



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT THE  
ADELPHI HOTEL, LIVERPOOL L3  
29 – 30 MARCH 2014**

**ATTENDANCE LIST**

\*denotes a member of Council (voter)

<b>President</b> Kate Ashbrook*	Sylvia Popham* Brian Reader* Clare Wadd*	Philip Guest* June Mabon*
<b>Vice-Presidents</b> Andrew Bennett*(Saturday only) Richard Lloyd Jones* Cath MacKay* Malcolm Petyt* Paddy Tipping*	<b>Avon Area</b> Jill Fysh* Ann Light*	<b>Clydesdale to Solway Area</b> Ann Rankin* John Cooper*
<b>Chairman</b> Jonathan Kipling*	<b>Bedfordshire Area</b> Bob Tarron* Rita Tarron*	<b>Cornwall Area</b> Graham Ronan* Sylvia Ronan* Bob Fraser Mary Weston
<b>Honorary Treasurer</b> Robert Peel*	<b>Berkshire Area</b> Ali Melabie* John Moules*	<b>Derbyshire Area</b> Martin Pape* Carol Shiers Keith Shiers*
<b>Board of Trustees</b> Naseem Akhtar* Mike Church* Moira Fraser* Des Garrahan* Max Grant* Alex Mannings* Richard May* Gwyn Lewis* David Thomson* Richard Trueman*	<b>Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes &amp; West Middlesex Area</b> John Elfes Paul Rhodes* John Wainwright*	<b>Devon Area</b> James Baldwin* Robert Woolcott* Rosemary Kimbell
<b>Agenda Committee</b> John Esslemont* Liz Lawie*	<b>Cambs &amp; Peterboro Area</b> Brian Foster*	<b>Dorset Area</b> Keith Seymour* Janette Seymour*
	<b>Carmarthenshire Area</b> No delegation this year	<b>East Yorkshire &amp; Derwent Area</b> Peter Ayling* Tom Halstead* Dany Wlodarczyk
	<b>Ceredigion Area</b> Chris Hodgson*	
	<b>Cheshire East Area</b>	

Tony Corrigan

**Essex Area**

Richard Iles\*  
Hilary Snell\*  
Jon Caine\*

**Forth Valley, Fife & Tayside Area**

John Andrews\*  
Ian Bruce\*

**Glamorgan Area**

Allan Harrison\*  
Christine Harrison\*  
Asta Smith  
Carys Holt

**Gloucestershire Area**

Catherine Benfield  
Ray Chaney\*  
Bernard Gill\*  
Molly Roberts

**Grampian Area**

Alison Mitchell\*  
Anne MacDonald\*

**Greater Manchester & High Peak Area**

John Ireland\*  
Gordon Campbell\*,

**Hampshire Area**

Patric Curwen\*  
David Nichols\*  
Owen Plunkett\*

**Herefordshire Area**

Arthur Lee\*

**Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area**

Sarah Lea\*  
Declan Leyden\*  
Norman Jones

Justin Lumley

**Highland & Islands Area**

Vic Royce\*

**Inner London Area**

Helen Abbott\* (Saturday delegate only)  
Elsbeth Cox\*  
Phil Marson\*  
Teri Moore\* (Sunday delegate)

**Isle of Wight Area**

David Howarth\*  
Michael Slater\*

**Kent Area**

Alison Hargreaves\*  
Les Preston\*

**Lake District Area**

Dennis Pook\*  
Margaret Pook\*

**Leicestershire & Rutland Area**

Jeanette Hollis\*  
John Howells  
Rob Jones\*  
Yvonne Lake

**Lincolnshire Area**

Stephen Almond\*  
Geoff Mullett\*

**Lothian & Borders Area**

Sandy Janas\*  
Dorothy Stewart\*

**Merseyside & West Cheshire Area**

Dave Beacher\*  
Steven Green

Margaret Hems\*  
Joyce Hughes

**Mid Lancashire Area**

David Kelly\*  
Brian Dearnaley\*

**Norfolk Area**

Tim Arnold\*  
Peter James\*

**Northamptonshire Area**

Andrew Knapman\*  
Joy Tripp\*

**North & Mid Cheshire Area**

Jan Shippides\*  
Cath Thomas\*

**North East Lancashire Area**

Michael Counter\*  
Susan Baxendale\*

**North Strathclyde Area**

Eleanor Peacock\*  
Barry Pottle\*

**Northumbria Area**

Rachel Orange\*  
Richard Fletcher\*  
Nuala Wright

**North Yorks & South Durham Area**

John Marshall\*

**North Wales Area**

Pete Bland\*  
Gerald Moss  
Joanna Slattery\*

**Nottinghamshire Area**

Judith Anson\*

Jenny Fillingham\*  
David Hunt  
Allan Rogers

**Oxfordshire Area**

Dave Cavanagh\*  
Vanessa Corrick  
Susan Maguire\*  
Rosemary Williams

**Pembrokeshire Area**

George Allingham\*  
Jeanette Allingham\*

**Renfrewshire, Cowal & Bute Area**

David Collinson\*  
Ross Elder\*

**Shropshire Area**

John Newnham \*  
Sue Jones\*

**Somerset Area**

Gus Halfhide\*  
Les Stather\*

**South Yorks & NE**

**Derbyshire Area**

Nicola Farmery\*  
Terez Nagy  
Allen Pestell\*

**Staffordshire Area**

Graham Evans\*  
George Greensides\*  
Ted Taylor  
Muriel Taylor

**Suffolk Area**

David Harmer\*  
Roley Wilson\*

**Surrey Area**

Lynette Long\*  
David Ross\*

Damian Wheeler\*

**Sussex Area**

Graham Elvey\*  
Clive Grumett  
Malcolm McDonnell \*  
Stephen Kisko

**Warwickshire Area**

Andy Page  
John Phillips\*  
Rob Heaton\*

**West Riding Area**

Martin Bennett  
David Gibson\*  
Elizabeth Snow  
Keith Wadd\*

**Wiltshire & Swindon Area**

Grahame Lee\*  
Tom Allen\*

**Worcestershire Area**

Peter Davies\*  
Sue Davies\*

**Long Distance Walkers Association**

Norman Corrin\*  
(Saturday day delegate)  
Paul Lawrence\*(Sat evening and Sunday delegate)

**Ramblers Worldwide Holidays**

Cathy Cook  
Paul Cook  
Annette Cotter\*

**Red Rope**

Don Kinnibrugh\*  
Adrian Jones  
David Symonds

**Visitors**

Rod Fillingham (Notts Area)  
Alan Kimbell (Devon Area)  
Chris Thompson (Notts Area)

**Guests**

Martin Abrams  
(Campaign for Better Transport)  
Beverley Arnold  
(Walking for Health volunteer)  
Mike Bates (Sussex Area)  
Derek Bunn (Surrey Area)  
Dave Callan,  
Merseyside Area Chair  
Maria Eagle MP  
Dave Hanbury (Walking for Health volunteer)  
Christine O'Byrne  
(trustee candidate)  
Will Renwick  
David Rutley MP  
Pat Sullivan, Liverpool Group Chair & Merseyside Area GC coordinator  
Nigel Woodhead (Surrey Area)

**Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust**

Mavis Rear  
Peter Skipp

**Area helpers**

Mary van Altena  
Margaret Beacher  
Fran Begbie  
Emma Campbell

Alice Cutts  
Barry Davies  
Margaret Evans  
Yvonne Gordon  
Beryl Henderson  
Helen Holyoak  
Janet Hudson  
Terry McKenna  
Sally Partington  
Charlie Walker  
Tony Walsh  
Richard Whitty  
Stella Yates

**Staff**  
Simon Barnett  
Maria Castellina (Sat  
only)  
Justin Cooke  
Angela Charlton  
Janet Davis  
Des de Moor  
Tom Fewins  
Joe Fitzpatrick  
Anastasia French  
Sarah Gardner (Sat  
only)  
Pam Gheerow

Christine Grant  
Jacqui Hayhoe  
Dave Morris  
Gemma Petty  
Nicky Philpott  
Elly Hannigan-Popp  
Hazel Robinson  
Emily Shaw  
Benedict Southworth  
Paul Strong  
Robin Walton  
Caroline Wheeler  
Ed Wilson

## 1 INTRODUCTION SESSION

### 1.1 **Opening remarks and welcome, Jonathan Kipling, Ramblers' Chair**

The Chairman opened the meeting. He said that it was a great privilege to be the Chairman of the Ramblers, and warmly welcomed delegates to General Council and particularly the 44% of delegates who had not attended before. He thanked them for giving up their weekend, and for everything which they did to help to implement the Ramblers' mission. General Council meetings helped to shape that mission, but its formal job was to elect new members to the Board of Trustees, to hold the Board to account, to adopt motions and to guide the organisation. This weekend members of Council would be asked to think hard about the vision and governance of the organisation so as to change it and make it fit for the future. There would also be opportunity to meet volunteers from other areas and to socialise.

1.2 He told General Council that two innovations from last year would be continued: first time delegates had been given yellow voting cards so that the Chairman would be more easily able to spot them and invite them to speak, and there would be a Chairman's reception for new delegates. There would also be a consultation session on vision and governance issues on Sunday morning.

### 1.3 **Welcome by Dave Callan, Merseyside and West Cheshire Area Chair, and Pat Sullivan, Liverpool Group Chair**

Dave Callan welcomed General Council to Liverpool, and to the famous Adelphi Hotel at its heart, on behalf of Merseyside & West Cheshire Area.

1.4 He said that the Area encompassed five Groups which reflected the geographical diversity of the locality: Cestrian (Chester)—a Roman and medieval city in the heart of glorious Cheshire countryside; Southport—an elegant, Victorian seaside resort which offered coastal walking and possible sightings of red squirrels; St Helens—at the industrial heart of Lancashire with paths that reflected its mining heritage; Wirral—a rural peninsula between the estuaries of the Dee and the Merseyside offering shore-side walking; and Liverpool itself—a UNESCO World Heritage site. Additionally there was a Young Walkers Group, whose membership was vibrant and growing. The Area was also fortunate to have four national parks within easy travelling distance—the Lake District, Snowdonia, the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales. He said he was proud of the Area, and of all that it could offer, and he wished all delegates an enjoyable Council, and a happy time in the City of Liverpool.

1.5 Pat Sullivan, Liverpool Group Chair and the host Area's GC co-ordinator, endorsed Dave's comments, and said that the Area had for many years organised public rambles as a means of bringing in new members and of introducing people to hill walking. This was a wonderful way of introducing

people to the Ramblers and its work and she hoped that other Areas would follow the example.

1.6 Pat said that she was delighted to welcome people to the City. It had been the second port of the Empire and there were many amazing listed buildings to see, including those on the waterfront and the cathedrals. The walks on Sunday afternoon would be led by architectural tour guides and she hoped that many delegates would be able to join them. She wished everyone an enjoyable and memorable time.

1.7 **The Chief Executive, Benedict Southworth, gave a presentation, *What we've achieved together (Appendix one)*.**

The Chief Executive recommended that delegates examine the Annual Report and the Impact Report for detailed accounts of the past year's achievements, reporting that the work and outcomes of the last year had continued to be in line with the 2012-14 business plan. We have continued to deliver our great work for the benefit of everyone who walks, and are achieving the stability which had eluded the charity in recent years. There is a definite sense that the organisation is beginning to pull together toward a more common sense of purpose. Many thanks are due to all of our fantastic volunteers who are the life blood of the Ramblers.

1.8 **The Chair, Jonathan Kipling, gave a presentation, *Our future challenges (Appendix two)***

The Chairman was pleased to tell Council that our recent achievements highlight what an excellent job the Chief Executive is doing. The last year has seen many innovations and initiatives. However, if we are successfully to enact the vision, we need to make further improvements and work on coordination and communication across the organisation.

He was pleased to announce the exciting new "Path Watch" project, with funding from Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust. He further announced that a new three-year online-only deal for mutual marketing had been negotiated with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays as a walking holiday partner. The Chairman extended his thanks to the areas, not least to their Chairs, who are increasingly important players in the delivery of the mission.

A key challenge for the future was to attract younger people, but he was confident the Ramblers would evolve to meet this challenge.

## 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Jo Bird (North Yorks & South Durham Area), John Foster (vice-president), Tom Fisher (Herefordshire Area), David

Grosz (vice-president), Chris Hall (vice-president), James Lawson (Board of Trustees), Alan Mattingly (vice-president), Jerry Pearlman (vice-president), Andy Rogers (current trustee and candidate for re-election), and Owen Plunkett (Hampshire Area).

### **3 APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS**

The Chairman approved the appointment of:  
Mary van Altena, Charlie Walker, Stella Yates, Sally Partington, Margaret Beacher, Margaret Evans, Janet Hudson and Terry McKenna.

### **4 MINUTES OF GENERAL COUNCIL 2013**

The Chairman was authorised to sign these as a correct record.

### **5 AGENDA COMMITTEE REPORT**

Council noted a report from the Agenda Committee which had met to consider the motions and amendments, and the order in which they should be debated.

This year there had been no appeals or emergency motions and no need for motions to be composited, although the Agenda Committee had put forward some amendments of its own.

### **6 REVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON 2013 MOTIONS AND OUTSTANDING MOTIONS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS**

6.1 Council noted a report from the Board reviewing action taken on previous motions. The following comments were made.

6.2 On behalf of Jo Bird (North Yorkshire & South Durham Area), Sylvia Popham (Agenda Committee), asked how action on Motion 4 (2012—Membership Recruitment) could be complete when the first two actions outlined did not target independent walkers. Specifically, renewal of membership was targeting current members, not potential members who walk independently, and while some independent walkers may find Ramblers Routes useful, a great many of them never have had, and never will have, any need of this facility. While the two actions were commendable, they did not fulfil the requirements of the motion. While the third action, communication of our mission, was clearly of benefit in informing our members and the public, it had not specifically targeted independent walkers. Jo was asking the Board look into more ways of attracting the independent walker, and at the same time of better informing current

members of our work so that they can help spread the word; and to find more and better ways to publicise the work done at all levels of the organisation which benefits all who walk.

- 6.3 Phil Marson, (Inner London Area), expressed concern about the lack of progress with the re-appraisal of Area structures within the geographical area covered by the Greater London Authority (Motion 8, 2011, Regional Structures). Brian Reader (Agenda Committee) said that any changes to Area boundaries in and around London needed to be achieved by way of discussion and agreement. The Chief Executive said that the Board was aware of the need for a body to act as an advocate for walking in the Greater London area and it needed to decide on the best way of achieving the Ramblers' mission there.
- 6.4 Keith Wadd, (West Riding Area), said that he did not consider that work on Motion 10 (2013—rights of way in future housing developments) to be complete. Clearly work was still continuing on this issue.

## **7 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

- 7.1 **The Honorary Treasurer, Robert Peel gave a presentation, *the financial landscape. (Appendix three).***

The Treasurer is satisfied the Ramblers' finances are stable, under control, and he is confident we have good financial discipline and are delivering better and better value for money. Furthermore, clarity and transparency in reporting has improved.

He expressed the charity's deep gratitude to all those who had remembered Ramblers in their wills and urged others to do the same. He also drew attention to the huge added value of gift aid contributions and urged everyone to spread the word about this. However, financial stability has come not as a result of buoyant income but as a result of placing tight limits on expenditure. We need to be ever mindful of the Ramblers' pension fund deficit. The Treasurer thanked everyone for their part in meeting our challenges so far and told Council he is confident that by pulling together we will not just survive, we will thrive.

- 7.2 Council noted a report (which appears as *Appendix four* to these minutes) from the Board setting out a number of written questions and answers on both the Annual Report and Accounts. The following additional matters were raised from the floor.
- 7.3 Philip Guest (Cheshire East Area) said that over the last five to six years Groups has reduced their reserves as requested by central office. He asked whether there was now money available from the central organisation to support Group

work when necessary. Robert Peel assured Council that such funding was available.

- 7.4 Referring to the penultimate paragraph of p.5 of the Annual Report, John Esslemont (Agenda Committee) said that in describing General Council, the word “includes” would be more appropriate than “comprises”, since not all Areas send delegates to Council.
- 7.5 It was proposed by David Ross (Surrey Area), seconded by Patric Curwen (Hampshire Area) and agreed by Council that the Annual Report and Accounts for the year to 30 September 2013 be adopted.

## **8 ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**President:** Kate Ashbrook

Proposed by Jonathan Kipling, and seconded by Robert Peel.

**Vice-Presidents:**

The following **Past Presidents** automatically remain **Vice-Presidents**:

Andrew Bennett, Julia Bradbury, Chris Hall, Mike Harding, Peter Melchett, Chris Smith, Janet Street-Porter.

The following **Vice-Presidents** were proposed *en bloc* by David Thomson, and seconded by Gwyn Lewis.

Geoff Eastwood, John Foster, David Grosz, Richard Lloyd Jones, Cath Mackay, Alan Mattingly, Jerry Pearlman, Malcolm Petyt, John Riddall, David Sharp, Paddy Tipping.

It was proposed by Mike Church and seconded by David Gibson (both of West Riding Area) that Keith Wadd should be elected as a new Vice-President.

All officers were elected by Council.

## **9 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS**

It was proposed by Naseem Akhtar (Vice Chair), and seconded by Richard May (Trustee) and agreed by Council that the firm of Crowe Clark Whitehill should be appointed as auditors.

## **10 ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

There was no contested election for membership of the Board of Trustees as there were three candidates for three ordinary Board member places. The three candidates were

Christine O'Byrne, Paul Rhodes and Andy Rogers. Each would serve on the Board for three years.

## **11 AGENDA COMMITTEE**

There was no contested election for membership of the Agenda Committee as there were five candidates and five positions available. The following persons would serve on the Agenda Committee: John Esslemont, Elizabeth Lawie, Sylvia Popham, Brian Reader, and Clare Wadd.

## **12 TRUSTEE AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (PANEL)**

Council was provided with the opportunity to ask questions of the Board of Trustees or the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team.

1. Allen Pestell (South Yorkshire & North East Derbyshire Area) asked whether the recent increase in membership numbers was as a result of a concerted plan. The Chief Executive said that the plan had been to try to end the year with only 600 fewer members than at the beginning (so to stem the tide of loss of members). This was to be achieved by a new and more sophisticated membership renewal process with letters and e-mails reminding people of the need to renew their membership. This had been supplemented by a new telemarketing arrangement under which lapsed members were called. He said that to keep members it was necessary to love and care for them.
2. Sue Jones (Shropshire Area) commented that there appeared to be quite a number of vice-presidents. She asked what their rôle and function was within the organisation. The Chair said that the position of vice-president was an honour. A vice-president had no power other than a vote at General Council, of which they automatically become a member, but the organisation can call upon their wisdom and help at any time.
3. David Gibson (West Riding Area) asked what efforts had been made to persuade people to pay their subscription by direct debit, and to sign for gift aid. The Chief Executive said that members are constantly reminded to sign gift aid forms and that making sure the relevant forms are accurate was an ongoing project. Between 75% and 80% of members now paid by way of direct debit and there had been a discount scheme to encourage this. It is planned to discontinue the discount scheme while managing the effect. Not everyone was happy to pay by this method.
4. David Collinson (Renfrewshire, Cowal, and Bute Area) expressed concern that he had not received a reply to e-mail correspondence to the Ramblers Scotland Office after two months. The Chief Executive said that a reply should have been sent. He went on to explain that several thousands of e-mails were received every week, and that there were too few members of staff to deal with the volume. Messages could get

passed between staff until they reached the appropriate person. A new “zendesk” system was being trialled to try to overcome this problem with allocation of e-mails. He apologised for the delays and said that efforts were made to track and monitor correspondence. However, correspondents did need to bear in mind that for specific rights of way and access queries it might be necessary to ask volunteers for reports, which all took time.

5. John Esslemont (Agenda Committee) asked how the new footpath project, under which all paths will be walked, would differ from the previous project in which all paths were walked. The Honorary Treasurer explained that the earlier project involved no more than walking paths—no data about the condition of paths was collected centrally. Under the new project the data would be collected and subjected to statistical analysis so that local authority league tables and so on could be produced.

6. Clare Wadd (Agenda Committee) asked what could be done to fulfil the Ramblers’ mission in London. Des Garrahan (Trustee) said that the 2011 motion on Regional Structures that specifically mentioned the structure of the Ramblers within the geographical area covered by the Greater London Authority needed to be re-examined. The spirit behind it was understood, but the practicalities were more complex.

7. Sue Baxendale (North East Lancashire Area) asked what progress had been made with recruiting a countryside officer. Nicky Philpott (Director of Advocacy and Engagement) said that a consultant had been working on countryside issues for the last ten months. He had been working on revision of the guidance notes for countryside/walking environment officers, and policy statements on, in particular, renewable energy issues. He had made many site visits to discuss these issues with volunteers and he had led a workshop, “Going green needn’t cost the countryside” that morning at GC. All of the new guidance and policy statements would be published on the website.

8. Rob Heaton (Warwickshire Area) asked whether the Ramblers was considering collaborating with any organisations with which it had not previously worked. Dave Morris (Director Ramblers Scotland) said that recognition of Ramblers Scotland as the governing body for walking in Scotland had opened the way for new funding streams with Sportscotland, and that £28,000 had also been obtained from the Ordnance Survey-funded GeoVation Challenge, for the development of Apps as part of the Medal Routes project (associated with the Commonwealth Games).

## 13 MOTIONS

No Constitutional Resolutions were submitted.

### Policy Motions

#### [1] Publicity for 2026 cut-off date

The following motion was proposed by Malcolm McDonnell of Sussex Area, and seconded by Graham Elvey of that Area:

This General Council believes that, as the leading body representing walkers, Ramblers should do much more to raise awareness of the 2026 cut-off date in England and Wales to add historic rights of way to definitive maps, amongst the membership and the wider public.

Council requires that the Board authorises a long-term campaign to ensure that as many people as possible know what the cut-off date will mean, and what they can do about it.

The campaign strategy should use *Walk*, the Ramblers website, the wider published media and engage Areas, Groups and Members to achieve its goals.

The motion was carried *nem con*, with one abstention.

#### [2] Guidance on 2026 cut-off date

The following motion was proposed by Allen Pestell of South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area, and seconded by Nicola Farmery of that Area:

This General Council is concerned that we are now half way to the 2026 cut-off date in England and Wales to add historic rights of way to definitive maps, introduced by the CROW Act 2000, and that Areas and Groups have not yet received any guidance on the types of routes which they should claim.

Council urges the Board of Trustees to issue, as soon as possible, clear advice on where and how we should all be concentrating our efforts in order to achieve maximum efficiency.

The motion was carried, with one vote to the contrary.

#### [3] Waymarking

The following motion had been submitted by West Riding Area:

This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to adopt and implement a proactive policy on waymarking with the purpose of ensuring that all rights of way are reliably and adequately waymarked, thus enabling them to be followed with ease by members of the public.

The Area has subsequently submitted the following amendment, which was accepted by Council. The amended motion was proposed by Keith Wadd of West Riding Area, and seconded by David Gibson of that Area:

Delete entire text and replace with:

This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to campaign for a substantially higher standard of waymarking with the purpose of ensuring that all rights of way are accurately, adequately and appropriately waymarked on a countrywide standardisation following Natural England guidelines, thus enabling them to be followed with ease by members of the public. Council further calls on the Board to urge all highway authorities in England and Wales to show much greater willingness to authorise Ramblers volunteers to undertake waymarking on their behalf and to enter into negotiations with the Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management (IPROW), Local Authorities and other relevant organisations with a view to facilitating it.

The amended motion was carried, with one vote to the contrary and three abstentions.

#### **[4] Guidance notes for footpath workers**

The following motion was proposed by Pete Bland of North Wales Area, and seconded by Joanna Slattery of that Area:

“Guidance Notes for Footpath Workers” was last published in 2004. This General Council urges the Board of Trustees to make available in updated form, as soon as possible, the comprehensive guidance notes contained in that publication.

The following amendment was submitted by Clare Wadd of Inner London Area, and accepted by the proposer and by Council:

Delete the words after “as soon as possible” and insert “comprehensive guidance notes for footpath workers as part of the Ramblers’ integrated package of guidance for volunteers.”

The amended motion reads:

“Guidance Notes for Footpath Workers” was last published in 2004. This General Council urges the Board of Trustees to make available in updated form, as soon as possible, comprehensive guidance notes for footpath workers as part of the Ramblers’ integrated package of guidance for volunteers.

The amended motion was carried, with eight votes to the contrary and four abstentions.

#### **[5] Biodiversity Offsetting**

The following motion was proposed by Sylvia Popham of Avon Area and seconded by Jill Fysh of that area:

This General Council notes with some concern Defra's consultative proposals on biodiversity offsetting in England, which could lead to the loss of recreational green spaces and valued habitats. However Council welcomes the recognition of the local social importance of biodiversity and landscape in the response submitted by the organisation 'Wildlife and Countryside Link'.

Council requests the Board of Trustees to continue to work closely with Link and other organisations to ensure that any offsetting scheme brings benefits for walkers. In particular the impact on public access and enjoyment should be included in the adopted metric. Existing statutory measures, such as the dedication of access land using section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the creation of new public rights of way, could be employed (in addition to conservation covenants and other measures) to secure offsets for the long-term.

The following amendment was submitted by John Newnham of Shropshire Area and seconded by Sue Jones of that Area:

After "benefits for walkers", add "and all leisure users of the countryside."

The amendment was lost.

The substantive motion was carried.

#### **[6] Barbed Wire**

The following motion was proposed by Margaret Hems of Merseyside and West Cheshire Area and seconded by Dave Beacher of that Area:

This General Council deplores the use of barbed wire in the countryside, alongside footpaths and bridleways, particularly the use of barbed wire on and around stiles.

Council therefore urges governments in England, Scotland and Wales to produce legislation to remove and prevent the use of barbed wire in these places. The planting of thorn hedging and non-aggressive fences which would not do damage to livestock and people should be encouraged.

Three amendments to this motion, (a), (b) and (c), were considered:

Amendment (a) was submitted by Jill Fysh of Avon Area, and accepted by the proposer and by Council:

Replace the first sentence of the second paragraph with:

Council therefore calls upon the Board of Trustees to campaign for highway authorities to make greater use of their powers under the Highways Act 1980 to require removal of barbed wire.

Amendment (b) was submitted by John Esslemont on behalf of the Agenda Committee, and accepted by the proposer and by Council:

If amendment (a) is passed add at the end of the first sentence of the second paragraph: "and to consider the case for stronger legislation."

If amendment (a) has not been passed, replace the first sentence of the second paragraph by the following: "Council therefore calls upon the Board of Trustees to campaign for highway authorities to make greater use of their powers under the Highways Act 1980 to require removal of barbed wire, and to consider the case for stronger legislation."

Since amendment (a) was carried, the first of these two alternatives prevailed.

Amendment (c) was submitted by John Esslemont on behalf of Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area, and accepted by the proposer and by Council:

In the last sentence delete "The planting of thorn hedging and non-aggressive fences" and replace by "Use of appropriate hedging or fencing".

On the Chairman's authority the comma after the word "countryside" in the first line of the motion was deleted.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council deplores the use of barbed wire in the countryside alongside footpaths and bridleways, particularly the use of barbed wire on and around stiles.

Council therefore calls upon the Board of Trustees to campaign for highway authorities to make greater use of their powers under the Highways Act 1980 to require removal of barbed wire, and to consider the case for stronger legislation. Use of appropriate hedging or fencing which would not do damage to livestock and people should be encouraged.

The amended motion was carried, with 15 votes to the contrary and five abstentions.

**[7] Access points to access land**

The following motion had been submitted by Mid Lancashire Area:

This General Council is concerned about the continuing low level of usage of access land. The main reason why many walkers are reluctant to use access land is because they do not know where the access points are located; this is both to gain access to access land and within access land. Some local authorities have attempted to provide publicity about access points but this is frequently of poor quality. In many other places the publicity about access points is non-existent. Therefore the publicity on how to use access land needs to be improved, with ideally the access points being shown on OS 1:25,000 maps. General Council recommends that the Board of Trustees campaigns on this issue.

The following amendment had been proposed by the Agenda Committee and was accepted by the proposer and by Council:

Add a new paragraph at the end:

“Council is aware that the preceding paragraph is already Ramblers’ policy, following its approval as a motion in 2011, and notes the reports by the Board of Trustees issued in 2012 and 2013. However, Council does not consider action on the 2011 motion can be considered complete and requires the Board to continue campaigning and reporting progress on this issue.”

The amended motion, proposed by David Kelly on behalf of Mid Lancashire Area and seconded by John Esslemont of the Agenda Committee, reads:

This General Council is concerned about the continuing low level of usage of access land. The main reason why many walkers are reluctant to use access land is because they do not know where the access points are located; this is both to gain access to access land and within access land. Some local authorities have attempted to provide publicity about access points but this is frequently of poor quality. In many other places the publicity about access points is non-existent. Therefore the publicity on how to use access land needs to be improved, with ideally the access points being shown on OS 1:25,000 maps. General Council recommends that the Board of Trustees campaigns on this issue.

Council is aware that the preceding paragraph is already Ramblers’ policy, following its approval as a motion in 2011, and notes the reports by the Board of Trustees issued in 2012 and 2013. However, Council does not consider action on the 2011 motion can be considered complete and requires the Board to continue campaigning and reporting progress on this issue.

The motion was carried.

## **14 THIRD SESSION OF COUNCIL- CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE RAMBLERS' GOVERNANCE AND VISION**

### **14.1 Governance**

General Council discussed in round table discussions themes identified by the Governance working party. The themes were:

- Should we introduce one member one vote to elect the Board and therefore replace elected delegates making the decision?
- How do we get the Board of Trustees the organisation needs whilst ensuring democracy?
- How can we clarify the powers of the Board v General Council responsibility?
- Should we have a simplified way of delivering our activities by streamlining group and area constitutions and having a separate route for providing accountability at all levels of the organisation?
- Can we make governance changes that help areas become more effective in delivering the mission of Ramblers GB (Scotland/Wales)?
- Are there practical things we can do to improve democracy such as better use of technology or changing how General Council operates?
- How can we identify and harness volunteer expertise without using the traditional route of being elected into constitutional roles at Area or Board level?
- How can we structure GC so that delegates are enabled to focus on the strategic direction of the Ramblers?

The findings of the discussion are available as *Appendix five* to this document.

### **14.2 Vision**

General Council discussed in round table discussions questions arising from the six main themes that emerged as a result of feedback by members and the walking community from the first phase of the project. These results came from online surveys, discussion kits, interviews and stakeholder events.

The tabled questions were:

- What should the relationship be between Ramblers and young people (below the age of 26)?
- What does an organisation do that gives all types of walkers the skills, knowledge and confidence they need and what does it look like?
- What is the path network for and what sort of path network do we want?
- What type of open access would we like to see in England and Wales and why?
- What should the goal of our countryside protection be?
- What would we like the image of walking to be?

Delegates also submitted any additional questions that they would like to see addressed by the project.

The findings of the discussion are available as *Appendix six* to this document.

## **15 VENUE FOR GENERAL COUNCIL IN 2015**

General Council 2015 would take place on 28 and 29 March at Robinson College, Cambridge.

## **16 PRESIDENT'S CLOSING REMARKS**

- 16.1 The President made a closing speech to Council, She recalled that Liverpool was home to one of the first Ramblers' federations: the Liverpool and District Ramblers' Federation founded in 1922. We still face many of the same challenges that we did back then. For instance, green spaces were at risk, with development continuing apace.
- 16.2 She considers our biggest challenge is to change so as to be relevant to today's society while holding on to our traditions.
- 16.3 However, she said, there were plenty of opportunities for action, such as the UK election in 2015 and elections in Scotland, Wales and London in 2016. We should take our MPs, Scottish MPs and Assembly members and the candidates for walks — there was nothing like showing them the issues and discussing our concerns in the fresh air. And, she added, we must do much more local publicity about issues and campaigns, not just about walks. The volunteer awards last night had shown just a tiny example of the sheer volume of impressive work undertaken. But most members didn't know about this, or understand the value of our skilled, professional staff, or our history. We must get better at explaining ourselves to all our members and the public. We are a mainstream charity that changes and saves lives. We must tell the world what we do.
- 16.4 The President would welcome more invitations to help plan or implement local campaigns, to meet councillors, or to celebrate successes. With our proud history, our staggering number of active volunteers and the esteem in which we are held, there is so much we could do. We must be flexible and take calculated risks. We must become the organisation that no one can do without.

## **17 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

- 17.1 In bringing the meeting to a close the Chairman thanked the President for her inspiring speech and for presenting the Volunteer Awards. He was very pleased

to be able to reciprocate that action and present to her the well-deserved certificate, awarded by readers of *The Great Outdoors*, for runner-up Outdoor Personality of the Year.

- 17.2 The Chairman went on to thank the out-going Trustees: Max Grant, who had played an important role in the development of the devolution arrangements for Ramblers Cymru; Naseem Akhtar, who had originally been co-opted on to the Board but who had gone on to be elected and to serve as Vice-Chair, and who had been a champion for the need for diversity within the organisation, and Moira Fraser, who had also been a recently co-opted member of the Board.
- 17.3 As ever, many thanks were due to those who had contributed to the running of a successful General Council: Kevin and his team at the Adelphi Hotel; Dave Callan and Pat Sullivan and all of the wonderful volunteers from Merseyside & West Cheshire Area; the guest speakers who had assisted at the workshops and fringe meetings; Nicky Philpott, Hazel Robinson, Caroline Wheeler and the rest of the Ramblers' staff team; and finally, and not least, to everyone who had attended the weekend and who had brought so many ideas and so much enthusiasm to the event.
- 17.4 It had been a good General Council and although there were clearly many challenges for the future, the Chairman was in no doubt that by working together the Ramblers could rise to meet them.
- 17.5 The President thanked the Chairman for his tireless work both at General Council, and throughout the year.

**THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS**