

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
13th-14th APRIL 2002**

* denotes a member of Council (voter)

PRESIDENT

Andrew Bennett MP*

VICE-PRESIDENT

John Bunting*
Geoff Eastwood*
Jack Ibbott*
Alan Mattingly*
David Rubinstein*
David Sharp*

CHAIRMAN

Cath MacKay*

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Brian Reader*

TREASURER

David Hunt*

HONORARY SOLICITOR

Jerry Pearlman*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Kate Ashbrook*
Peter Ayling*
Jo Bird*
Annette Cotter*
Kevin Matthews*
Alison Mitchell*
Terry Pollard*
Mavis Rear*
Peter Skipp*
Terry Squires*

AGENDA COMMITTEE MEMBER

Terry Bates*
Tony Clarkson*
Sylvia Franks*
Ron Moore*
Sylvia Popham*

Circular: 02/122

AVON AREA

Peter Gould*
Audrey Lennox*
Geoff Mullett

BEDFORDSHIRE AREA

Bob Cato*
Bob Wallace*
Carole Dixon

BERKSHIRE AREA

Jane Kiely*
Caroline McDonagh*
Cliff Lambert
Stuart Shurlock

BUCKS & W MIDDX AREA

David Bradnack*
John Esslemont*
Keith Potter

CAMBS & PETERBO AREA

Sara Donner*
Steve Horner*

CENTRAL, F & T AREA

Charles Nash*

CORNWALL AREA

Christine James*
Hazel Perham*

DERBYSHIRE AREA

John Hayes*
Alan Snowball*
Joyce Mold

DEVON AREA

John Howell*
Jean Mills*

DORSET AREA

David Riches*
Keith Seymour*

DYFED AREA

Hedydd Phillips*
Geoffrey Williams*

E YORKS/DERWENT AREA

Chris Bush*
Dennis Parker*
Trevor Oates
Sheila Smith

ESSEX AREA

John Dowding*
Hazel Jarrold*
Adrian Vincent-Jones*

GLAMORGAN AREA

Ian Fraser*
Margaret Scott*
Gillian Masters

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA

Jill Byrne*
Charlie Morriss*
Diane Cox
Karen Hilling

GRAMPIAN AREA

Jane Catto*
Irene Cruickshanks*

GREATER GWENT AREA

John Ridley*

HAMPSHIRE AREA

Alan Marlow*
Brenda Parker*
Owen Plunkett*

HEREFORDSHIRE AREA

Arthur Lee*
Nick Rayner*

HERTS & N MIDDX AREA

Justin Lumley*
Bert Richardson*

Sheila Richardson

HIGHLAND & ISLANDS AREA

Ken Davidson*
Brian Spence*

INNER LONDON AREA

Mike Biggs*
Les Douglas*

ISLE OF WIGHT AREA

Jacqui Hough*
Mike Marchant*
Tim Hough

KENT AREA

Jean Bomber*
John Charles*
David Noakes*
Richard Blackford

LAKE DISTRICT AREA

Brian Jones*
Peter Jones*
Tim Baynes
Jim Burns
Jean Gilligan
Joan Hibberd
Mick Leverton
Pam Leverton
Tony Rogers
Audrey Shaw

LEICS & RUTLAND AREA

Bill Brown*
Ellen Sandeman*

LINCOLNSHIRE AREA

George Grout*
Ron White*
Bill Allen
Brett Collier
Barbara White

LOTHIAN/BORDERS AREA

David Grosz*
Laurie Macaskill*
Ian Harris
Jim Harrower
Bridget Wilcox

MANCHESTER AREA

Janet Cuff*
Terry Perkins*
Edgar Ernstbrunner
Gloria Gaffney
Keith Pennyfather
Steve Slater

MERSEYSIDE AREA

Gloria Thayer*
Vi Williams*
Freda Parsons

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

David Kelly*

N YORKS/S DURHAM AREA

John Armstrong*
John Holmes*

NORFOLK AREA

Donald Davenport*
Ian Mitchell*

NORTH EAST LANCS AREA

Susan Baxendale*
Alan Johnson*

NORTH WALES AREA

Pete Bland*
Dave Hollett*

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AREA

Peter Ellement*

NORTHERN AREA

Tony Jones*
Mary Moore*
Dorothy Anderson
Erica Bamford
John Bamford
Stan Beckenstall
John Blacklock
Barbara Calvaley
Michael Calvaley
Clive Crossley
Martin Davies
Christine Dodds
John Dodds
Doreen Ercox
Arthur Harris

Mavis Harris
Margaret Hodgson
Sheila Jeffries
Ann Key
Pat Lynch
Brenda Nunn
Jeff Porter
Margaret Porter
Pennie Porter
Arthur Quick
Geoff Shearing
Margaret Smithard
Ron Smithard
Joyce Sutherland
John Swift
Judith Taylor
Rosemary Thompson
Margaret Watson
Michelle Whitworth
Nuala Wright

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA

Sarah Rich*
Chris Thompson*
Michael Ayling
Jonathan Bramley

NTH/MID CHESHIRE AREA

Keith Doughty*
Tony Wakefield*
Simon Gebbett

OXFORDSHIRE AREA

Ray Hance*

POWYS AREA

S & E CHESHIRE AREA

Alan Soper*
Joan Soper*

S YORKS/NE DERBY AREA

Terry Howard*
Allen Pestell*
Peter Haines

SHROPSHIRE AREA

Marion Law*
Alison Parker*
Vivienne Hodges
William Hodges

SOMERSET AREA

Mary Henry*

STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

Anne Clamp*
Richard Clamp*

STRATHCLYDE, D&G AREA

Ada Caldwell*
Elizabeth Lawie*

SUFFOLK AREA

Geoff Pratt*
Iain Taylor*

SURREY AREA

Graham Butler*
Kate Colley*
Alan Lewis*

SUSSEX AREA

Malcolm Mcdonnell*
Nigel Sloan*

WARWICKSHIRE AREA

Michael Bird*
Janet Satchwell*
John Hall

WEST RIDING AREA

Keith Wadd*
Rodney Waddilove*
Max Grant
Margaret Thomas
Dorothy Willson
Ken Willson

WILTS & SWINDON AREA

Pat Crabb*
Jean Davis*

WORCESTERSHIRE AREA

Trevor Antill*
Derek Starkey*

CAMPING & CARAVANNING CLUB

Jim Perry*

COUNTRYWIDE HOLIDAYS ASSOCIATION

Margaret Whiteside*

HF HOLIDAYS

Peter Cass

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOC

Peter Morrill*

OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

Donald Lee*

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SERVICES

Stuart Alderman*
Kathryn Gregory

RED ROPE

Barrie Dobson*

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

Bryan Harwood*

GUEST

Irene Bunting
Lord Clark Of Windermere
Tony Drake
Carol Fuller
Denis Fuller
Ann Holt
Arthur Howcroft
Margaret Ibbott
Rt Hon Alun Michael MP
Malcolm Petyt
James Sinclair Taylor

VISITOR

Nicky Lettington
John Nurse
Jamal Pasha
Naeem Siraj

STAFF

Josie Amadiogwu
Kelly Archer
Nick Barrett
Paul Bell
Rebecca Brewin
Rachael Bryett

Gwen Campbell
Salli Carson
David Carter
Kate Conto
Vanessa Crawford
Janet Davis
Des De Moor
Jacquetta Fewster
Des Garrahan
Zenia Jamison
David Joseph
Olive Lacey
Adrian Morris
Ian McCall
Denise Noble
Donna O'Brien
Beverley Penney
Emily Richmond
Carys Roberts
Kareen Robertson
Janice Samuel
Christopher Sparrow
Paul Strong
Eugene Suggett
Nicky Warden
Julie Wildey
Charlotte Williams
Ed Wilson
Ian Woodhurst
Sharon Woods

1 WELCOME

- 1.1 Lord Clark of Windermere, Northern Area vice-president, welcomed delegates and visitors to Tyneside on behalf of the Area. Lord Clark told delegates that, in autumn of 2001, he had been asked by the Prime Minister to take up chairmanship of the Forestry Commission, and had accepted. Lord Clark had worked in forestry early in life, and strongly believed that forestry management was not just about trees, but about sustainability, social inclusion, recreation and health, and these were issues on which Lord Clark hoped progress was being made.
- 1.2 Lord Clark recorded with pleasure that the Worldwide Fund for Nature had awarded the Forestry Commission "Gift to the Earth" status. This was the first time a state institution had been given such an award, and was in recognition of the fact that all Forestry Commission managed forests were now certified as sustainable.
- 1.3 Lord Clark then warned delegates of the importance of vigilance with regard to the New Forest National Park. Lord Clark anticipated that a public inquiry would take place and emphasised the need for all those with an interest in the creation of a new national park to ensure that the matter was brought to a successful conclusion.
- 1.4 Lord Clark went on to speak about the pleasure felt within the parliamentary Labour party at the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, and its freedom to roam provisions. Lord Clark then gave delegates the important news that the Forestry Commission had decided to dedicate all state-owned freehold forest in England and Wales for access on foot in perpetuity. Whatever the future of the Commission, even if it were privatised, the land would remain dedicated. Delegates responded with applause.
- 1.5 Lord Clark ended by wishing all delegates a successful meeting. The chairman thanked Lord Clark.

2 APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Council noted apologies from Richard Lloyd Jones (vice-president), and Pat Lloyd Jones, Cameron McNeish (president of RA Scotland), Mary Weston, Kate Sayer (Sayer Vincent – RA auditors), John Holms, Malcolm MacKay, Linda Nash (Central Fife and Tayside).

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 3.1 Council noted that Peter Morrill (Long Distance Walkers Association) was attending as a delegate, and Peter Cass (HF Holidays) was attending as a visitor.
- 3.2 The chairman welcomed David Rubinstein (vice-president) to the meeting, following his illness which had kept him away from Council in 2001.
- 3.3 The chairman also congratulated David Hunt (treasurer) on behalf of Council on being awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to charities and voluntary organisations for over 40 years.
- 3.4 Council agreed that the president's address should be taken after the election of officers.

4 APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

4.1 The following persons were appointed:

Tellers (Saturday):	Doreen Ercox Brenda Nunn Jeff Porter Margaret Watson	(Sunday):	Michelle Whitworth John Dodds Brenda Nunn Christine Dodds
Scrutineers:			Margaret Porter John Blacklock Margaret Hodgson Geoff Shearing
Timekeepers:	John Swift Pennie Porter		Arthur Quick Mavis Harris

5 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 There was no other business.

6 MINUTES OF GENERAL COUNCIL 2001

6.1 There were no corrections, and the chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of General Council 2001 as a true record.

6.2 There were no matters arising.

7 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Annual report

7.1 The chairman moved the adoption of the annual report.

7.2 The chairman thanked members, sponsors, donors and Ramblers Holidays for their contributions, which made the work of the association possible. She reminded Council that, whilst EC members take a close interest in the detailed work that goes on at national and local level, EC's main rôle is to give strategic direction to the work at national level. EC entrusts the operational running of the organisation to the chief executive and the annual report summarises that work over the last year.

7.3 Council gave permission for Nick Barrett, the chief executive, to speak to the annual report.

7.4 The chief executive began by talking about the work of Ramblers Scotland, where staff and volunteers had played an important rôle in promoting access legislation. The RA had led an alliance of environmental and conservation bodies which had run an effective campaign to further the rights of walkers. This campaign continued. Preventing new trespass legislation being included in the Land Reform Bill was a testimony to the strength and depth of the association's commitment in Scotland, and to the RA as a campaigning organisation.

7.5 With regard to the association's finances, the chief executive reported that, having assured Council in 2001 that stability and control would be gained; the financial situation was now greatly improved. Income and reserves had increased at the centre, with expenditure being reduced. This meant that, while expenditure had exceeded income by £1,000 a day in the financial year 2001-2002, the association was now in profit by £300 a day. The chief executive thanked all those Areas and

Groups which had played a part in this turn-around. He also assured Council that the problems were being addressed seriously.

- 7.6 Referring to the 2001 outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), the chief executive spoke about how this had acted as a “wake-up call” to those concerned with the rural economy, rights of way, walking and other issues. Now it seemed that there was potential for positive outcomes to result from such terrible events. All now had a rôle to play in ensuring that the lessons learned were acted upon, and that those with a tendency to retreat to their “bunkers” were not allowed to do so.
- 7.7 The chief executive then spoke about his recent attendance at Welsh Council, where he had met with farmers pleased to have rights of way on their land as they felt that they connected their way of life with that of others, and helped engender a feeling of mutual respect between those living in rural and urban environments. They were, however, exceptions to the rule, but proved that some attitudes were changing.
- 7.8 With regard to access, the chief executive spoke about how his vision for walkers was one where access meant less about rights, and more about a countryside accessible to all.
- 7.9 The chief executive ended by thanking everyone for their work during his first 18 months of office; it was the effort of volunteers that made the association so effective.

Questions on the annual report

- 7.10 David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area) asked that more precise membership figures for the association as a whole, and for Areas and Groups, be included in the annual report. The chief executive agreed to look into this.
- 7.11 Sylvia Franks (Agenda Committee) gave additional information on the Sawley right-of-way case, pointing out that the Ribble Way could still be used.
- 7.12 Jane Kiely (Berkshire Area) suggested that the RA work with organisations such as Mencap to bring walking opportunities to those with disabilities.
- 7.13 David Rubinstein (vice-president) spoke in support of the chief executive’s comments on FMD, saying how gratifying it was to see the contributions made by walkers to the rural economy acknowledged.
- 7.14 Council agreed to adopt the annual report.

8 Accounts

- 8.1 The adoption of the accounts for the year to 30 September 2001 was proposed by the treasurer, David Hunt, and seconded by David Grosz (Lothian and Borders Area).
- 8.2 The treasurer then presented the accounts.
- 8.3 Speaking about income, the treasurer pointed out that, as members’ subscriptions were the most consistent income source for the RA, it was important to increase membership. Other sources of income, such as trusts, legacies and fundraising, were more open to external influence, so could not be relied on as heavily as subscriptions.
- 8.4 The treasurer thanked the Ramblers’ Association Trust for its continued generosity, and congratulated Ramblers Holidays in being voted fourth in the Guardian’s holiday league table.
- 8.5 Net income and resources had ended close to budget, but the figures in the accounts masked the fact that there remained an imbalance between Areas and the centre, with too much of the association’s reserves held in Area bank accounts. While this situation prevailed, there would be insufficient funds to expand the work of the RA. The treasurer stressed that money raised by the

association should be spent on the agreed charitable objectives, and not held in bank accounts or given as grants to other organisations.

- 8.6 The motion on incorporation to be debated by Council offered the opportunity to bring greater stability, improved governance and reduced trustee liability to the association.
- 8.7 The treasurer told delegates of his decision to retire, and thanked members, the executive committee, officers and staff for all of their support over his five-year period of service.
- 8.8 Council warmly applauded the treasurer.

Questions on the Annual Accounts

- 8.9 Dennis Parker (East Yorks and Derwent Area) asked if the association had considered giving supporters the option to pay a monthly donation by direct debit, as many other organisations did. The treasurer said that this was being considered.
- 8.10 David Rubinstein (vice-president) supported the suggestion that monthly contributions be investigated, and pointed out that there was nothing to prevent members from arranging such donations themselves.
- 8.11 Bert Richardson (Herts and North Middlesex Area) spoke in support of appeals for accumulated Area and Group funds being moved to the centre.
- 8.12 Charles Nash (Central, Fife and Tayside Area) queried the figures given for legal and professional expenditure. The treasurer clarified these. The Legal Panel budget, consultant fees and production costs for The Rambler, were the main areas of expenditure.
- 8.13 Hazel Perham (Cornwall Area) asked that the postage costs of material sent from the offices be considered and reduced where possible.
- 8.14 Geoff Williams (Dyfed Area) asked for clarification on the expenditure on property leases. The treasurer explained that this expenditure was on current leases only.
- 8.15 Charlie Morriss (Gloucestershire Area) asked if an increase in subscription rates had been considered. The treasurer replied that encouraging take-up of full-rate membership by those able to afford it, and increasing the number of members joining in their 20s and 30s were currently regarded as the best options for increasing income from membership subscriptions.
- 8.16 David Riches (Dorset Area) asked why some funds were listed as restricted in the Annual Accounts. The treasurer replied that this was income from the Way Ahead appeal, and was therefore restricted to rights-of-way work.
- 8.17 Tony Jones (Northern Area) asked about the future of the RA's credit card scheme. The treasurer said that there had been some problems with promotion of the MBNA card, but that potentially such a scheme could substantially increase income generation. The incoming treasurer and the finance director would look at the matter again.
- 8.18 Jim Perry (Camping and Caravanning Club) thanked the treasurer for all his work.
- 8.19 The chairman supported this, and asked that the thanks of Council to the treasurer be recorded.
- 8.20 Council agreed to adopt the accounts for the year to 30 September 2001.

9 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

9.1 Officers were elected, as follows:

President	Proposed by:	Seconded by:
Andrew Bennett MP	Cath MacKay	Brian Reader

Past Presidents

The following past presidents automatically become vice-presidents:

Fay Godwin
Chris Hall
Mike Harding
Peter Melchett
Janet Street-Porter

Vice-presidents	Terry Pollard	Terry Squires
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John Bunting
Geoff Eastwood
John Foster
Jack Ibbott
Richard Lloyd Jones
Alan Mattingly
David Rubinstein
David Sharp
Paddy Tipping MP

Geoff Eastwood temporarily took the chair for the election of the chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer and honorary solicitor.

Chairman

Cath MacKay	Peter Ayling	Terry Pollard
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Vice Chairman

Brian Reader	Peter Ayling	Terry Pollard
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Treasurer

Denis Fuller	Peter Skipp	Cath MacKay
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Hon Solicitor

Jerry Pearlman LLB	Peter Ayling	Terry Pollard
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10 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

10.1 It was proposed on behalf of the executive committee by Mavis Rear, and seconded by Peter Skipp, that Sayer Vincent be re-appointed as the association's auditors, for the ensuing year. This was agreed.

11 ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 11.1 Ten 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
Chris Bush
Annette Cotter

Kevin Matthews
Terry Pollard
Mavis Rear
Peter Skipp

12 ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

- 12.1 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
Liz Lawie

Ron Moore
Sylvia Popham

13 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

- 13.1 Andrew Bennett MP began by expressing his concern at the lack of a new contender for the position of president. Though honoured to be asked to serve a further year, it was time for the association to seek someone new.
- 13.2 Andrew went on to say that the lack of a new president highlighted the issue of image, and how the association should go about attracting more members. With 500,000 or a million members, the scope of work undertaken by the RA would be revolutionised and one had only to look at the RSPB to see what could be achieved. The key was to attract more of the many millions of walkers who were currently not RA members. An increase in members would also bring an increase in active volunteers, walk leaders and campaigners, but most of all it would bring in more money for the work of the association.
- 13.3 Andrew asked delegates to think about recruiting younger members. Perhaps older people had always formed the majority of the association's membership, but it was now time to address the issue and ensure that the RA recruited more younger people.
- 13.4 Going on to talk about the draft maps which were being prepared under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, Andrew expressed reasonable satisfaction with those for Berwyn in Wales and the lower north-west in England. He expressed greater concern for the draft map of the south-east, particularly in respect of the South Downs. Andrew congratulated all involved in the consultation process and thanked volunteers for their work in checking the mapped land and suggesting additions to the draft maps. He hoped that every Group would look at the draft maps for their areas, and make any representations needed to make the maps as beneficial as possible. After many years of campaigning it was crucial that the implementation was seen through. Andrew said that he knew of footpaths which had not been designated rights of way due to a lack of work on the ground, and that a similar situation must not arise with regard to access land.
- 13.5 Andrew went on to comment on some other issues which came to mind in relation to access, including the importance of a review of farming subsidies. Access land was currently defined by agricultural use, and Andrew felt that there was a strong argument for this being reviewed, as it was now obvious that tourism was more important to the rural economy than farming. The dedication of access land was good news for the rural economy as a whole, not just for walkers, and farmers should be encouraged to cooperate in the mapping process.

- 13.6 Andrew expressed his disappointment at the failure of Footpath Target 2000, with little improvement in many areas and a decline in conditions in some areas. Andrew suggested that the RA needed more footpath officers to make an impact on the current figures, as it was easier for a local authority to manage their relationship with one active volunteer. The association needed more people to do footpath work, and to increase the number of successful actions.
- 13.7 Finally, Andrew thanked the executive committee, staff and all volunteers for their work, and asked all to endorse the strategic framework document, *Waymarking the Future*, to ensure that, in five years time, the RA continued to be a formidable force, hopefully doubled in size.

MOTIONS

14 EMERGENCY MOTIONS

- 14.1 Council considered the addition to the agenda of three emergency motions.
- 14.2 It was proposed by Terry Pollard, on behalf of Northern Area, that an emergency motion on Youth Hostel closures be taken. Council voted overwhelmingly to debate the motion and to do so after motion 1. (The text of the motion is as in motion 1A, item 15, below.)
- 14.3 It was proposed by Jerry Pearlman, as honorary solicitor, that an emergency motion on the Model Code of Conduct for members of National Parks and the Broads be taken. Council voted overwhelmingly to debate the motion and to do so after motion 3. (The text of the motion is as in motion 3A, item 15, below.)
- 14.4 It was proposed by Terry Perkins and seconded by Janet Cuff, on behalf of Manchester Area, that an emergency motion on Green Lanes be taken:

General Council applauds the initiative of the North Yorkshire County Council in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to press ahead with their proposals to restrict access by motorised vehicles – other than access by farmers and landowners – on just four vulnerable green tracks in the Dales.

We deplore the vociferous and abusive campaign orchestrated by LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association) even before a public consultation exercise has begun.

General Council reaffirms its support for sustainable activities in National Parks and upholds the principle “for quiet enjoyment” as an essential requirement for maintaining the integrity of our National Parks.

This motion was not accepted by Council as an emergency motion.

15 OPEN SESSION MOTIONS

The vice-chairman, Brian Reader, assisted the chairman by chairing debate on some of the following motions.

[1.] **Strategic framework** (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Kevin Matthews, and seconded by Terry Pollard:

This General Council approves the document “**Waymarking the future - the RA in the 21st century**, a *strategic framework for the growth and development of the Ramblers’ Association*” and calls on all parts of the Association to work towards its implementation

over the next five years, subject to the addition of the words “and other major” between the words “trunk” and “roads” in Waymarking, page 10, para KD2F.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[1A.] Emergency motion on Youth Hostel closures (Northern Area)

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

This General Council deeply regrets the YHA’s decision to close ten youth hostels following the FMD crisis, and especially those in national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty, and those close to national trails.

We urge YHA to find alternative sites in the areas threatened with closures, and we shall support its efforts, by measures which include pressing local authorities and the regional development agencies to assist the YHA with the necessary investments, and arguing the benefits which youth hostels provide to the rural economy.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[2.] CROW Act, Section 16 (Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area by John Esslemont, and seconded by David Bradnack:

With reference to section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, this General Council:

- i) calls on the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the National Assembly for Wales to make regulations at the earliest opportunity, and broadly in line with the proposals of the consultation paper issued in January 2002, to implement voluntary access dedication measures and to take steps to encourage landowners to take up this option;
- ii) calls on the Forestry Commission and other public bodies to dedicate appropriate land at the earliest possible opportunity;
- iii) congratulates those landowners who have already announced their intention to dedicate land;
- iv) urges private landowners to consider dedicating appropriate land;
- v) instructs the Executive Committee to establish procedures for monitoring the extent and effectiveness of voluntary access dedications;
- vi) encourages legitimate campaigning at local level to seek dedication of particular sites where this is clearly in the public interest.

The following amendment was proposed by Geoff Williams (Dyfed Area):

Add:

- vii) urges that adequate national publicity be given to each and every dedication.

The amendment was accepted by the movers.

The following amendment was proposed by David Rubinstein (vice-president) and seconded by David Grosz (Lothian and Borders Area):

in point iv) - delete “consider dedicating” and replace with “dedicate”

The amendment was accepted by the movers.

The amended motion was carried overwhelmingly.

The amended motion reads:

With reference to section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, this General Council:

- i) calls on the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the National Assembly for Wales to make regulations at the earliest opportunity, and broadly in line with the proposals of the consultation paper issued in January 2002, to implement voluntary access dedication measures and to take steps to encourage landowners to take up this option;
- ii) calls on the Forestry Commission and other public bodies to dedicate appropriate land at the earliest possible opportunity;
- iii) congratulates those landowners who have already announced their intention to dedicate land;
- iv) urges private landowners to dedicate appropriate land;
- v) instructs the Executive Committee to establish procedures for monitoring the extent and effectiveness of voluntary access dedications;
- vi) encourages legitimate campaigning at local level to seek dedication of particular sites where this is clearly in the public interest;
- vii) urges that adequate national publicity be given to each and every dedication

[3.] CROW Act in Wales (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Terry Squires, and seconded by Kate Ashbrook:

General Council notes with approval that the implementation of the CROW Act in Wales will bring huge benefits to the public, walkers and RA members throughout Britain, and that the National Assembly for Wales has identified money to enable local authorities and national parks in Wales to put the provisions of the Act into effect. It strongly supports Welsh Council in urging the National Assembly and local authorities and national parks in Wales to ensure that this money is used for this purpose, and not for others.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[3A.] Emergency motion on Model Code of Conduct (Honorary Solicitor)

The following motion was proposed by Jerry Pearlman (Honorary Solicitor), and seconded by Geoffrey Williams (Dyfed Area):

This General Council of The Ramblers' Association makes strong representations to the Government for a change in the Model Code of Conduct for members of National Parks and the Broads.

The Code presently states that in many cases, farming interests of farmers or land owners will not be considered to be prejudicial interests when a committee or authority deals with general farming issues which therefore will include discussions about the general grant structure sometimes provided by local authorities to farmers and landowners.

There is no such provision protecting ramblers or other rights of way users. Neither does the Code give any form of protection for those interested in issues such as conservation, wildlife or cultural heritage (these being some of the purposes of National Parks).

Council therefore calls upon the Government to create a "level playing field" whether by way of:-

- (a) removing the protection for farming and landowning interests; or
- (b) giving similar protection to those interested in the rights of way network and a variety of other special interests.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[4.] Planning Green Paper (England) (Manchester Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Manchester Area by Terry Perkins, and seconded by Janet Cuff:

General Council views with alarm and dismay the consequences for the English countryside embodied in the government's planning green paper. The key rôle of the planning system is to deliver sustainable development and effective protection of the countryside through democratic and public processes.

The planning green paper and its accompanying daughter documents contain unacceptable proposals to remove democratically convened public inquiries for deciding on major infrastructure projects and give parliament the powers to push schemes through without adequate public consultation, thus losing the opportunity to present the value of the environment to decision makers. They also propose to remove the right of the public to scrutinise local plans for development at public inquiry, to abolish strategic planning at a county level so removing the opportunity for public involvement with key decisions, such as on housing numbers, and to introduce Business Planning Zones which will give industry a free rein to build without planning consent in certain areas. These proposals are at odds with the Prime Minister's party's election manifesto commitment to put concern for the environment at the heart of decision making.

General Council calls on the government to reaffirm its public declaration of being the custodian of the environment by ensuring that planning decisions are based on full representation at public inquiries before committing our countryside irretrievably to further erosion and degradation.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[5.] Rights of Way (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Peter Ayling, and seconded by Kate Ashbrook:

This General Council is deeply concerned that the Countryside Agency's rights-of-way condition survey 2000 shows that there has been only marginal improvement in the condition of public paths in England since the previous survey in 1994, and that, £69 million is needed to get paths into top condition. We consider these results to be particularly alarming given the widespread recognition of the importance of rights of way to the rural economy and for recreation, health, sustainable transport and rural business recovering from recent path closures during foot-and-mouth. We exhort our volunteers to campaign for their highway authorities to devote the necessary resources and priority to public paths to enable them all to be in top condition by 2010 at the latest.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[6.] Ridgeway Code of Respect (Avon Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Avon Area by Peter Gould, and seconded by Audrey Lennox:

This General Council repudiates the Ridgeway Code of Respect and calls upon the Countryside Agency to devise an effective strategy to maintain the structure and protect the ancient character of the Trail.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area by David Bradnack and seconded by John Esslemont:

In line 1: delete “repudiates the Ridgeway Code of Respect” and substitute “considers the Ridgeway Code of Respect inadequate to protect vulnerable parts of the Ridgeway”.

The amendment was lost.

The motion was carried.

[7.] South Downs National Park designation date (Hampshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by Owen Plunkett, and seconded by Nigel Sloan (Sussex Area):

This Council welcomes the progress that the Countryside Agency has made towards the creation of the South Downs National Park. However it expresses deep concern at the statement by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that the designation process could be delayed until 2006. It instructs the EC to urge the government to keep to the original timetable set by the Countryside Agency.

The motion was carried *nem con*.

[8.] British Standard on Gaps, Gates and Stiles (Norfolk Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Norfolk Area by Donald Davenport, and seconded by Ian Mitchell:

This General Council welcomes the publication of the British Standard 5709:2001 *Gaps, Gates and Stiles* as an important step towards achieving a more accessible path network.

Council resolves that the Association will seek, via Scottish and Welsh Councils, Areas and Groups, to have the principles of the Standard applied to all paths and routes used by walkers - whether or not public rights of way - by the end of 2007.

Council instructs the Executive Committee to report to the annual meeting of General Council in 2005 on progress with this campaign.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area by John Esslemont and seconded by David Bradnack:

Add at end of first sentence: “, but notes with satisfaction the statement in the foreword that “local traditional forms of gates and stiles should not be lightly discarded for a standard design”

In second paragraph, delete “all paths” and substitute “all new structures on paths”.

This amendment was lost by 59 votes to 57.

The motion was carried.

[9.] Footpaths being converted into cycle tracks (Inner London Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Inner London Area by Mike Biggs, and seconded by Les Douglas:

This General Council applauds the Association’s increasing concern on the issue of footpaths being converted into cycle tracks without benefit of Cycle Track Orders.

We are aware that the government has for some time been consulting on revising Local Traffic Note 2/86. In view of the increase in cycle use since that document was published, and the proliferation of conversions of footpaths and footways to shared use,

we urge that the Executive press the government to publish revised recommendations as soon as possible.

We urge also that the Executive continue to monitor the situation concerning these conversions, and is prepared to act as necessary in the interests of walkers using these paths, including making such representations as it sees fit to the appropriate regulatory bodies.

The motion was carried.

[10.] Renewable energy (Derbyshire Area)

The following composite motion was proposed on behalf of Derbyshire Area by John Hayes, and seconded on behalf of Kent Area by John Charles:

This General Council calls 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.

The motion was carried.

[11.] Proposed locations of the next national parks (Shropshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Shropshire Area by Marion Law, and seconded by Alison Parker:

That this General Council instructs the Executive Committee, Scottish Council Executive Committee and Welsh Council Executive Committee, to seek Areas' views on the proposed locations of the next national parks.

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

Add at end of the motion:

“and also to ascertain the likely effectiveness of the implementation of the provisions of CROW part IV in relation to the management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. “

The amendment was lost.

The motion was carried.

[12.] Disposal of electrical and mechanical items (South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area)

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

This General Council, being concerned with the disposal of electrical and mechanical items, calls upon the government to check European Union regulations to ensure that facilities are in place to enable full and safe implementation on a date before such regulations become a directive.

The motion was carried.

16 CLOSED SESSION MOTIONS

[13.] Incorporation (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Brian Reader, and seconded by Peter Skipp:

The General Council resolves that the Association should form a charitable company limited by guarantee to be called the Ramblers' Association to which will be transferred the assets and liabilities and the undertaking of staff of the Association.

The Memorandum & Articles of Association of the new company to maintain the same procedures and form of governance as the existing Constitution and Standing Orders subject only to any legal requirement or Charity Commission requirement.

Council further instructs the Executive Committee to arrange for incorporation of the association as soon as may be reasonably practical, in accordance with the draft Memorandum and Articles laid before Council on 13th April 2002 (as they may be amended by the Charity Commission).

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area by John Esslemont and seconded by David Bradnack:

Delete "in accordance with the draft Memorandum and Articles laid before Council on 13th April 2002 (as they may be amended by the Charity Commission)."

This amendment was accepted by the movers.

The amended motion was carried nem con.

The amended motion reads:

The General Council resolves that the Association should form a charitable company limited by guarantee to be called the Ramblers' Association to which will be transferred the assets and liabilities and the undertaking of staff of the Association.

The Memorandum & Articles of Association of the new company to maintain the same procedures and form of governance as the existing Constitution and Standing Orders subject only to any legal requirement or Charity Commission requirement.

Council further instructs the Executive committee to arrange for incorporation of the association as soon as may be reasonably practical.

[14.] Membership subscriptions – concessionary rate (North East Lancs Area and Essex Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of North East Lancs Area by Alan Johnson, and seconded on behalf of Essex Area by Adrian Vincent-Jones:

This General Council deplores the deliberate omission of the amount of reduced membership fee payable from the two new membership application forms *Get more out of walking* and *A voice for all walkers*. Council therefore urges the Executive Committee to reinstate the previous format of the RA's recruitment material in which all membership fees are quoted.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Kate Ashbrook and seconded by Terry Pollard:

At the end of the first sentence add "but notes that it was an experiment."

Second sentence replaced by “Council urges the Executive Committee to review the format of the RA’s recruitment material to ensure that it does not present any barriers to joining the Association and that any reduced rates are clearly presented on future recruitment leaflets, but that those who can afford to pay more than the minimum are encouraged to do so.”

The amendment was carried.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council deplores the deliberate omission of the amount of reduced membership fee payable from the two new membership application forms *Get more out of walking* and *A voice for all walkers*, but notes that it was an experiment. Council urges the Executive Committee to review the format of the RA’s recruitment material to ensure that it does not present any barriers to joining the Association and that any reduced rates are clearly presented on future recruitment leaflets, but that those who can afford to pay more than the minimum are encouraged to do so.

[15.] Joint committees for rights of way and access (East Yorkshire and Derwent Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of East Yorkshire and Derwent Area by Chris Bush, and seconded by Dennis Parker:

This General Council calls upon the Executive Committee to consider the constitutional and funding implications in order to establish joint committees for rights of way and access where either:

- i more than one RA Area covers a highway authority or local access forum area;
or
- ii more than one RA Area adjoins a national park which carries out the functions of a highway authority.

These joint committees would act in all rights of way and access matters on behalf of the Ramblers’ Association.

Remission was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Brian Reader and seconded by Mavis Rear.

Remission was carried.

[16.] Membership recruitment (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Jo Bird, and seconded by Annette Cotter:

This General Council acknowledges the importance of membership recruitment to the long-term growth of the association and its ability to pursue its charitable objectives.

Council therefore calls upon all members to embark upon a sustained publicity and recruitment campaign, and urges Areas and Groups, where not already current practice, to:

- (a) aim to offer a greater variety of walks to cater for as wide a range of people as is practicable.
- (b) utilise all opportunities to effectively promote the walks, activities and campaigns of the association, and to convey an inclusive and welcoming image.

- (c) establish and publicise procedures for allowing the public to participate in a number of RA walks, following which they should take up membership.

The motion was carried *nem con*.

[17.] Area entitlement (North Wales Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of North Wales Area by Pete Bland, and seconded on behalf of Greater Gwent Area by John Ridley:

General Council considers that the present arrangements for distributing funds to Areas are in need of review and instructs EC to devise a system more appropriate to present needs, consult Areas and Groups, and present the result to General Council 2004 for consideration.

The motion was carried.

[18.] Affiliated organisations (West Riding Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of West Riding Area by Keith Wadd, and seconded by Rodney Waddilove:

This General Council asks the Executive Committee to carry out a review of the relationship between the Ramblers' Association and its affiliated organisations. It also asks that, as part of this review, consideration be given to an increase in the affiliation fee.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[19.] Demands on volunteers (Nottinghamshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Nottinghamshire Area by Chris Thompson and seconded by Sarah Rich:

The enactment and implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is placing increased demands upon footpath officers, access officers and other volunteers.

Council requests that a directory containing contact details of access officers and footpaths officers is produced, thereby facilitating easier communications and greater co-ordination between the volunteers concerned.

The motion was carried.

17 VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council noted that the 2003 meeting would be held at the University of Lancaster on 11-13 April, and that the 2004 meeting would be held at the University of Exeter on 16-18 April. The chairman welcomed suggestions for venues for 2005 and beyond.

18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Delegates were reminded that a rally to mark the 70th anniversary of the Kinder Scout mass trespass was due to take place on 27th April 2002.

19 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

- 19.1 The chairman thanked the host Area, Northern Area, which had arranged volunteer tellers, scrutineers, timekeepers, registration staff, walk leaders, guides and had helped make the meeting a successful one.
- 19.2 Special thanks were also given to staff, including the chief executive, those involved in organising the meeting, those who had helped with microphones and other tasks, and those who had run fringe meetings and presentations.
- 19.3 Delegates were thanked for their participation in fringe meetings, discussions, and for their preparatory work drafting motions.
- 19.4 Special thanks were extended to Brian Reader, vice-chairman, and Geoff Eastwood, for their assistance during the meeting.
- 19.5 The chairman went on to talk about the geographical spread of those attending Council, and how she thought about the countryside surrounding the homes of the delegates during the meeting. The variety of landscapes brought to mind the reasons why walking was such a popular activity. Walking could be done anywhere - in woodland, on coastlines, on moorland, and in all weather conditions and seasons. Walking could also be enjoyed alone, with a group, or with friends, and the RA's charitable aims sprang from this shared love of the countryside.
- 19.6 The chairman stressed the importance of joint working and partnerships to ensure that the RA remained an effective organisation. The strategic review had provided guidelines on the development of partnerships to help build and drive the organisation forward. The importance of partnerships (critical if necessary) had been reflected in the motions debated over the weekend – links with the Government and the Welsh Assembly in the motions on CROW and on planning, links with local authorities in the cycle tracks motion, and links with the Countryside Agency in the Ridgeway Code of Respect motion.
- 19.7 The annual report had also provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress made over the last year. In 2001, Council had given clear instructions to the Executive Committee to ensure that a “steady ship” be achieved. This had been done, and now three key motions had been passed which would help achieve the next steps: the Strategic Framework, Incorporation and membership recruitment. Implementation of these three motions would ensure that the RA had adequate resources to remain an effective campaigning force.
- 19.8 Speaking of the work of the association in Scotland, the chairman again stressed the importance of working in partnership with other organisations to achieve common goals. The work of the RA as part of the coalition of environmental and wildlife groups in Scotland to ensure that no law of trespass was carried forward had been crucial. The chairman congratulated all who had contributed to this campaign and cited it as an example of cutting-edge campaign work.
- 19.9 The chairman also spoke about the work still to be done in Wales, where one in two paths remained obstructed.
- 19.10 In closing, the chairman spoke of her hope that the RA in 2003 would be an even greater force to be reckoned with, having more effective internal and external relationships, and a clear plan, in the form of Waymarking The Future.
- 19.11 The chairman's remarks were warmly acclaimed.
- 19.12 David Grosz then thanked the Chairman. This vote of thanks was applauded.

THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS