

WELCOME

Mr N Edwards, President of Manchester Area, welcomed delegates and visitors to the first Council meeting in Manchester Area since 1969. He referred to the tremendous expansion of the Association since that time, which was reflected in the wide-ranging array of motions on the agenda. He wished Council a successful and enjoyable weekend.

APOLOGIES

Council noted apologies from Dr Raistrick and Lady Sayer. It was agreed with acclaim to send greetings and good wishes to Dr Raistrick, the oldest vice-president.

APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

The following persons were appointed:

Tellers:	Mr H Billington	Scrutineers:	Mr	R
Chaney				
	Mrs H Billington		Mr	B
Fairbanks				
	Ms B Evans		Mr	R
Lomas				
	Mrs M Gregory			Mr
P Sleightholm				

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

In her presidential address Fay Godwin commented that although most of the changes in the countryside during the past year had been for the worse, there were still causes for celebration, the defeat of the Lyndhurst Bypass Bill and, after many years of campaigning, the designating of a public right of way through Wychwood.

She went on to detail a number of the threats to the enjoyment of the countryside which were particularly concerning the Association.

In Kent, despite the RA's objections supported by strong evidence, the county council, prompted by the army, had persuaded the magistrates at a court hearing to close the few remaining rights of way across military training grounds at Lydd on Romney Marsh. The RA was considering an appeal to the High Court against this decision.

Water privatisation posed one of the most serious threats since the

association's formation. Although there had been access problems with the water authorities, these bodies had always been susceptible to public pressure. But in the bill there was no statutory duty for the new water companies to maintain public access after the land had been sold or resold. It was likely that much land would be sold for commercial development.

A further threat to access was the campaign of the newly-formed Moorland Association, representing the landed interests, to prevent any right to roam on grouse-moor commons. The RA had been vigorously opposing its proposals.

In the south-east, under particular danger of devastation from the Channel Tunnel development, the RA in Kent had been notably successful in putting together a third section of the Greensand Way.

The president spoke of her forthcoming book, Our Land, Forbidden Land, and thanked those who had written to her about forbidden access. Work on it had been depressing, as she had realised to what extent the agricultural industry had robbed the public of the countryside. The farming methods used were cruel to animals, poisoned the countryside, destroyed rights of way and produced degraded food. Eventually there was likely to be a considerable backlash of opinion against the farming community.

Planners were increasingly emphasising the benefits of theme parks and nature trails as against real countryside. In this context time share complexes and leisure developments were becoming a major threat, particularly in the Lake District National Park. The park authorities generally did not seem able to protect the landscape against exploitation. Bronze Age tracks had been bulldozed in Snowdonia and whole skylines had been changed by huge quarries in the Yorkshire Dales.

Although the Forestry Commission had stated that it did not intend any more conifer plantations in the uplands of England, it was now planning to plant in the Calder Valley in the Pennines, on moors used by huge numbers of people from nearby conurbations. A wonderful network of rights of way here was under threat.

In the Flow Country in Scotland the desecration from forestry was accelerating. Planning consultation times had been reduced to benefit

commercial interests.

The Ministry of Defence brought another threat to the enjoyment of the countryside. The army sought even larger firing areas while leaving the areas it had abandoned in a disgraceful state. Near at hand the RA was awaiting the outcome of an inquiry into the Ministry's plans to take over a large area of common land on Holcombe Moor.

During the first world war, the president concluded, sentimental posters of the countryside had urged people to fight to protect it. The inference was that the countryside belonged to the people. This had not been the case for centuries. But there was an inalienable right to use the unique network of rights of way. The battle against the many interests which threatened them must be maintained.

She was amazed at the sheer volume of work being tackled by the RA on so many fronts. What a long way it had come! She valued beyond expression her association with the RA in the struggle to make the countryside accessible, pleasant and safe.

The president's address was greeted with acclaim.

MINUTES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL 1989

The president was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the 1988 Council, held in Southampton.

REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN ON RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT NATIONAL COUNCIL 1988

Council noted a report from the director on action taken on resolutions passed at National Council 1988.

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The chairman, proposing the adoption of the annual report, commented that the words of warning he had given in his closing remarks had been justified by events. The difficulties with commons legislation, the implications of water privatisation and the growing practice of wealthy incomers moving into countryside hoping to buy themselves privacy by closing local footpaths were a few examples of threats the RA was facing.

He paid tribute to the strength of the staff team with which the association was tackling these problems.

Mrs A Lennox seconded the adoption of the report.

The director spoke to the report.

He referred to the 40th anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act and looked at four aspects of the RA's work in the context of what it had been hoped the act would achieve.

Definitive maps of public rights of way - the introduction of which had been a major achievement of the act - were still inaccurate and out of date. Ministers had repeatedly ignored RA requests for more resources to be allocated to rights of way needs and for a higher priority to be given to countryside legislation. Yet when the outcome of the Rubinstein case had proved unfavourable to landowning interests the government had reacted promptly with promises to amend the law. In fact if some of the proposals of the Countryside Commission's document, Changing the Rights of Way Network, reached the statute book, the situation of public rights of way forty years after the passing of the act would be deteriorating.

National Parks had been set up but were facing most serious problems. The government had promised in its election manifesto to help the situation by introducing new laws to protect national park landscapes. After taking office it had scandalously reneged on this commitment.

As regards access, very few access orders had been made, and comparatively few access agreements entered into. A number of these would be under threat when they came up for renewal in the near future.

Progress towards the right to roam, which had been Tom Stephenson's lifelong aim, was painfully slow. Now there was the additional threat posed by water privatisation. Some concessions had been gained since the bill had been published but there was still much to be done if disastrous consequences were to be avoided. As to commons legislation, the government was believed to be sympathetic to the moorland owners.

The situation might arise where the RA had to oppose commons legislation as it had had to oppose the Access to Mountains Bill fifty years ago.

Long-distance paths had been introduced in the 1949 Act. Certainly recent progress towards the designation of the Thames Walk was most welcome. But the establishment of long-distance paths still took far too long.

The director went on to speak of the proven popularity of rambling - according to the latest statistics by far the most popular of outdoor leisure pursuits. Reflecting this, the RA membership was showing an unprecedented rate of increase - over 14% in the last twelve months.

This posed a severe challenge to the membership section, and he paid particular tribute to Adrian Ritchie, whose work with computer programming had been so effective in this respect.

He concluded by referring to the tremendous response to the recent footpath appeal. Over £50,000 had been received in three weeks. With such support the RA could only go from strength to strength.

Council greeted the director's speech with applause.

Mr D Nisbet (Essex Area) mentioned the area's success in having a bridge replaced on the line of a footpath over a wide section of the River Roding.

Council agreed to adopt the annual report for 1988.

The adoption of the annual accounts was proposed by the treasurer and seconded by Mr B Reader.

The treasurer referred to the new format of the accounts, which gave a much clearer view of the situation. He paid tribute to the work of the accountant, David Carter.

Largely because of the Tom Stephenson legacy, funds and reserves totalled £238,774 as against £15,813 the previous year.

A budgetary system had been established, and the Executive Committee had approved a balanced budget for 1989. While it was hoped that the level of legacies would be maintained and a legacy appeal was soon to be launched, for budgetary purposes legacies were being averaged over the period of the preceding five years.

Mr R McLoughlin (Manchester Area) and Mr J Riddall (Derbyshire Area) spoke in approval of the method of budgeting for legacies.

Mr J Kerr (Hampshire Area) was informed, in answer to his question about the advertising revenue from The Rambler, that David Green Ltd, the publishers, obtained the advertisements and consequently retained the revenue from them, although the RA would share in any profit from the publication. However The Rambler was printed free of charge.

Mrs P Mills (Sussex Area) was informed, following a question, that the "Holiday Allowance" under staff expenditure referred to long-standing concessions allowed to staff on RAS holidays.

Council agreed to adopt the annual accounts for 1988.

APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

President
by:

Proposed by:

Seconded

Fay Godwin
Ibbott

Mr C Hall

Mr J

Vice Presidents:

Past Presidents:

Lt Col G G Haythornthwaite CBE, TD, MA, FRIBA, MTPI
Gerald McGuire OBE
Mike Harding
The Rt Hon Lord Melchett
Arthur Raistrick PhD, MSC, FGS
W S Tysoe

and:

Sir Jack Longland
David Rubinstein
Arthur Roberts MBE
Lady Sayer
Eastwood
Bill Murray OBE
David Sharp
J W Smith

Mr A Howard

Mr G

Chairman

Mr C Hall
Robinson

Mrs C MacKay

Mr J

Vice Chairman

Dr G Eastwood
Howard

Ms K Ashbrook

Mr A

Treasurer

Mr J Ibbott
Meadowcroft

Mr D Grosz

Mr L

Hon Solicitor

Mr J J Pearlman LLB
Drake

Mr R Harland

Mr A

ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

Ms K Ashbrook	Mrs C MacKay
Ms J Bird	Mr L Meadowcroft
Mr A J Drake	Mr J Newnham
Mr P Gould	Mr D Whicher
Mr A Howard	

ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

Three valid nominations for the Agenda Committee were received. The president declared them elected as follows:

Mr J Barnard	Ms S Popham	Mr
B Reader.		

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

The appointment of Finnie & Co was proposed by Dr G Eastwood and seconded by Mr D Whicher and agreed.

AWARD OF LIFE MEMBERSHIP TO ANDREW BENNETT MP

Ms K Ashbrook proposed that honorary life membership of the RA should be awarded to Andrew Bennett MP in recognition of his work for the association and for the cause of public access to the countryside. This was seconded by Mr L Meadowcroft and agreed with acclaim.

Andrew Bennett was presented with a framed certificate by the president to mark this award.

MOTION AFFECTING THE CONSTITUTION

[The chairman took the chair for discussion on motions 1-10]

1. Election of Executive Committee

Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area had submitted the following motion:

Clause 9: Executive Committee; Clause 11: Annual General Meeting of National Council

Amend clause 9 (b) to read:

Nine members (of whom not fewer than seven shall be delegates of the areas appointed in accordance with clause 10) appointed by and from the National Council for a period of three years, one third elected each year.

Add at end of clause:

No retiring members of the Executive Committee can seek re-election for one year.

Amend clause 11 (c) to read:

To elect one third of the Executive Committee to hold office until their successors are duly appointed.

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In order that this amendment may operate there shall be a transitional two year period starting in 1990 when retiring members will not have served their three year period; each third to retire in these years to be decided by the national Executive.

Mrs A Lennox asked on behalf of the area for this motion to be withdrawn, having no seconder.

Council agreed to this.

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

2. Notice of National Council Business

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by Mr J Kerr and seconded by Miss B Parker:

This National Council amends the standing orders to allow more time for the local consideration of motions prior to the Council meeting.

S O 1: Reword the second clause of the first sentence of the second paragraph to read:

....., and all relevant paperwork shall be circulated to the secretaries of areas, groups and affiliated organisations not less than 14 days before the meeting.

Cambridgeshire Area had submitted the following amendment:

Reword the first paragraph to read:

Notice of alterations to the constitution to be proposed at the annual general meeting of the National Council must be received in writing at the national office not less than 70 days before the meeting.

Reword the first sentence of the second paragraph to read:

Notice of all other business for transaction at the annual general meeting of the National Council must be received not less than 56 days before the meeting, and all relevant paperwork shall be circulated to the secretaries of areas, groups and affiliated organisations not less than 28 days before the meeting.

The chairman ruled the first paragraph of the amendment out of order.

The amendment was then withdrawn.

Mr S Wallsgrove proposed and Mr T Hellberg seconded the following amendment on behalf of Warwickshire Area:

Replace: "14 days" with "1 calendar month".

This amendment was then lost.

Dr G Eastwood proposed remission of the motion to the Executive Committee; this was seconded in several places.

Council agreed to remission.

3. Membership Subscription

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by Mr J Barnard and seconded by Mrs M Haylock:

S.O. 12: Amend the first sentence to read:

Proposed changes to the subscription rate for ordinary members of the Association shall be agreed by the National Council before implementation.

The motion was overwhelmingly lost.

4. Joint and Family Membership

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by Mr J Barnard and seconded by Mrs M Haylock:

Amend "Joint membership rate" in lines 6 and 14 to "Joint and Family Membership Rate (families to include parents and children under 18 living at the same address)"

Essex Area asked for the following addition to be made to the motion:

5th paragraph from end: line 2: substitute 18 for 16.

This was agreed.

The motion was then lost by 46 votes to 34.

DOMESTIC MOTIONS

5. Model Constitutions

The following motion was proposed on behalf of The Executive Committee by Mr A Howard and seconded by Dr G Eastwood:

Amend Clause 7(i) of the model constitution for areas to read:

Management

- (i) Subject to the directions of any annual or special general meeting as to the exercise of its powers, the management and control of the area shall be vested in a council which

shall consist of:

- (a) representatives of individual members;
- (b) representatives of local affiliated organisations;
- (c) the area honorary officers;
- (d) not less than two representatives of each local group.

The total number of representatives of local groups shall be greater than the total number of representatives of individual members and representatives of local affiliated organisations combined.

In clause 10 of model constitution for local groups:

Insert the words "financial" between the words "each" and "year" in the first line.

Mr R Warren proposed and Mr D Stockwell seconded the following amendment on behalf of Gloucestershire Area:

Amend last paragraph of clause 7 amendment to read:

The total number of representatives of local groups and of individual members combined shall be greater than the number of representatives of local affiliated organisations.

This amendment was lost.

Mr S Wallsgrove proposed and Mr T Hellberg seconded the following amendment on behalf of Warwickshire Area:

Regarding clause 7 amendment:

- 1: in (a) replace "representatives" with "number".
- 2. in last sentence delete "representatives of".
- 3. renumber (a) as (d)
(b) as (c)
(c) as (a)

(d) as (b)

This amendment was lost.

The motion was then carried.

6. Relationship between Areas/Groups and NEC/National Office

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Warwickshire Area by Mr S Wallsgrove and seconded by Mr T Hellberg:

This Council is concerned about the lack of understanding between national office and areas/groups, the apparent inefficiency of national office in dealing with matters such as financing, membership and publicity in relation to areas and groups, and the increasing number of matters which are very time consuming but which areas (or groups) are being asked (and expected) to do - in particular, the post coding of areas and groups.

This Council therefore calls upon the staff at national office and the elected members of the national Executive Committee to carefully assess the amount and complexity of work which they intend asking areas and groups to carry out, bearing in mind that the limited time available to volunteers may be more effectively used to promote local publicity by making available sales and other items bearing the logo.

The motion was overwhelmingly lost.

7. Holiday Advertising in "The Rambler"

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Manchester Area by Mr M Hadfield and seconded by Mr R McLoughlin.

This National Council agrees that the decision to ban overseas holidays advertising in "The Rambler" magazine by firms other than Ramblers' Association Services, should be reversed.

The motion was lost.

8. Content of "The Rambler"

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by Mr J Kerr and seconded by Mr P Redwood:

This National Council urges the editors of 'The Rambler'

to make more use of the talents of RA members to provide articles and photographs for the publication.

The motion was lost by 54 votes to 51.

9. Recycled Paper

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hereford and Worcester Area by Mr E Powell and seconded by Mr S Lund:

All communications within the Association to be on recycled paper and all external where applicable and appropriate.

After debate Mr J Perry proposed that the vote be taken. This was seconded in several places.

This was agreed.

The motion was then lost by 65 votes to 50 votes.

10. Recycled Paper

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Leicestershire and Rutland Area by Mr M Statham and seconded by Mr R Doughty:

It is the intention of the Ramblers' Association to use re-cycled paper wherever practical. National Office is therefore instructed to thoroughly examine its future use and report to the next National Council. The report shall advise of any technical limitations, the anticipated additional costs and the effect of such additional costs on the level of subscriptions.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

POLICY MOTIONS

11. Forestry in Scotland and Wales

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Mr J Robinson and seconded by Mr D Grosz.

This National Council welcomes the government's decision that the Forestry Commission should be instructed not to give approval "for new planting which consists predominantly of conifers" in the uplands of England. However Council

believes a refusal to adopt a similar policy for the Scottish and Welsh uplands will deflect much of the large-scale conifer afforestation which might have occurred in England to Scotland and Wales. Council resolves to pursue a vigorous campaign to ensure that the uplands of Scotland and Wales are given the same protection as those of England.

The motion was carried unanimously.

12. National Park Legislation

South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area had submitted the following motion:

That this National Council deploras the government's failure to observe its 1987 election manifesto promise to 'introduce new laws giving extra protection to the landscape of our national parks.'

Council urges H M government to give a much higher priority to the following issues which are of major importance within national parks:

- (a) The re-introduction of plans to introduce Landscape Conservation Orders.
- (b) The administration of ALL national parks by independent planning boards.
- (c) The extension of planning controls over damaging operations such as afforestation, fish farming, fencing on open moorland and around ancient woodland and the removal of hedgerows.
- (d) The adoption of an agricultural policy which integrates conservation and farming practices.
- (e) The introduction of legislation to safeguard common land on the basis of the Common Land Forum Report.
- (f) The introduction of stricter controls over noisy activities such as low-flying aircraft and motorised pursuits.

The following amendment was tabled by the Executive Committee and accepted by South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area. It was proposed by Mr R Cannon and seconded by Mr J Burling:

Reword as follows:

That this National Council deploras the government's failure to observe its 1987 election manifesto promise to 'introduce new laws giving extra protection to the landscape of our national parks.' Council urges the government to implement this commitment during the current parliament by, in particular, placing the administration of all national parks in England and Wales in the hands of independent planning boards.

Council further calls for legislation along the following lines, to strengthen the protection of all countryside, including national parks:

- (a) The re-introduction of plans to introduce Landscape Conservation Orders.
- (b) The extension of planning controls over damaging operations such as afforestation, fish farming, fencing on open moorland and around ancient woodland and the removal of hedgerows.
- (c) The adoption of an agricultural policy which integrates conservation and farming practices.
- (d) The introduction of legislation to safeguard common land on the basis of the Common Land Forum Report.
- (e) The introduction of stricter controls over noisy activities such as low-flying aircraft and motorised pursuits.

Mr J Pearlman proposed and Mr D Parker seconded the following amendment:

delete under (b) the words: "and around ancient woodland".

This amendment was accepted by the movers.

The amended motion was then carried unanimously.

13. Defence Lands

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Nottinghamshire Area by Mr D Whicher and seconded by Mr W Smith:

This National Council, while welcoming the limited release of former defence lands following the Nugent Report of 1973, regrets that the government has in more recent years - without

public debate or inquiry -embarked upon a policy of expanding military training land in Britain by at least a further 50,000 acres. Council is also concerned that this land is being obtained on an ad hoc basis as opportunities arise anywhere in Britain. Council calls for a thorough, independent public examination of the case for this expansion before it proceeds any further. Council also:

- (1) reaffirms its belief that military training is an inappropriate use of land in national parks and national scenic areas and that such training, where it currently exists in such areas, should be phased out; and
- (2) calls upon the government to allow more public access on foot to military training land when or where live firing is not taking place.

Mr E Hibberd proposed and B Reader seconded the following amendment:

in (1) line 2, after national parks add, ",AONBs".

This amendment was accepted by the movers.

This amendment was carried.

Mr B Wright proposed and Mr D Lee seconded the following amendment:

in (1) after "training" add "and other defence uses of land" and after "scenic areas" add "and commons".

The movers of this amendment agreed that it should be referred to the Executive Committee for further consideration should the motion be passed.

Mr S Wallsgrove proposed and Mr T Hellberg seconded the following amendment on behalf of Warwickshire Area:

In (2) delete "when or where live firing is not taking place".

The amendment was carried.

Mr J Newnham proposed and Mr B Reader seconded the following

amendment:

In (2) line 1 substitute "safe" for "more public".

This amendment was lost.

The motion, amended as follows,

This National Council, while welcoming the limited release of former defence lands following the Nugent Report of 1973, regrets that the government has in more recent years - without public debate or inquiry - embarked upon a policy of expanding military training land in Britain by at least a further 50,000 acres. Council is also concerned that this land is being obtained on an ad hoc basis as opportunities arise anywhere in Britain. Council calls for a thorough, independent public examination of the case for this expansion before it proceeds any further. Council also:

- (1) reaffirms its belief that military training is an inappropriate use of land in national parks, AONBS and national scenic areas and that such training, where it currently exists in such areas, should be phased out; and
- (2) calls upon the government to allow more public access on foot to military training land,

was then carried unanimously.

14. Access to open country

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Ms K Ashbrook and seconded by Mr A Howard:

This National Council, recognising the unprecedented threats to open country from privatisation of the water industry, road schemes, urban development etc, and without prejudice to its efforts to protect public rights of way and secure new ones, resolves to step up significantly its campaign for a public right of access on foot to all open country.

The motion was carried unanimously.

15. Water Privatisation Bill

Red Rope had submitted the following motion:

This National Council congratulates the Executive Committee on its work drawing attention to threats to the countryside and access posed by the Water Privatisation Bill.

This National Council:

1. Calls upon local groups to identify rights of way, permissive paths and open spaces in their areas which may be threatened by Water Privatisation or the sale of water authority holdings.
2. Calls upon the Executive Committee to institute a national programme of walks highlighting threatened paths and areas.

Red Rope asked permission to reword (2) as follows:

Calls upon areas and groups to pay special attention to land currently owned by water authorities when organising walks for Forbidden Britain Day.

This was agreed, and Mr R Gilbert proposed and Ms J Hodson seconded the motion on behalf of Red Rope.

Ms K Ashbrook proposed and Mr A Howard seconded the following amendment on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Add after first paragraph:

, and deplores the government's proposed amendment which is wrongly described as safeguarding water authority land in national parks because it gives no effective protection to that land and puts other water authority land at greater risk.

Add (3):

Opposes the government's proposed "national park amendment" and calls on it to protect the landscape of and access to all land now owned by the water authorities in England and Wales.

The amendment was carried by a large majority.

The motion, amended as follows:

This National Council congratulates the Executive Committee on its work drawing attention to threats to the countryside and access posed by the Water Privatisation Bill, and deplores the government's proposed amendment which is wrongly described as safeguarding water authority land in national parks because it gives no effective protection to that land and puts other water authority land at greater risk.

This National Council:

1. Calls upon local groups to identify rights of way, permissive paths and open spaces in their areas which may be threatened by Water Privatisation or the sale of water authority holdings.
2. Calls upon areas and groups to pay special attention to land currently owned by water authorities when organising walks for Forbidden Britain Day.
3. Opposes the government's proposed "national park amendment" and calls on it to protect the landscape of and access to all land now owned by the water authorities in England and Wales.

was then carried unanimously.

16. Rights of way on National Trust Land

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Oxfordshire Area by Ms J Bird and seconded by Mr J Ibbott:

This National Council calls upon the National Trust:

- (a) to ensure that all rights of way on their land are walkable;
- (b) to create additional rights of way so as to improve public amenity;
- (c) to appoint footpath officers at national and regional level to implement these objectives.

Mr J Capes proposed and Mr D Lee seconded the following amendment:

in (a): after "walkable" add " and waymarked".

The amendment was carried by 71 votes to 43.

Mr D Lee proposed and Mr B Wright seconded the following amendment:

delete (c).

The amendment was lost by 76 votes to 38 votes.

The amended motion was then carried by a large majority.

17. Ploughing and cropping of footpaths

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by Mr D Nisbet:

In view of the apparent inability of the ploughing code and the action of highway authorities to effect any significant improvement in respect of the ploughing and cropping of footpaths and the great difficulty in defining what is ploughing and what is reinstatement of ploughed paths, this National Council calls upon the national Executive Committee to press for a change in legislation to make it illegal to plough or cultivate any public right of way whether headland or cross-field.

It also calls on the national Executive to press for legislation to require the person cutting any cropped fields to run a cutter over any public right of way in the fields at the time of harvest to remove any annual growth and keep paths from becoming overgrown.

The Executive Committee had submitted the following amendment:

In view of the apparent inability of the Ploughing Code and the action of highway authorities to effect any significant improvement in respect of the ploughing of footpaths and what is restoration of ploughed paths, this National Council calls upon the national Executive Committee to press for a change in the legislation to make it illegal to plough

any cross-field path (just as it is already illegal to plough a field-edge path), unless H M government can find effective means of ensuring that the surface of every such path is properly restored without delay after ploughing, preferably by adopting and enforcing the legislative and other measures recommended to the Department of the Environment by the national Executive.

This National Council also calls on the national Executive to press for legislation to require any person who has sown a field for annual cropping to run a cutter from time to time along the line of any path that crosses the field whenever needed for maintaining the path in a condition reasonably fit for pedestrians of all ages.

Mr Nisbet accepted this amendment, which Mr J Barnard seconded.

Mr J Capes proposed and Miss V Doran seconded the following amendment:

delete the 2nd paragraph.

This amendment was lost.

The amended motion was then carried.

18. Closure and diversion of paths

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area by Ms K Ashbrook and seconded by Mr P Gulland:

This National Council deplores the now common practice whereby, shortly after purchasing a residential property, the new owner applies to have a path over that land closed or moved, and instructs the Executive Committee to raise with the Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, as a matter of urgency, this growing threat to the historical and stable basis of the definitive path network.

The motion was carried by a large majority.

19. End of MSC Community Programmes

The following motion was proposed by Avon Area by Mr P Gould and seconded by Ms S Popham:

In view of the demise of the MSC-funded community programmes, this National Council calls upon the national Executive to make representations to the government and the Association of County Councils to secure effective organisation and funding for the future maintenance of all public rights of way.

The Executive Committee had tabled the following amendment:

Line 3: substitute "all relevant local authority associations" for "the Association of County Councils".

This was accepted by the movers.

The amended motion was carried unanimously.

20. District Council Agency Agreements

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Surrey Area by Mr B Reader and seconded by Mr J Newnham:

This National Council is concerned at the situation that can arise when a district council claims an agency agreement for rights of way and then fails to carry out its duties, as there appears to be no means in law for the county council to revoke the agency. The national Executive Committee and the footpaths subcommittee are instructed to investigate further and to press the government at an appropriate time for any necessary amendments to the law.

The motion was carried unanimously.

21. Access and Wildlife

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Mrs C MacKay and seconded by Mr L Meadowcroft:

That this National Council reasserts the wholehearted commitment of the Ramblers' Association to the cause of conserving wildlife species and habitats.

Council believes that the promotion of access on foot to the countryside for quiet recreation presents very little threat to wildlife and is insignificant in its impact on flora and fauna compared to other threats such as conifer

afforestation, over-grazing and the excessive use of pesticides. However, where it can be clearly demonstrated on particular sites that reasonable restrictions on access (either at particular times of the year or over specified areas of ground) are necessary to safeguard plants or animals, such restrictions will be accepted by the association.

Council calls upon nature conservation organisations to recognise:

- (a) that the Ramblers' Association and other bodies promoting quiet, informal recreation in the countryside are important potential allies in campaigns to protect wildlife; and
- (b) that public support for wildlife conservation can be significantly enhanced by allowing reasonable public access to nature reserves and other sites designated for the protection of plants and animals.

Council therefore welcomes the positive policies on public access adopted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and some other wildlife conservation bodies, but greatly regrets the negative, anti-people attitude sometimes displayed by the Nature Conservancy Council. Council calls upon the NCC to reassess its policies on access and in particular to instruct its regional officers to adopt a much more positive attitude towards public access.

Mr J Andrews proposed and Mr G Pratt seconded the following amendment on behalf of Suffolk Area:

Paragraph 2, line 8: after "animals" insert "and that acceptable alternatives are available".

The amendment was lost.

The motion was carried unanimously.

22. M11 Extension

The following motion was proposed on behalf of East Yorkshire &

Derwent Area by Mr D Parker and seconded by Mr B Bawden:

This National Council instructs the national Executive of the Ramblers' Association to oppose the northward extension of the M11 from Cambridge to Teesside via the Humber Bridge.

The motion was carried unanimously.

23. Thames Path

The following motion was proposed on behalf of London Area by Mrs A Bellwood and seconded by Mr J Archer:

This National Council instructs the national Executive to use every opportunity to press for a speedy acceptance by the Secretary of State of the Countryside Commission's Thames Path Report. Further, the national Executive should start a campaign to extend the path on the North and South banks to Southend and Gravesend respectively.

The motion was carried unanimously.

24. Lurchers Gully

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Lothian and Borders Area by Mr S Betts and seconded by Mr L Griffiths:

This Council opposes the proposed development of downhill skiing facilities in Lurchers Gully. It believes that such a development will damage the unique quality of the Cairngorms as an area of wilderness and solitude.

The Council calls on the national Executive Committee to exert maximum pressure on the Secretary of State for Scotland to call the planning application in when it is made and institute a public inquiry.

The motion was carried unanimously

25. Leadership Training

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Merseyside and West Cheshire Area by Miss G Thayer and seconded by Mrs V Williams:

This National Council recognises the separate efforts currently being made to encourage Leadership Training by

(inter alia) the Holiday Fellowship, the Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales), the Mountain Leadership Training Boards, and by this Association. It also takes seriously the possibility of action by the present or any successor government to limit future access to mountain areas to parties in the charge of qualified leaders and acknowledges the desirability of moving towards improved standards of group leadership and first aid.

Council therefore instructs the national Executive, as a matter of urgency, to make every endeavour, in conjunction with the other organisations listed above, to establish a nationally recognised basic qualification for potential leaders, designed to attract the support of the average rambler and hillwalker.

Mr G Gerrard proposed and Mr D Grosz seconded the following amendment:

Delete the second sentence of the first paragraph.

This amendment was accepted by the movers, and by Council.

The motion was then lost.

26. Accidents in the Scottish Hills

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Strathclyde Area by Ms K Walsham and seconded by Mr B Pottle:

This National Council notes that the recent report by the Scottish Sports Council on "The Nature and Causes of Injuries Sustained in 190 Scottish Mountain Accidents" identifies 108 of these accidents as occurring to hill-walkers, many of whom were normally resident outside Scotland, and instructs the national Executive Committee to undertake a programme of education of the members of the Association in the particular dangers of walking in the Scottish hills, with a view to maintaining the good safety record of the Association.

The chairman moved remission of the motion to the Executive Committee.

Council agreed to this and the motion was remitted.

27. Rural Public Transport

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Mr A Howard and seconded by Mrs C MacKay:

This National Council reaffirms its belief in the importance of rural public transport in enabling non-motoring rambles to get to the countryside and in helping to protect the environment and the well-being of rural communities.

Council welcomes initiatives by the Countryside Commission, the Sports Council for Wales, National Park Authorities, Passenger Transport Executives and public transport operators, in promoting the use of buses and trains for countryside recreation. It urges RA areas and groups to respond positively to these initiatives by using and publicising the services provided, by seeking improvements and extensions where appropriate, by offering to help by providing walks leaders, and by placing a reasonable limit on the number of car-only rambles.

Mr S Wallsgrove proposed and Mr A Clarkson seconded the following amendment:

Delete at end: "and by placing a reasonable limit on the number of car only rambles"; insert "and" in place of the comma at "appropriate, by offering..."

The amendment was lost.

The motion was carried unanimously.

VENUES OF FUTURE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

It was noted that the 1990 meeting of National Council would be held in Strathclyde Area on 7th and 8th April; the 1991 Council in Sussex Area; and the 1992 Council in Mid-Lancashire Area.

Council agreed to accept an invitation from Warwickshire Area to meet there in 1993.

CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The chairman thanked all who had worked for the success of Council. He spoke of the death during the year of Francis Ritchie, whose work for the amenity movement would always be remembered. There would be a memorial meeting in the North York Moors National Park and RAS had instituted a book prize in his memory.

He regretted the absence of any delegate from Norfolk Area, which had missed the opportunity to take part in Council's deliberations. Council fulfilled a vital democratic function, to put forward the voice of the membership, to give authority to the Executive Committee and its officers and to set out guidelines for action during the coming year.

There was no lack of issues at present facing the RA - the Countryside Commission's follow-up to their document on changing the rights of way network, controversial commons legislation, the threatened legislation in response to the decision in the Rubinstein case, to mention a few. The discussions and votes of Council gave the necessary support with which the association could proceed with confidence.

Council applauded the chairman's remarks.

THANKS TO PRESIDENT

Mr D Grosz thanked the president for her conduct of the meeting, and Council endorsed this with acclaim.

THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS