suggested that it be a permanent feature of General Council.
- 7.2 Terry Perkins (Manchester Area) praised the countryside report in particular and expressed his concern about the issue of quarrying, particularly of limestone in the Peak District.
- 7.3 David Low (Gloucestershire Area) thought that the Annual Report was a useful document and that it should be given more exposure.
- 7.4 David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area) supported this view, but requested more information in the Financial Report and Accounts on the day to day business of the Association.
- 7.5 Sue Cassell (YHA) offered support in our outreach work and access to young people via the YHA network.



- 7.6 Tony Jones (Northern Area) asked for more information on opposing urban footpath closures. Janet Davis reported that the rights of way team at central office had prepared a briefing for MPs on footpaths and crime, and that very little real evidence for linkage was found. In fact, there were examples of local police supporting the existence of the footpath network as the public acted as the “eyes and ears” of the community when using paths.
- 7.7 Stuart Alderman (Ramblers’ Association Services) offered sponsorship from Ramblers Holidays to cover an extra print run of the Annual Report for use as a recruitment tool in libraries, doctors’ surgeries etc.
- 7.8 Alan Mattingly thanked the speakers for their support, and Ramblers Holidays for their kind offer of sponsorship (which would be taken up!). He also apologised for the quality of printing in some copies. He asked for other suggestions about future content to be included on the evaluation form provided for delegates.

## **8. Accounts**

- 8.1 The adoption of the accounts for the year to 30 September 1999 was proposed by Treasurer David Hunt and seconded by Peter Ayling (Executive Committee).
- 8.2 The accounts were presented by David Hunt.
- 8.3 David Hunt drew Council’s attention to the high income from legacies this year. When many in the charitable sector were experiencing problems, the Association had experienced a good year overall.
- 8.4 The information contained in the back page of the Annual Report showed that reserves had increased by £182,000. This was mainly due to the income from legacies (£220,000) and fundraising. Income from investments had also been good.
- 8.5 David was impressed by income generation in the Areas.
- 8.6 The Association had also been working with new auditors, who were challenging some existing procedures in an effort to improve efficiency.
- 8.7 The Treasurer thanked Ramblers Holidays for their continuing support, and looked to the Lottery and the Association’s Affinity Card as future sources of income. He also informed General Council of the appointment of an interim finance director, David Joseph, who had begun work at central office.
- 8.8 Mary Robinson (Executive Committee) asked if it were wise for the Association to have half of its assets tied up in Area and Group accounts. David Hunt said that EC had agreed to examine the reserves issue in the near future, and the process having been initiated by Frank Syrratt.
- 8.9 David Bradnack (Bucks and West Middlesex) asked for advice to be given to Areas on the issue of reserves. Alan Mattingly hoped to do this in the near future.
- 8.10 Allen Pestell (South Yorks and North East Derbyshire) thanked David Hunt, but questioned the note in EC minutes referring to the removal of a minute detailing an anonymous donation. David Hunt said that he had drawn up a protocol on disclosing details of anonymous donations.
- 8.11 Dennis Parker (East Yorks and Derwent) requested information on the new office accommodation, particularly the floor area. David Hunt drew attention to his report, circulated to delegates, and confirmed that, though similar in area to the combined floor space at Wandsworth Road and Great Smith Street, the open-plan layout would offer a better working

environment for the staff at central office.

- 8.12 Fred Lawson (Lothian and Borders) asked for clarification on the gain on investments, and also asked if the Association would be able to claim tax back on income through the revised Gift Aid scheme. David Hunt confirmed that he was looking into this.
- 8.13 Terry Perkins (Manchester Area) requested clear guidance be given to Areas and Groups to assist them in making decisions about using funds. Terry felt that the charitable aims were possibly being interpreted in too rigid a manner.
- 8.14 Ken Dawe (Cornwall) asked about the impact of VAT. David Hunt would look into this.
- 8.15 Stuart Alderman (Ramblers' Association Services) noted that no thanks were given in the Accounts to the RA Trust. David Hunt confirmed that the Trust was a major source of funding and that thanks were due.
- 8.16 Jim Perry (Camping and Caravanning Club) offered advice on banking for local groups. In that organisation groups held only current accounts, with all deposited funds administered by the head office. David Hunt thanked him and would report further once the report on reserves was completed.
- 8.17 Council agreed to adopt the accounts for the year to 30 September 1999.

## **9. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN ON RESOLUTIONS PASSED OR REMITTED AT NATIONAL COUNCIL 1999**

- 9.1 Council considered and noted a report from the Executive Committee on action taken on resolutions passed at National Council 1999:

### **Motion 5: Rights of way campaigns (carried)**

- 9.2 Terry Pollard (Northern Area) asked the Executive Committee to press for a campaign to be organised effectively.
- 9.3 Alan Mattingly responded, explaining that staff and volunteers had run a major campaign over the last year, for example, by targeting North Yorkshire County Council in the first "Big Hit". The strategy was a long-term one, with the footpath campaigns team planning ahead. New initiatives included the Footpath Summit on May 6th.

### **Motion 2: Access to woodland (carried)**

- 9.4 John Esslemont (Bucks and West Middlesex) thanked those working on the legislation campaign for pressing to have access to woodland included in the Bill. He also asked what measures were to be taken to encourage members to lobby on this issue.
- 9.5 Alan Mattingly replied that the intention so far had been to safeguard and secure the access currently outlined in the Bill, with further lobbying of MPs to follow to extend this where possible.

### **Motions 4: Involvement of children and young people (carried)**

- 9.6 Allen Pestell (South Yorks and North East Derbyshire) said that he thought coverage for younger people in the magazine was an improvement, but that it should be more proactive than reactive.
- 9.7 Terry Howard (South Yorks and North East Derbyshire) made four suggestions: 1) that the RA should have special membership provision for those under 16; 2) that the RA target material and publications at these age groups; 3) that staff should become fully acquainted with the

work done in the Areas at local level; 4) that the Association should build on the “Let’s Get Going” project and foster greater cooperation between staff and volunteers.

- 9.8 Alan Mattingly explained that a strategy was currently being developed which would look at all of these issues. Once the remaining posts in the outreach team were filled, the work would begin, drawing on the experience of volunteers as part of this process.

**Motion 23: Safe walking routes (remitted)**

- 9.9 John Thackray (Hampshire Area) asked the Executive Committee to reconsider their position on this motion and look to the development of a long-term national strategy.
- 9.10 Alan Mattingly explained that this was not a current priority.

**Motion 12: Footpaths alongside eroding features (carried)**

- 9.11 David Kelly (Mid Lancashire) requested an update on the progress of this issue.
- 9.12 Alan Mattingly explained that there was nothing further to report.

**Motion 21: Local records (carried)**

- 9.13 Michael Bird (Warwickshire) asked for assurance that records and archives would be taken care of during the coming office move.
- 9.14 Alan Mattingly reported that much material had been catalogued and archived as part of the preparations for the move, with some material being transferred to the London Metropolitan Archives. Information which needed to be kept close at hand would be moved into the new accommodation.

**Motion 17: Volunteers (carried)**

- 9.15 Annette Cotter (Herts and North Middlesex) asked the Executive Committee to provide an update on the production of the volunteers handbook.
- 9.16 This was currently in hand.

**Motion 16: Funding for countryside objectives (remitted) and Motion 17: Volunteers (carried)**

- 9.17 Mary Robinson (Executive Committee) expressed her delight at the funding of an additional post in the countryside protection team. She also voiced her concern over an initial draft of part of the volunteers handbook, saying that it was not well received and was a duplication of existing publications. Mary asked how this would proceed and if there would be an Area Secretaries’ handbook.
- 9.18 Alan Mattingly said that work on the handbooks would be taken forward as soon as possible.

**Motion 10: Access for less-able-bodied people to the countryside (carried)**

- 9.19 Roger Fitzwater (Disabled Drivers Association) asked if there were any specific proposals to improve access for the less able. If not, would General Council consider consulting with the DDA Countryside Access Group?
- 9.20 Alan Mattingly replied that there were not yet any specific proposals, but that the outreach team would be developing a strategy soon.

**Motion 11: Walker’s day return tickets (carried) and Motion 21: Local records (carried)**

- 9.21 David Rubinstein (vice-president) expressed a concern that not all motions were taken seriously, citing the above as examples.
- 9.22 Alan Mattingly explained that current circumstances, particularly the preparations for the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, had forced the Executive Committee to give priority to some areas of work over others.

**Motion 28: Converting footpaths into cycle routes (remitted)**

- 9.23 David Sharp (vice-president) asked that his concern on this remitted motion be taken seriously. Some local authorities were not consulting over such applications. Would it be possible for the Association to press for consultation with the local public, the Association and other groups in these cases?
- 9.24 Alan Mattingly said that he appreciated David’s concern. Staff were making representations on this point wherever possible.

**Motion 4: Involvement of children and young people (carried) and Motion 24: Width of public footpaths (remitted)**

- 9.25 Chris Bush (East Yorks & Derwent Area) asked about the implications of the Child Protection Act for the Association’s work with children. He also asked about progress of work on minimum widths for new and diverted footpaths and bridleways, and also on the Association’s action on farm subsidies and field boundaries.
- 9.26 Alan Mattingly replied that the Association would be taking careful account of any changes to the law with regard to Child Protection and other issues. This had been looked at in the past. There was little to report on the other issues, other than to say that we would be looking at opportunities during the committee stages of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill to table amendments which would protect or improve the rights of way network.
- 9.27 As a final point Alan Mattingly commented that, although progress on some issues had been slow, there were two valid reasons for this. Firstly, while the workload at the Association’s offices had increased, there had been a number of staff changes, with some teams being left understaffed for some time. This problem was now being addressed and things would improve in the future. Secondly, the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill had dominated the work of staff and volunteers, with action on other resolutions being delayed so that the Bill could be given priority.

**10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Officers were elected as follows:

<b>President</b>	<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Seconded by:</b>
Andrew Bennett MP	Cath MacKay (for EC)	Kate Ashbrook (for EC)
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Seconded by:</b>
Alan Mattingly	Keith Walkerdine (Derbyshire Area)	Des Whicher
<b>Past Presidents:</b>		
Fay Godwin Chris Hall	Des Whicher	Brian Reader

Mike Harding  
Gerald McGuire  
Peter Melchett  
Janet Street-Porter

**and:**

John Bunting  
Geoff Eastwood  
John Foster  
Alan Howard  
Jack Ibbott  
Richard Lloyd Jones  
David Rubinstein  
David Sharp  
Wally Smith  
Paddy Tipping MP

**Proposal for life membership:**

Tony Drake	Mavis Rear	Terry Squires
Alan & Elsie Gaskell	Ken Willson (West Riding Area)	Kate Ashbrook

**Chairman**

Two nominations were received.

Cath MacKay	Peter Harwood (for EC)	Geoffrey Williams
Des Whicher	Alex Staniforth	Jack Ibbott

After a ballot, Geoff Eastwood, who had temporarily taken the chair, announced the votes cast for each candidate, and that Cath MacKay had been elected.

**Vice Chairman**

Three nominations were received.

Brian Reader	John Holms	Peter Harwood (for EC)
Terry Pollard	Keith Wadd	Peter Jones
Mavis Rear	Alan Howard	Kevin Matthews

After a ballot the Chairman announced the votes cast for each candidate, and that Brian Reader had been elected.

**Treasurer**

David Hunt	Brian Reader (for EC)	Terry Squires
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**Hon Solicitor**

Jerry Pearlman LLB	Brian Reader (for EC)	Terry Squires
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**Appointment of auditors**

Sayer Vincent	Brian Reader (for EC)	Terry Squires
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**10. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- 10.1 Eleven nominations for the Executive Committee were received. After a ballot, the chairman announced the votes cast for each candidate and declared that the following nine persons had been duly elected:

Kate Ashbrook  
Peter Ayling  
Jo Bird  
Annette Cotter  
Kevin Matthews

Alison Mitchell  
Terry Pollard  
Mavis Rear  
Peter Skipp

## 11. ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

- 11.1 Seven nominations for the Agenda Committee were received. After a ballot, the chairman announced the votes cast for each candidate and declared that the following five persons had been duly elected:

Tony Clarkson  
Sylvia Franks  
Ron Moore

Allen Pestell  
Sylvia Popham

## MOTIONS

### OPEN SESSION MOTIONS

An emergency motion was proposed by Terry Pollard (Northern Area), and Council voted overwhelmingly to take the proposal after motion 5 .

#### 1. Countryside and Rights of Way Bill (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Kate Ashbrook and Seconded by Geoffrey Williams:

This General Council warmly welcomes the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill.

EC proposed that the motion be amended as follows:

Add at end "but will attempt to improve the Bill by amendment where necessary."

The amendment was accepted by Council.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Manchester Area by Gloria Gaffney and seconded by Terry Perkins:

Amend motion to read: "This General Council warmly welcomes Part 1 (Access Provisions) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill.

Part 11 (Rights of Way) is more problematical particularly so in relation to clause 51 and schedule 7. This, if enacted, would allow for closure and diversion of urban public footpaths and bridleways for reasons of crime prevention and for school security. Already there are sufficient statutory powers to achieve similar objectives but with some safeguards for users.

General Council therefore instructs the Executive Committee, as a matter of extreme urgency, to seek deletion of clause 51 and Schedule 7 from the Bill."

The amendment was overwhelmingly lost.

The amended motion was carried unanimously.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council warmly welcomes the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, but will attempt to improve the Bill by amendment where necessary.

## **2. Freedom to Roam (Berkshire Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Berkshire Area by Stuart Shurlock and seconded by Cliff Lambert:

This General Council recognises that success in its freedom to roam campaign places an obligation on the Association to encourage the public to exercise its new rights in a responsible manner. It therefore calls on the Executive Committee to investigate ways of fulfilling this obligation.

Avon area proposed the following amendment:

Second line delete...."the public to exercise its...."  
Replace with....."all walkers to exercise their...."

This amendment was accepted by the movers, and carried.

The amended motion was carried overwhelmingly.

The amended motions reads:

This General Council recognises that success in its freedom to roam campaign places an obligation on the Association to encourage all walkers to exercise their new rights in a responsible manner. It therefore calls on the Executive Committee to investigate ways of fulfilling this obligation.

## **3. Long term vision for the Association (Kent Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Kent Area by Peter Skipp and seconded by Michael Collins:

This General Council considers that it is vital that priority should be given to drawing up a long term vision for the future of the Association which will ensure its continued success and growth. Plans must be developed to take full advantage of the Association's present high profile and position.

The Executive Committee is requested to carry out a strategic review of the Association's current activities and future potential and to present a report together with recommendations on the way forward to General Council 2001.

The following issues should be covered in the review:

- plans to secure the RA's position as the market leader in the world of walking;
- actions necessary to achieve a significant increase in membership;
- a review and update of the long term objectives considered and endorsed by General Council in 1996 and 1997;
- an assessment of the resources, both financial and human, likely to be required in support of future activities.

It is not intended that the Executive Committee should be limited in taking any actions

considered necessary to protect and/or develop the RA's position during the course of this strategic review.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of South and East Cheshire Area by Harry Hadfield and seconded by Jim Perry (Camping and Caravanning Club):

Delete the first bulleted point and insert in place: "plans to widen recruitment of those walking clubs and other walkers to be associated with the RA and contribute to its work."

The amendment was lost overwhelmingly.  
The motion was then carried by 57 votes to 52.

#### **4. New National Parks (Hampshire Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by Owen Plunkett and seconded by John Thackray:

This General Council warmly welcomes the government's announcement that it favours the creation of two new national parks in the South Downs and the New Forest and the proposal that downland could be restored to its natural state. It also welcomes the decision of the Countryside Agency to begin the process of national park designation in the New Forest.

It urges the government to ensure that the national park authorities for both areas are set up with full planning powers. It also urges the Countryside Agency in proposing boundaries for both national parks, to ensure that adequate and long term buffer land is included in order to protect the core areas. In the case of the South Downs it calls on the Countryside Agency to:

- (a) make a speedy response to the government on its designation as a national park and
- (b) ensure that its boundaries include as a minimum all of the areas of the Sussex Downs and East Hampshire AONBs.

Hampshire Area amended their motion as follows:

This General Council warmly welcomes the government's announcement that it favours the creation of two new national parks in the South Downs and the New Forest and the proposal that downland could be restored to its natural state. It also welcomes the decision of the Countryside Agency to begin the process of national park designation for both areas.

It urges the government to ensure that the national park authorities for both areas are set up with full planning powers. It also calls on the Countryside Agency to take a very long term view of the land needs and ensure that:

- (a) as a minimum their boundaries include all of the areas set out in the General Council resolution of 1998, in the case of the New Forest and the Sussex Downs and East Hampshire AONBs in the case of the South Downs;
- (b) a designation order for both national parks is submitted to the Secretary of State as soon as possible.

The amendment was accepted by General Council.

The amended motion was carried.



**5. Access to defence lands (Northern Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Northern Area by Terry Pollard and seconded by Tony Jones:

This General Council call upon the government to ensure that maximum access is available to the general public for recreational activities on Ministry of Defence land. To enable this aim to be achieved the following policies to be introduced:-

1. All environmental steering groups to include representatives from non statutory recreational organisations.
2. All dry training areas to have permanent freedom to roam at all times.
3. Maximum publicity to be given to non-firing days.
4. Encourage non-firing days to be arranged at weekends (at least one per month).
5. Duty of care rules to be changed to that which will pertain when access legislation is introduced, provided adequate warning signs are placed at range boundaries and appropriate points throughout the range.
6. The MoD to introduce a central booking system for use of its training areas by military units.

Northern Area proposed that the motion be amended. This was accepted by Council.

In 2, add "subject to the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill".

In 5, delete all from "Duty" to "introduced". Add "where access is to land that would be defined as open country the commandant would be subject to the same provision as a landowner in the Access and Countryside Bill".

Remission of the amended motion to the Executive Committee then was proposed by Jerry Pearlman (Honorary Solicitor) and seconded by David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area).

Remission failed on the Chairman's casting vote, there being 57 votes for and 57 votes against.

The amended motion was lost.

**5A. Emergency Resolution on Otterburn Enquiry (Northern Area)**

The following emergency motion was proposed on behalf of Northern Area by Terry Pollard and seconded by Tony Jones.

In view of the imminent decision by the Secretary of State of the Department of

Environment, Transport and the Regions on the proposed developments by the Ministry of Defence at the Otterburn Training Area, this General Council urges him to reject the Notice of Proposed Development thus preventing substantial and permanent damage to the special qualities of the Northumberland National Park.

The motion was carried.

**6. Disabled access to rights of way (Disabled Drivers Countryside Access Group)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Disabled Drivers Countryside Access Group by Peter Harwood (Executive Committee) and seconded by Barrie Dobson (Red Rope) on behalf of the Disabled Drivers Countryside Access Group.

This meeting notes and approves of the increasing emphasis being placed on access by disabled people to countryside paths and trails by government and the Countryside Agency. Recent examples include:

1. Countryside and Rights of Way Bill. This includes proposals requiring the needs of disabled people to be taken into account, particularly with respect to easing passage through manmade barriers erected at locations such as field boundaries and at road crossings, and by provision of better information on access required from Highway Authorities.
2. The commissioning by the Countryside Agency of a consultant-led study into better disabled access to national trails, leading to a valuable report and recommendations.

The meeting also notes and approves of the high profile role taken by the Countryside Access Group in helping to bring about new basic freedoms and new thinking over disabled access to the national rights of way network.

The motion was carried.

**7. Provision of safe crossings (Essex Area & Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area & Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area by John Dowding (Essex Area) and seconded by Robin King (Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area).

This General Council instructs the national Executive Committee to take urgent action now to implement a national policy to persuade highway authorities to pursue a realistic policy for the urgent provision of safe crossings where the public rights of way network is cut by major roads.

Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area proposed that the motion be amended as follows:

Line 2, delete "highway" and insert "appropriate";

Line 4, after "roads" insert "or railways".

This was accepted by Council.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council instructs the national Executive Committee to take urgent action now to implement a national policy to persuade appropriate authorities to pursue a realistic policy for the urgent provision of safe crossings where the public rights of way network is cut by major roads or railways.

**8. Green lanes - restricting vehicular access (West Riding Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of West Riding Area by Keith Wadd and seconded by Frank Reynolds:

This Council is alarmed at the damage caused to green lanes by the increased use of motorised vehicles and calls upon the Ramblers' Association to implement a campaign for restricting vehicular access to green lanes. In the furtherance of the campaign Council urges that a full survey of green lanes throughout England and Wales is undertaken to ascertain the extent of the damage, and to undertake research including historical research to ascertain whether or not the use of each route by motor vehicles is lawful.

The Executive Committee asked that West Riding Area amend its motion as follows:

Line 3, delete all after "green lanes".

West Riding Area did not accept this amendment.

Berkshire Area proposed the following amendment:

Amend the wording so that the motion reads:

This Council is alarmed at the damage caused to unsurfaced highways by the increased use of them by mechanically propelled vehicles, and calls upon the Ramblers' Association to seek the introduction of legislation that will further restrict access by mechanically propelled vehicles to such unsurfaced highways. Such legislation will firstly create a legal definition of and differentiation between surfaced and unsurfaced highways; and secondly will redesignate all unsurfaced byways open to all traffic as restricted byways.

West Riding Area did not accept Berkshire Area's amendment.

Avon Area proposed the following amendment:

Second paragraph. Line 4, delete "...full survey..."  
Replace with "...sample survey..."

This amendment was accepted by West Riding Area and by Council.

Remission to the Executive Committee of the amended motion was proposed by Jerry Pearlman (Honorary Solicitor) and seconded by Jo Bird.

Remission was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This Council is alarmed at the damage caused to green lanes by the increased use of motorised vehicles and calls upon the Ramblers' Association to implement a campaign for restricting vehicular access to green lanes. In the furtherance of the campaign Council urges that a sample survey of green lanes throughout England and Wales is undertaken to ascertain

the extent of the damage, and to undertake research including historical research to ascertain whether or not the use of each route by motor vehicles is lawful.

**9. Support for hill farmers (Northamptonshire Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Northamptonshire Area by Peter Ellement and seconded by Jean Perkins:

This General Council recognises that it is increasingly uneconomic for hill farmers to graze sheep on the hills and mountains of upland Britain.

We therefore call upon the government to give assistance and support to hill farmers to manage the uplands so that these open spaces do not become overgrown and unwalkable and so to ensure that access is available to everyone.

The following amendment was proposed by the Executive Committee:

Paragraph 2, line 2, delete all after “uplands” and insert “in a sustainable manner which achieves social and environmental objectives and ensures access is available to everyone”.

This amendment was accepted by Northamptonshire Area, and by Council.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Mid Lancashire Area by David Kelly and seconded by Mike Bloomfield:

Paragraph 2, line 3, delete “to everyone” replace with “for quiet recreation on foot”. This amendment was accepted by Northamptonshire Area, and by Council.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council recognises that it is increasingly uneconomic for hill farmers to graze sheep on the hills and mountains of upland Britain.

We therefore call upon the government to give assistance and support to hill farmers to manage the uplands in a sustainable manner which achieves social and environmental objectives and ensures access is available for quiet recreation on foot.

The closing time for discussion on open session motions having been reached, the following motions were remitted to the Executive Committee:

**10. Bulls in fields crossed by public rights of way (Manchester Area)**

This General Council is of the opinion that the presence of bulls in fields crossed by public rights of way is a potential source of danger and acts as a deterrent to walkers in the countryside.

It calls on the EC to campaign urgently for the introduction of an amendment to the Countryside Amenity and Conservation Bill to remove this threat by making it illegal for bulls over ten months old to be at large in any field crossed by a public right of way, irrespective of the breed of the bull or the presence of any accompanying cows or heifers.

**11. Reinstatement of public rights of way across set-aside and derelict agricultural land (Cambridgeshire Area)**

This General Council urges the Executive Committee to investigate the problems associated with the reinstatement of public rights of way across “set-aside” and derelict agricultural land.

**12. Rhizomania (Norfolk Area)**

This General Council demands that the powers contained in the Article 22 of the Plant Health (Great Britain) 1993 Order which are used to close crossfield public rights of way without limit of time and without review where rhizomania infection is confirmed or even suspected, be amended to require that a reasonable alternative path be provided in every case. Moreover, every certificate of rhizomania should be given an expiry date rather than be open ended so that public rights of way are not closed without limit of time and without a review. There should be an inspection at the end of each term and a re-certification only if necessary.

**13. Path orders (Warwickshire Area)**

That this General Council instructs the Executive Committee to arrange for the results of all determined Path Orders to be analysed, and a database created, to provide footpath workers with information on practical and legal aspects of path changes.

**14. Definitive map (Suffolk)**

This General Council deplores the failure of many highway authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations to keep the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way up to date, with the consequence that many hundreds of miles of public paths and roads have remained effectively closed to public use for decades.

Council believes that such a situation is no longer to be tolerated and that there are no sound reasons why members of the Association should not feel free to walk along any route in respect of which there is sufficient evidence of the existence of their right to do so. Council therefore commits the association to support all members who choose to make use of a highway, regardless of whether that highway is included in any official record, and to defend their right to do so in whatever manner may be appropriate.

**15. Amendment to Highways Act 1980, section 31 (Merseyside and West Cheshire Area)**

General Council requests the central office of the Ramblers' Association to take whatever action necessary to have the Highways Act 1980, section 31, sub-section (1) amended for the dedication of way as a highway presumed after uninterrupted public path use for a full period of 20 years reduced to 12 years.

With the greater mobility of population today, particularly in villages, compared with 1980, difficulty is experienced in finding people who have lived and walked in an area for 20 years.

A 12 year period would bring this in line with squatters rights. Surely a right of passage is a

lesser right as compared with a right of ownership of the land as can be acquired by squatting for 12 years.

In addition sub-section (2) of the same act and section to be amended for the period not to be calculated retrospectively from the date when the right of the public to use the way is brought in question, but for a 12 year period at any time during the life of a person and or persons providing evidence.

**16. Roadside margins (Gloucestershire Area)**

This Council is concerned that many roadside margins are generally unsuitable for pedestrians and that particularly in places where a road provides a link between the termini of public paths, highway authorities should be required to provide a suitable and adequately maintained surface.

Council urges HM Government to amend section 71 of the Highways Act 1980, by the addition of the word "pedestrians" before "ridden horses": the section to read:

"It is the duty of a highway authority to provide in or by the side of a highway maintainable at the public expense by them which consists of or comprises a made-up carriageway adequate grass or other margins as part of the highway in a any case where they consider the provision of margins necessary or desirable for the safety or accommodation of pedestrians, ridden horses and driven livestock; and a highway authority may light a margin provided by them under this section."

**17. Planning - new development (Shropshire Area)**

This General Council endorses government policy that 60% of new development should be on brown field sites. Given that regional planning guidance (RPG11) is about to be revised and that land resources are finite, General Council affirms a policy that future development should no longer be so profligate with land.

**CLOSED SESSION MOTIONS**

**18. Recent resignations (Leicestershire & Rutland Area, Lincolnshire Area and Sussex Area [composited])**

(Geoff Eastwood took the Chair during debate of this motion.)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Leicestershire & Rutland Area by Brian Taylor and seconded by David Barber (Sussex Area):

This General Council is extremely concerned at the lack of information to the membership when senior members of the Executive leave their elected positions, and when senior members of staff leave the organisation in sudden circumstances, without any explanation other than a curt note to Area and Group secretaries.

Council instructs the executive Committee to ensure the membership is kept better informed, otherwise the effect on the membership is one of deep concern and distrust at the running of the RA and demands a full and frank explanation of the cause of this most unsatisfactory situation.

The motion was carried.

**19. Proposed new standing order (Avon Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Avon Area by Geoff Mullett and seconded by

Sharon Toase:

This General Council deplors the practice, hopefully rare, of officers of the association opposing outside the association the decisions of an Area, in particular appearing at Public Inquiries supporting or leading the case in opposition to the Area.

Therefore this General Council resolves to adopt the following new standing order:

If it is considered that an Area has acted contrary to the objects of the association, the matter must be called in by the Executive Committee for full investigation, and until such time no officer of the Ramblers' Association at any level may make public representation, in any capacity, against the decision of the Area, nor thereafter if the Executive Committee confirms the Area's decision.

The motion was lost.

**20. Election of Executive Committee by postal vote (Wiltshire and Swindon Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Wiltshire and Swindon Area by Christopher Perraton and seconded by Mike Heckford (Dorset Area):

General Council instructs the Executive Committee to bring forward proposals to General Council 2001 to amend the constitution so that all members of the Ramblers Association will, in future, have the opportunity to elect members of the Executive Committee by postal vote. These proposals, if acceptable to General Council 2001, would enable voting by post to be used for the election of the Executive Committee to take office during, or immediately after, General Council 2002.

The motion was carried by 63 votes to 60.

**21. Candidates for Executive Committee - election nomination form (Mid Lancashire Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Mid Lancashire Area by David Kelly and seconded by Tony Clarkson (Agenda Committee):

This General Council would like more information to be made available about candidates for the Executive Committee. For future General Councils the nomination form should be modified to replace the section "Brief details (not more than 100 words) of the candidate/statement in support of the candidate" with:

"Statement of not more than 300 words in support of the candidate. Candidates are advised to include details of age, occupation, membership of other organisations, previous experience (positions held, committees served on, achievements, etc) and particularly details of how they envisage the future of the RA."

The Agenda Committee nomination form will be unaffected by this change.

The motion was carried.

**22. RA's image (Oxfordshire Area)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Oxfordshire Area by Jack Ibbott (Vice President) and seconded by Margaret Ibbott (Oxfordshire Area):

General Council is concerned that the public, the media and public bodies and organisations involved in countryside matters, and even many of our own members, seem to have misconceptions about the objects and policies of the RA, either thinking us to be no more than a federation of rambling clubs or a single-issue campaign for

the right to roam anywhere and everywhere.

Council therefore requests EC to consider ways in which our image can be enhanced and projected more accurately, for instance, by giving more publicity to the whole range of our activities such as our programmes enabling disadvantaged groups in society to walk in the countryside, and for promoting country walking as a healthy leisure activity, our footpath and countryside work, and by sounding out government at both central and local level as to how they assess our influence on their decision-making processes.

The motion was carried.

**23. RA's logo (Executive Committee)**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Jo Bird and seconded by Kevin Matthews:

That this General Council authorises the Executive Committee to amend or replace the association's logo, subject to consultation with Areas and Groups, but without any need for further reference to General Council.

The following amendment was proposed by the Executive Committee and accepted by Council.

Line 2, after "consultation with", insert "Scottish and Welsh Councils."

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of South and North East Derbyshire Area by Allen Pestell and seconded by Terry Howard:

Line 2, after "...with Areas and Groups" delete the rest of the sentence and add in its place a full stop followed by, "A selection of proposed logos will be published in The Rambler to allow all members to make a choice. The most popular one chosen by them would be the new logo".

The amendment was lost.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Inner London Area by John Archer and seconded by Les Douglas:

Line 2, replace "logo", with "logo design created from within the association's resources".

The amendment was lost.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

That this General Council authorises the Executive Committee to amend or replace the association's logo, subject to consultation with Scottish and Welsh Councils, Areas and Groups, but without any need for further reference to General Council.

The closing time for discussion on closed session motions having been reached, the following motions were remitted to the Executive Committee:

**24. Democracy in the RA (Dyfed Area)**

This General Council reaffirms that the association, as a volunteer body, is strengthened by its



democratic nature. It, however, believes that the expansion of the association, both in the recent past and in the future, requires a re-evaluation of the process for achieving effective democracy as part of the constitution and governance reviews.

General Council therefore instructs EC to evaluate and report back to General Council in 2001 on innovative and effective processes for democratic expression in the association, including the evaluation of alternatives to the current pyramid structure.

**25. Response of central office to legal queries (South & East Cheshire Area)**

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to explore means of improving the response of central office to legal queries on countryside and rights of way matters raised by Areas/Groups.

**26. New and lapsed members (South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area)**

This General Council instructs Executive Committee to look into more effective ways of speeding up the process by which Groups are informed of new and lapsed members.

**12. PRESENTATION OF DRAFT CONSTITUTION**

12.1 Brian Reader chaired a session on the new draft constitution. Jerry Pearlman presented the draft, explaining that many comments had been received, and many were still awaiting consideration. The draft had been analysed at length by experts in this field, and the process was continuing. He requested that any comments on the report be sent, in writing, to the Constitution Working Party.

12.2 The review was also taking into account Area and Group constitutions.

**13. INTERNATIONAL LINKS AND RELATIONS**

13.1 Geoffrey Williams chaired a session on how the Association should develop internationally. He opened by stressing the importance of Europe as a possible source of funding via the European Union, and the possibilities for attracting walkers from the continent to the UK.

13.2 Henk Dikker Hupkes (ERA) spoke about the work of the European Ramblers' Association, and the Euro-Rally in Strasbourg in 2001.

13.3 Didier Bloch (FFRP, Paris) talked about the structure and history of the FFRP. He spoke about their success in building partnerships with nationally owned companies, and their campaigning work.

13.4 Michael Stokes (Kent Area) spoke about Kent Area's success at building links with walkers' groups on the continent and gave an inspiring presentation on the possibilities for the Association to build on this ground work.

13.5 David Rubinstein thanked the speakers.

**14. VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Council noted that the 2001 meeting would be held at the University of Bath on 6-8 April and that the 2002 meeting would be held at the University of Durham on 12-14 April. It was recommended by Executive Committee that the 2003 meeting be held at the University of Lancaster on 11-13 April. This was proposed to Council by David Grosz and seconded by Brian Reader. The recommendation was accepted.

**15. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

- 15.1 The Chairman drew Council's attention to some key features of these Annual Meetings which she had noted over 13 years as a member of Executive Committee.
- 15.2 The meetings acted as a forum where knowledge and experience could be shared between volunteers and staff; they gave an insight into the way the organisation operated; and they were an opportunity to make new friends and develop new contacts. Overall, they led to a widespread feeling of being a part of an effective organisation with new targets and goals.
- 15.3 The Chairman remarked that this meeting of General Council had been exceptional as there had been a number of difficult internal issues over the preceding year. The Executive Committee recognised that members needed more information. The on-going governance review, which would define new job descriptions for the Chairman and Chief Executive, would help pave the way to a more open organisation with a clear vision.
- 15.4 Alongside the governance review, work on the constitution, though a lengthy process, would ensure that the Association had an effective framework which would act as a contract between the Association and its members. The Association had outgrown the old constitution and it was time to update it.
- 15.5 The Chairman applauded the presentation of the Annual Report by staff, pointing out how it had led to greater understanding of the staff as a team, and had illustrated the calibre of the staff at central office, and in Wales and Scotland.
- 15.6 As a general comment on the timetable for the meeting, the Chairman suggested that the Executive Committee would need to look more closely at the agendas of future meetings as it was difficult to get through all the motions if the agenda was so overloaded.
- 15.7 The Chairman congratulated Elsie and Alan Gaskell and Tony Drake on becoming life members, and thanked them for their dedication to the Association over so many years.
- 15.8 The Chairman also thanked Paddy Tipping MP, whose words on the progress of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, and the future of the Association once it became law, provided a springboard for the future. Paddy's speech had shown that there would be no shortage of work once the Bill gained Royal Assent.
- 15.9 The Chairman then thanked other speakers over the weekend, Andrew Bennett MP, Cameron McNeish, Henk Dikker Hupkes and Didier Bloch. She thanked the chairmen and leaders of the various working parties, and of all the fringe meetings over the weekend. The Association's staff were thanked for their work which was a true team effort.
- 15.10 Special thanks were given to the host area, Kent, which had arranged tellers, scrutineers, microphone monitors, time keepers, registration staff, walks leaders, lifts from the station and had given an enormous amount of time helping to arrange a successful meeting.
- 15.11 Thanks were given to all the staff at Kent University, who had made the stay at the university so enjoyable.
- 15.12 Finally, thanks were given to all the delegates.
- 15.13 The Chairman said that she was proud to be a member of the Ramblers' Association and honoured to have been elected as chairman. She promised that in the coming year the Executive Committee would work together as a team with volunteers, staff and the new Chief Executive to meet targets, achieve Council's wishes and raise the profile of the Association.
- 15.14 The Chairman's remarks were greeted with applause.
- 15.15 David Grosz then thanked the Chairman and praised her dedication and integrity throughout a

difficult period. This vote of thanks was warmly acclaimed.

**THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS**

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