

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT EXETER UNIVERSITY
16TH-18TH APRIL 2004**

* denotes a member of Council (voter)

VICE-PRESIDENT

Andrew Bennett MP*
Geoff Eastwood*
Alan Mattingly*
Malcolm Petyt*
David Sharp*
Paddy Tipping MP*

Ron Phelps*
Sheila Dixon

BERKSHIRE AREA

Kath Hall
Caroline Mcdonagh
Jane Kiely*
Stuart Shurlock*
Cliff Lambert
Mary Walker

Chips Barber
Thelma Bickford
Pam Boyce
Paul Bulley
Roy Clough
Clifford Dampney
Colin Fagg
Joan Fagg
Janice Fly
Jean Harris
Audrey Hosie
George Howell

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Brian Reader*

**BUCKS & W MIDDX
AREA**

Ian Sykes
John Wainwright
Ian White
John Elfes*
John Esslemont*

James Howell
Sue Howell
Sue Jackson
Otto Jeff
Brian Kirby
Rachael Kirby
Joan Long
Mike Long
David Richardson
Jim Short
John Skinner
Eric Smith
Lily Thompson
Penny Treweek
Margaret Vatcher
Claire Wagstaff
Jillian Weldon
John West
Jenny Worsfold

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Terry Squires*

TREASURER

Denis Fuller*

**HONORARY
SOLICITOR**

Jerry Pearlman*

**CAMBS & PETERBO
AREA**

Roger Coulson
Janet Moreton
Roger Moreton

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Kate Ashbrook*
Peter Ayling*
Chris Bush*
Annette Cotter*
Cath Mackay*
Alex Marshall*
Kevin Matthews*
Alison Mitchell*
Mavis Rear*
Peter Skipp*

CENTRAL, F & T AREA

Fred Forrester*
Chic Nash*

DORSET AREA

Heather Wateridge
Alan Harris*
Keith Seymour*
Rosemary Bramah
Kate Gocher

**AGENDA COMMITTEE
MEMBER**

John Dowding*
Elizabeth Lawie*
Ron Moore*
Allen Pestell*
Sylvia Popham*

DERBYSHIRE AREA

Kate Lee*
Andrew Smith*
John Hayes

**E YORKS/DERWENT
AREA**

Sheila Smith*

AVON AREA

David Clarke*

DEVON AREA

John Howell*
Eileen Linfoot*
Stephanie Ackland
Liz Balkwell

ESSEX AREA

Colin Jacob*
Hazel Jarrold*
Adrian Vincent-Jones*

GLAMORGAN AREA

Ian Fraser*
Margaret Scott*
Allan Harrison
Christine Harrison

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA

Tony Drake
Jill Byrne*
David Sanderson*
Tod Callow
Molly Roberts
Dave Simmonds

GRAMPIAN AREA

Anne Macdonald*

HAMPSHIRE AREA

Owen Plunkett*
George Williams*
Barry Totterdell*
Valerie Plunkett

HEREFORDSHIRE AREA

Arthur Lee*
Phil Long*

HERTS & N MIDDX AREA

David Dickson*
Norman Jones*

HIGHLAND & ISLANDS AREA

Ken Davidson*
Brian Spence*

INNER LONDON AREA

Phil Marson
Clare Wadd
Les Douglas*
Jane Rosoux*

ISLE OF WIGHT AREA

Adrian Burns*
Mike Jordan*
Shirley Burns

KENT AREA

Morag Rogers
John Charles*
Les Preston*
Helen Vickery

LAKE DISTRICT AREA

Harry Hawkins*
Peter Jones*
Elizabeth Hawkins

LEICS & RUTLAND AREA

Stan Warren*
Ellen Sandeman*

LINCOLNSHIRE AREA

Peter Brown*
George Grout*

LOTHIAN/BORDERS AREA

Gillian McDonald
Laura Mullen
David Grosz*
Bridget Wilcox*

MANCHESTER & HIGH PEAK AREA

Edgar Ernstbrunner*
John Stirling*
Gloria Gaffney
Keith Pennyfather
Terry Perkins
Kathrina Wolf

MERSEYSIDE AREA

Bernie Roche
Gloria Thayer*
Vi Williams*

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

David Kelly*
Geoff Partington*

N YORKS/S DURHAM AREA

Jo Bird*
David Lawrenson*

NORFOLK AREA

Alan Bowell*

NORTH EAST LANCS AREA

Hazel Owen
Peter Aizlewood*
Allan Richards*

NORTH WALES AREA

Dave Hollett*

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AREA

Jean Perkins*

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

Dave Burke
Andy Wright
Pennie Porter*
Judith Taylor*
Mavis Harris

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA

Sarah Matthews
Gary Olds
Neil Thompson
Rod Fillingham*
Chris Thompson*
Jenny Fillingham
David Hunt

NTH/MID CHESHIRE AREA

Keith Doughty*
John Lilley*
Tony Wakefield

OXFORDSHIRE AREA

Patrick Lonergan*

POWYS AREA

Harry Chandler*
Robert Seabrook*

S YORKS/NE DERBY AREA

Jack Burling*
John Harker*

SHROPSHIRE AREA

Bill Hodges*
Vivienne Hodges*

SOMERSET AREA

Bev Mills
Derek Baker*
Tony Goverd*

STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

Graham Evans*
Harry Scott*

STRATHCLYDE, D&G AREA

Hilary Graham*
Barry Pottle*

SUFFOLK AREA

James Richards*
Iain Taylor*

SURREY AREA

Richard Denny
Dave Ebdon
Dominic Moran
Graham Butler*
Valerie Kirby*
Alan Lewis*
Jane Warner

SUSSEX AREA

Nigel Sloan*
Chris Wright*

WARWICKSHIRE AREA

Mandy Willis
Audrey Lee*
Steven Wallsgrove*
Alan Cumming

WEST RIDING AREA

Gwen Goddard*
Keith Wadd*
Harry Sculthorpe
Rodney Waddilove

WILTS & SWINDON AREA

Derek Crosbee*
Joan Crosbee*

WORCESTERSHIRE AREA

Elizabeth Baker
Trevor Antill*
Derek Starkey*

CAMPING & CARAVANNING CLUB

Jim Perry*
Sylvia Perry

COUNTRYWIDE HOLIDAYS

Margaret Whiteside*

DISABLED RAMBLERS

Rosie Norris*
John Norris
Kate Wass

HF HOLIDAYS

Daphne Forrest*

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOC

Hazel Bound*

OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

Donald Lee*

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SERVICES

Stuart Alderman*

ULSTER FEDERATION OF RAMBLING CLUBS

Ronnie Carser*

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

John Templeton*

GUESTS

Georgina Barter
Kevin Cahill
Mark Davies
Neil Green
Arthur Howcroft
Steven Howlett
Margaret Sharp
Tim Smit
Irene Tipping

VISITORS

Douglas Black
Peggy Crees
Carol Fuller
Sara Gibb

STAFF

Nick Barrett
Paul Bell
Gwen Campbell
David Carter
Kate Conto
Janet Davis
Des de Moor
Duncan Exley
Jacquetta Fewster
Dan French
Des Garrahan
Pam Gheerow
Fiona James
David Joseph
Catherine Leckenby
Nick Milton
Adrian Morris
Ian McCall
Beverley Penney
Sarah Perry
Adrian Ritchie
Jo Smith
Chris Sparrow
Eugene Suggett
Nicky Warden
Lucy Webster
John Wightman
Mariusz Wilczynski
Julie Wildey
Paul Wilkinson
Sarah Williams
Ed Wilson
Sharon Woods

1 WELCOME

- 1.1 Chips Barber, Devon Area President, welcomed delegates and visitors to Exeter on behalf of the Area.
- 1.2 Chips spoke about the university and its beautiful campus which, through family connections, was close to his heart, and explained that it had been built on the site of a massive ancient woodland which had been exploited by the Romans who had founded the city. Only a remnant of those woods now remained as part of the university's impressive gardens. He added that the corridors of the university were allegedly haunted by a human form and warned delegates to look out for this phantom painter!
- 1.3 Chips apologised for the wet weather but said that this was exactly what John Keats had experienced when he had come to this part of Devon in 1818. The weather couldn't detract from the beauty of the county with its hills and wild places and emerging wild flowers—indeed, it was here that Keats had written *Endymion* which opens with the line 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever ...'
- 1.4 Chips finished his welcome by saying that every council was different, and that he hoped everyone attending would get what they hoped for from the weekend's events.

2 APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Council noted apologies for absence from Terry Pollard (EC), Ron Cooke (Cornwall Area), John Bunting (vice-president), Richard Lloyd Jones (vice-president), Karen Green (East Yorks & Derwent Area), and John Archer (Inner London Area).

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 3.1 There were no announcements.

4 APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

- 4.1 The following persons were appointed:

Tellers (Saturday):	Colin Fagg Otto Jeff John West Jean Harris	(Sunday):	Thelma Bickford Clare Wagstaffe Brian Kirby John West
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Scrutineers: Paul Bulley
Otto Jeff
David Richardson
John Skinner

5 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 There was no other business.

6 MINUTES OF GENERAL COUNCIL 2003

- 6.1 There were no corrections, and the chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of General Council 2003 as a true record.
- 6.2 A number of questions were raised on the report on actions taken to implement motions passed or remitted at General Council 2003.
- 6.3 John Esslemont (Buckinghamshire & West Middlesex Area) asked if the Chairman and EC were satisfied that the pursuit of motion 1 (mechanically propelled vehicular rights over existing footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways) was compatible with the RA's charitable objectives. He understood that a member was considering making a complaint to the Charity Commissioners that it was not so compatible. The chairman replied that he was satisfied that this work was within the charitable objectives and that this had been explained to the member, although it was still open to him to raise the matter with the Charity Commissioners if he so wished.
- 6.4 Barry Pottle (Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway Area) asked about motion 10 (insurance for practical footpath work). In particular, had inquiries been made of other organisations carrying out such work, had it been made clear that the insurance was to cover practical work and not led walks, and, if it was concluded that the BTCV scheme was still the most cost-effective, would consideration be made to meeting the premium from central funds? Nick Barrett said that much research had been carried out, that the premium was specifically for footpath work, and that EC would need to consider how to meet the costs when setting next year's budget. If they decided not to meet those costs centrally then the matter would default back to Areas and Groups.
- 6.5 Allen Pestell (Agenda Committee) asked about progress with motion 12 (involvement of children and young people). He was particularly concerned that the new magazine had no children's page. Nick Barrett said that staff were considering how best to develop family involvement with the RA.

7 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

ANNUAL REPORT

- 7.1 The chairman moved the adoption of the annual report. This was seconded by Annette Cotter (EC).
- 7.2 Council gave permission for Nick Barrett, the chief executive to speak to the annual report.
- 7.3 Nick said that it was very clear that what the RA would like to do exceeded what we were actually able to do but that *Waymarking the Future* was proving to be a useful reference point for identifying priorities. General Council was a good time to take stock of progress and it seemed that things were going well.
- 7.4 The Land Reform Act in Scotland had actually become law during the period of the Annual Report. This was the most enlightened access legislation in Europe and represented a great success for the RA which had so successfully lobbied the Scottish Parliament. Enormous thanks were due to volunteers and staff alike. The success had been due to having clear aims, extraordinary tenacity, knowing more about the subject than anyone else,

effective use of the media, and successful mobilisation of public opinion—the characteristics of all RA campaigns. The next challenge was to ensure that the access code was something which was of real use to those visiting the Scottish countryside.

- 7.5 Similar challenges remained in England and Wales. Members had done a fantastic job in the mapping of open country—this had been an effort comparable to that done in the 1950s when the original definitive maps were prepared. It was a testament to the vibrancy of the RA's membership that this had been possible. In the current year the first fruits of those labours would be seen with the implementation of access in the first regions.
- 7.6 Nick commented that he was still coming to terms with the time taken to achieve campaign aims, in particular in respect of footpath cases. The annual report really didn't do justice to the scope and intensity of many of the footpath cases with which the RA struggles on a daily basis—dealing with diversion and extinguishments, obstructions, inquiries, and consultations. Few cases were on the scale of the van Hoogstraten case and most were a much lonelier fight.
- 7.7 Nick said that there were increasing concerns over the lack of progress with the 'Discovering Lost Ways' project. This needed to be watched very carefully to make sure that the Countryside Agency and DEFRA did not renege on their commitment to the work.
- 7.8 One of the key points to emerge from the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 2001 was the economic value of walking. That had led directly to the RA commissioning an academic report on the matter, 'The economic and social value of walking in England', which had been published in 2003. Whilst detractors label walkers as either obsessive or eccentric, a contribution of £6 billion to the economy cannot be dismissed lightly.
- 7.9 Nick spoke of the need to introduce walking to a far wider audience and the report highlighted the steps which were already being taken to achieve this, eg the *Walking out* project which was now up and running in Stoke, Sheffield and Lincolnshire and which complemented the *Bums off Seats* project in Scotland, and the long-running *Lonc a Chlonc/Walk and Talk* scheme in Wales. There had been an exponential growth in the number of under 40s Groups, and there were also now some family groups which was excellent news. The RA's involvement in this work was very important since it fulfilled a key element of the charitable aims '... *in the interests of social welfare to encourage the provision of facilities for and the organising of healthy open-air recreational activities in the countryside ...*'
- 7.10 The website was a key window to the RA's work and had been widely praised. It had been voted one of the top 100 sites and the Walk Finder database was continuing to progress well.
- 7.11 Financially, the RA was also in good shape. Central finances had improved and there had been consistently good fundraising results. However, an awful lot remained to be done. The target of 170,000 members needed to be reached and there were many other challenges—how to deal with the issue of mechanically propelled vehicles in the countryside, the access code in Scotland, new national parks, and problems associated with the generation of renewable energy to name but a few. There were also internal matters to

consider—in particular the matters raised by the Charity Commission in respect of the Memorandum and Articles, and the volunteer structure review.

- 7.12 Nick finished by saying that the challenges were there and the need for the RA clearly remained. On behalf of the staff he thanked all members and volunteers for their enormous efforts on behalf of the Association. As chief executive he had found that there was a limitless scope to be ineffective but he was supported by an excellent staff who were a real credit to the RA.

Questions on the annual report

- 7.13 David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area) said that the annual report was a good public relations document but he felt that more detail was needed. Nick Barrett replied that part of the purpose of the report was as a snapshot of the work of the Association for those outside it. It was a useful document for use when seeking funding from external sources. Active volunteers such as Area Secretaries did receive a lot more information as a matter of course, and the separate *Report and Financial Statements* gave a lot more detail.
- 7.14 John Esslemont (Buckinghamshire & West Middlesex Area) noted that the excellence of the website was reported but he asked about its accessibility to the less able. He said that the Disability Rights Commission had published a report about the number of websites that were not so accessible. He also asked if the RA was subject to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. Nick Barrett said that the Act did have implications for the RA, and that this would have to be investigated further.
- 7.15 Dave Hollett (North Wales Area) said that he was concerned that providing facilities for 'those of limited means' was not specifically mentioned as a budget head. The chairman said that work under that heading was covered by the 'promoting walking' budget.
- 7.16 Jo Bird (North Yorks & South Durham Area) asked what rôle the RA was playing in trying to combat obesity in children. Nick Barrett said that the 'Walking out' project in England, and 'Bums off Seats' in Scotland were part of the RA's work on that issue, and that he also hoped there would be RA involvement in 'Britain on the Move', a major project sponsored by ITV.
- 7.17 Derek Starkey (Worcestershire Area) asked what the RA gained from participation in the 'Outdoor Show'. Nick Barrett said that while 250 people joined the RA on the spot at the last show, and that more would join later, the primary purpose of attendance was to raise the profile of the RA.
- 7.18 Ron Moore (Agenda Committee) said that the annual report was a splendid document and an excellent advertisement for the work of the RA. He congratulated all concerned with its production.
- 7.19 Council agreed to adopt the annual report for the year 2002/03.

8 ACCOUNTS

- 8.1 The adoption of the accounts for the year to 30 September 2003 was proposed by the treasurer, Denis Fuller, and seconded by Annette Cotter (EC).

- 8.2 The treasurer then presented the accounts pointing out that the audit report was unqualified. This fact was a tribute to the expertise of Area and Group treasurers and the RA's staff finance team.
- 8.3 The treasurer said that he was conscious that the RA needed to provide training for its Area and Group treasurers.
- 8.4 The treasurer drew delegates' attention to the fact that the largest source of income remained that from the membership subscription and that, as ever, there was a need for more members paying their subscription at the full rate. He also thanked the RA Trust for its continuing and generous support.
- 8.5 The treasurer said that he was disappointed that some Areas were still holding money unused in bank accounts, and stressed that, if money was not being used to pursue the charitable aims at Area and Group level, it should be returned to the centre.
- 8.6 The treasurer finished his report by saying that, while there was no room for complacency, he remained optimistic about the RA's financial prospects in the coming year.

Questions on the Annual Accounts

- 8.7 Keith Wadd (West Riding Area) asked if a summary of the accounts could be published in 'Walk'. The chairman said that the Finance and Audit Subcommittee were considering how this could be done.
- 8.8 A number of delegates Mary Weston, (Cornwall Area), Gloria Thayer (Merseyside & West Cheshire Area) and Rod Fillingham (Nottinghamshire Area) all raised concerns about the return of Area Entitlement to the centre. Nick Barrett stressed that the important thing was that the RA's money was being put to work in pursuit of the charitable aims, whether at Area/Group level or in the centre.
- 8.9 Gwendoline Goddard (West Riding Area) commented that there was no mention of the appeal for funds to support the volunteer support staff. Nick Barrett said that this was a matter for the current financial year and so would appear in the 03/04 accounts.
- 8.10 John Esslemont (Buckinghamshire & West Middlesex Area) suggested that it might help if a list were published showing how much money each Area held. He also asked if new advice was planned for Groups explaining how income and expenditure on purely social events should be accounted for, and why the approval of the accounts by EC had been delayed. The chairman said that training on accounting matters was being considered, and that the approval of the accounts had been delayed by possible contingent liabilities arising from on-going action in the Framfield FP 9 case. Special advice from solicitors and from the auditors had subsequently indicated that this was not a problem in the context of the 02/03 accounts.
- 8.11 Chic Nash (Central, Fife and Tayside Area) asked if the formula which dictated Area Entitlement was derived from Charity Commission guidelines. The chairman said that it was an internal matter only. It was presently set out in the Memorandum and Articles but that it had been operational for a very long time.

8.12 Council agreed to adopt the accounts for the year to 30 September 2003.

9. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

9.1 Officers were elected as follows (nominated and seconded *en bloc* except where indicated otherwise):

President

Chris Smith MP Proposed by Kate Ashbrook, and seconded by
Jerry Pearlman

Past presidents

The following past presidents automatically become vice-presidents:

Andrew Bennett MP
Fay Godwin
Chris Hall

Mike Harding
Peter Melchett
Janet Street-Porter

Vice-presidents Proposed by Peter Skipp, and seconded by Chris Bush

John Bunting
Geoff Eastwood
John Foster
Jack Ibbott
Richard Lloyd Jones

Alan Mattingly
David Sharp
Paddy Tipping MP
Malcolm Petyt

Chairman Proposed by Mavis Rear and seconded by Alex Marshall

Brian Reader

Vice-chairman

Terry Squires

Treasurer

Denis Fuller

Hon Solicitor

Jerry Pearlman LLB

Award of Honorary Vice-Presidency to Jerry Pearlman

The following motion was proposed by the chairman, and seconded by Rodney Waddilove (West Riding Area):

This General Council commends the award of an Honorary Vice-Presidency of The Ramblers' Association to Jerry Pearlman in recognition of his many years service as Honorary Solicitor of the Association and as Chairman and Vice President of West Riding Area.

The motion was carried.

Nomination for Honorary Life Membership

On behalf of the Executive Committee Peter Ayling proposed, and Alison Mitchell seconded, the award of Honorary Life Membership to Arthur Howcroft.

The motion was carried.

10. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

It was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Chris Bush, and seconded by Annette Cotter, that Sayer Vincent be re-appointed as the Association's auditors. This was agreed by council.

11. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Eleven nominations for places on 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	Owen Plunkett
Peter Ayling	Terry Pollard
Annette Cotter	Mavis Rear
Cath MacKay	Peter Skipp
Kevin Matthews	

12. ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

Five nominations for the Agenda Committee were received so no election was necessary. The chairman declared that the following five persons would serve on the Committee:

John Dowding	Allen Pestell
Elizabeth Lawie	Sylvia Popham
Ron Moore	

13. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

13.1 Chris Smith thanked Council for electing him as RA President, particularly since it was probably the case that, of all MPs, he had the least amount of green space in his Parliamentary constituency. However, in a way that made it all the more appropriate since people who have little green space in their lives appreciate the need for open and green space all the more.

13.2 Chris said that he had walked for pleasure since he was a teenager, and that he had worked with the RA for many years. The RA's record of achievement since 1935 was amazing—the 1949 Act, the introduction of long distance paths, and now the passing of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. It had been the proudest moment of his ministerial life when he had been able to put his name down as a supporter of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill. It had taken a very long time to get to that point—James Bryce's Access to Mountains Bill had been more than a hundred years before. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act was still not perfect but it was a major step along the

road of access to open country and was a huge success for the RA of which we should be rightly proud.

- 13.3 Chris went on to say that 25 or 30 years ago he had been walking with friends in Snowdonia when they had been challenged by a farmer who denied them access to the mountain despite what their guidebook said. Given his size and his shotgun they had retreated and approached the mountain by a different route. This was when he had first realised that action was needed to secure access to open country. The new Act would hopefully mean this was a thing of the past but no one should imagine that the RA's work was done. Implementation still had to be secured and there were new challenges such as securing the future of urban paths, making sure that access to open country was maintained and seeking to prevent inappropriate development in the countryside. Only recently a Highland Light and Power scheme had been defeated in Torridon but there would always be issues of that kind, and landowners like van Hoogstraten to watch out for. And there were new challenges as well—campaigns to encourage walking, work on the new national parks, and efforts to find new volunteers to check and secure access.
- 13.4 Chris said that only last week he had walked to the highest point on the island of Islay. Storm clouds were drifting in and there were lambs in the fields and wildlife all around, from oystercatchers to caterpillars. It was his driving ambition that everyone should have the chance to experience these things. It shouldn't be necessary to have to campaign for it but that was the case, and that was what the RA did very well.
- 13.5 Chris finished by saying that he was looking forward to that campaigning and to much good walking in the years ahead.
- 13.6 The President's address was greeted with acclaim, and the chairman thanked the President for his encouraging words.

14. MOTIONS

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

[1.] Inclusion of coastal land in the definition of "open country"

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by John Dowding, and seconded on behalf of Sussex Area by Nigel Sloan:

This General Council calls on the government to take such action as is necessary under Section 3 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to amend the definition of 'open country' contained in Section 1 (2) of the Act to include a reference to coastal land as defined in Section 3 (3); and calls on staff to immediately prepare and implement a campaign with this action as its desired outcome.

The Executive Committee proposed that the word "immediately" should be deleted from the final sentence. This was accepted by the movers and by council.

The amended motion was carried unanimously.
The amended motion reads:

This General Council calls on the government to take such action as is necessary under Section 3 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to amend the definition of 'open country' contained in Section 1 (2) of the Act to include a reference to coastal land as defined in Section 3 (3); and calls on staff to prepare and implement a campaign with this action as its desired outcome.

[2.] Agricultural Subsidies and Rights of Way

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Shropshire Area by Bill Hodges, and seconded on behalf of Powys Area by Harry Chandler

This General Council commends the Government's statement on agricultural subsidies and their support for cross-compliance. Cross-compliance should ensure that subsidies will be withheld if farmers obstruct rights of way.

The motion was carried unanimously.

[3.] Land Registry

The following motion was proposed on behalf of North Wales Area by Dave Hollett, and seconded on behalf of Manchester & High Peak Area by John Stirling:

The Ramblers' Association agrees to campaign openly and vigorously to ensure that information regarding all land and property throughout the U.K. is placed on the Land Registry by 2010. This General Council agrees that the Ramblers' Association will campaign in a way that makes searches inexpensive and with land maps being made readily available to the general public for specified tracts of open land, at a nominal sum. These details to include all information regarding land and property held in "family" trusts, overseas trusts and financial trusts of any kind.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Jerry Pearlman proposed remission. This was seconded by Peter Ayling and carried.

The motion was remitted.

[4.] Improving Access for Disabled Ramblers

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Disabled Ramblers by Rosie Norris and seconded on behalf of Sussex Area by Nigel Sloan:

This meeting welcomes and approves of the work of the Disabled Ramblers, seeking to improve access for disabled people using countryside paths and trails.

It notes with approval the need for very high quality access only in highly visited and developed places and also welcomes the more informal approach proposed elsewhere, which recognises the need to avoid urbanising the countryside with unsuitable surfaces and treatments.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Cath MacKay proposed remission. This was seconded by Terry Squires.

The vote on remission was lost, and the motion was carried

[5.] Consultation with members

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway Area by Elizabeth Lawie, and seconded on behalf of that Area by Barry Pottle:

This General Council is concerned at the lack of consultation prior to changing the name of our magazine, especially considering the fight some years back to retain the name 'The Rambler'. It seeks an assurance that any future changes of this nature will be put to consultation before being put into effect.

John Esslemont (Buckinghamshire & West Middlesex Area) proposed that the second sentence should be deleted. This was seconded by David Grosz (Lothian and Borders Area).

The amendment was lost by 59 votes to 36.

The motion was lost.

[6.] EC proposal to ratify the RA Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 1st October 2003

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Peter Skipp, and seconded by Mavis Rear:

This General Council approves the RA Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 1st October 2003.

The motion was carried.

[7.] EC proposal to amend Article 4.2 of the RA Articles of Association

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Alison Mitchell, and seconded by Peter Skipp.

This General Council agrees that Article 4.2 of the RA Articles of Association (which currently reads *Each Constituent Part shall have as much authority and responsibility as in the opinion of the Executive Committee is consistent with the Association's duties and interests*) be altered to read: *Each Constituent Part shall have as much authority and responsibility as may be agreed between the Executive Committee and the Constituent Part.*

The motion was carried.

[8.] Accountability of the Legal Panel

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Manchester and High Peak Area by Terry Perkins, and seconded on behalf of that Area by John Stirling:

In General Council's view, the Ramblers Association's Legal Panel is not sufficiently accountable to Groups and Areas and indeed to General Council itself.

To improve Legal Panel's accountability,

- a) the members of Legal Panel shall be elected by General Council rather than by the Executive Committee,
- b) Legal Panel shall present an annual account of its actions to General Council
- c) Groups and Areas requesting Legal Panel's support in specific cases shall be entitled to attend the relevant Legal Panel meeting in order to plead their case in person.

The following amendment was proposed by John Esslemont and seconded by John Elfes (both of Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area):

In each of (a), (b) and (c) delete "shall" and insert "could" and add at the end:

"General Council advises the Executive Committee to consider implementing these, or other appropriate measures, to improve the accountability of the Legal Panel."

The amendment was accepted by the proposers and by Council, but the amended motion was lost.

15. VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council approved the following venues for future meetings:

8 -10 April 2005 – University of Nottingham
21-23 April 2006 – Keele University

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

17. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The chairman said that this Council could have been considered as in-looking but it was necessary to do this from time-to-time. It had also taken on a slightly new format in response to ideas brought forward at previous councils. None of this meant that the RA was 'going soft' when it came to campaigning. Looking at our internal structure meant that we would be able to improve our campaigning. This was particularly true when it came to supporting our volunteers. While the RA had professional staff, they relied heavily on volunteers giving up enormous amounts of time to support the RA's work so it was vital that consideration was given as to how those volunteers could be given the best possible support. Tim Smit's talk on the Eden Project had illustrated the importance of such team work.

The chairman went on to say that he welcomed the opportunity to attend Area and Group AGMs. These were not just an opportunity for him to talk - they gave him a chance to hear what volunteers were saying. This two-way communication was very important.

The chairman said that he had joined the RA when he was 16 simply so that he could go walking. However, he quickly started to see that there were many problems facing would-be walkers so he got more involved. He hoped that those who were visiting council for the first time would be similarly motivated by what they had heard.

The chairman said that it was very important that Areas and Groups let the wider membership know about the work they were doing and their successes in the campaigning field. The support of the 'silent majority' was very important since many members joined simply to support the RA campaigns and did not go on walks.

The chairman urged everyone to try to get involved in 'Welcome to Walking Week', and such projects as 'Britain on the Move'. Recruiting members through such initiatives was a campaign in itself which then enabled other campaigns to be more effective.

The chairman finished his closing remarks by thanking everyone who had given up their weekend to attend council, noting in particular that Tony Drake (Gloucestershire Area) was attending his 53rd Council. He thanked the RA staff, and the Devon Area volunteers who had organised the event, and the staff at Exeter University for their help and support. He finally wished everyone a safe journey home, and a year of enjoyable walking and successful campaigning.

The chairman's remarks were warmly applauded.

THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS