

The Ramblers' Association

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES,

SWANSEA, ON APRIL 12TH-14TH 1996

ATTENDANCE

PRESIDENT	Jim Grant* Audrey Lennox.	DERBYSHIRE AREA
Janet Street-Porter*	BEDFORDSHIRE AREA	John Pritchard-Jones. Keith Walkerdine'
VICE-PRESIDENTS	ian Lindsay* Kelwyn warlow.	Marianne Pritchard-Jones
Eddie Hibberd* David Rubinstein* David Sharp' Wally Smith*	BERKSHIRE AREA	DEVON AREA
CHAIRMAN	Cliff Lambert* Bob Withers* Jane Kiely Joan Withers	DORSET AREA
Kate Ashbrook'		Susan Blake* Ann Richards
VICE-CHAIRMAN	B U C K S MIDDLESEX	DYFED AREA
David Grosz' TREASURER	Peter Guiland* Berry Totterdell' Geraid Bott	Peter Davies' David Lloyd'
jack Ibbott'	David Bradnack Diane Guiland Keith Potter	E A S T Y O R K S & DERWENT AREA
HONORARY SOLICITOR	CALEDONIAN AREA (H&I)	Anne Cumberiand' Dennis Parker' Mike Addy ESSEX AREA
Jerry Peariman'	John Holms* Joyce Holms'	John Barnard' John Dowding' Adrian Vincent-Jones*
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS	CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA	
Jo Bird' Tony Drake*	Pat Boylan* Roger Moreton*	GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA
Geoff Eastwood' Peter Gould'		
Peter Harwood' Tessa Capes Cath MacKay' Janet Moreton Pam Roberts* Cliff Oiney Kate Walsham' David Shepherd Des Whicher' Ann Shepherd Geoffrey Wiiiiams'		Berry Lingard' Mavis Rear' Bill Irving Stu Robson
AGENDA COMMITTEE	CENTRAL FIFE &	
TAYSIDE AREA	GRAMPIAN AREA	

MEMBERS

	George Galloway*	Jane Catto*	
	John Capes*		
	Maureen Galloway*	Alison Mitchell'	
	Tony Clarkson'		
	Sylvia Franks'		
AREA	Sylvia Popham*	CORNWALL AREA	HAMPSHIRE
Brian Reader*	Shirley Oliver'	Ian Duffin'	
		Hazel Perham*	Brenda Parker'
	AVON AREA	Shirley Mathieson	Steve Turner'
		mary Weston	Pam Turner

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President: Janet Street-Porter
Chairman: Kate Ashbrook Director: Alan Mattingly

**HEREFORD &
WORCESTER AREA**

Edgar Powell'
Derek Starkey*

**HERTS & N MIDDLESEX
AREA**

Sheila Richardson*
Bert Richardson*

INNER LONDON

Les Douglas*
Martin Haggerty'
Thomas Lowry'

ISLE OF WIGHT AREA

Ken Mothersole'
Jack Wytie*

KENT AREA

Peter Skipp*
Michael Stokes*
Mike Temple'

LAKE DISTRICT AREA

Peter Jones*
Ron Wormaid*
Freda Leighton
Jo Leighton
Audrey Shaw

**LEICESTERSHIRE
&
RUTLAND AREA**

Alan Loasby*
Mike Statham*
Bert Harrison
Lois Harrison
Sue Marlow

LINCOLNSHIRE AREA

Stuart Parker*
Ron White'
Steve Ball
Alan Hull
Barbara White

**LOTHIAN & BORDERS
AREA**

Fred Noble'

Bridget Wilcox*

MANCHESTER AREA

Bruce Fairbanks'
Terry Perkins'
Janet Cuff
Gloria Gaffney
Myra Gregory
Madeline McGuinness

**MERSEYSIDE & W
CHESHIRE AREA**

Gloria Thayer'
Vi Williams*
Berry Davis
Beryl Henderson

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

David Kelly'
Andrew Manzie*

NORFOLK AREA

Geoffrey Head'
Janet Stevens'

**NORTH & MID CHESHIRE
AREA**

Geoff Hill'
Norman Houghton'
Gerry Haigh
Diana Taylor
Graeme Thompson

**NORTH EAST LANCS
AREA**

Sue Baxendale'
Heien Moore'
Judith Addison

NORTH WALES AREA

Peter Bland*
David Witton-Davies
Meirlys Witton-Davies

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
AREA**

Peter Ellement'
Gill Howe*

NORTHERN AREA

Kenneth Ashby'

Terry Pollard'
Tony Jones

**N YORKS & S DURHAM
AREA**

Alan Hutchinson'
Anthony Millett'

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
AREA**

Kevin Mathews'
Chris Thompson*
David Harrison

OXFORDSHIRE AREA

Peter Barbour'

Charles Woolland'
POWYS AREA

John Grey'
Raymond Lloyd'
SHROPSHIRE AREA

Ron Moore*
David Shelley'
SOMERSET AREA

John Ollerenshaw*
Brenda Prentice*

**SOUTH & EAST
CHESHIRE AREA**

Barbara Gray'
Les Newton'

SOUTH WALES AREA

Alex Marshall*
Terry Squires*
Sandra Abraham
Olivia Amer
Jack Chamberlain
David Cobourne
John Davies
Marion Davies
Brenda Davies

Gwyn Davies
John Davis
Ann Ellington
Ian Fraser
Pat Grattidge
Paula Gresty
Brenda Grinter
Tony Lewis
Viv Lewis
Susan Maudsley
Barbara Patmer

Bob Pucknell
Barbara Pucknell
John Ridley
John Sanders
Margaret Scott
Derek Smith
Nine Smith
Mailie Thomas
Margaret Thomas
Betty Thomas
Joan Welsh
Dave Williams

SOUTH YORKS & N E DERBYS AREA

Terry Howard'
Alien Pestel*
Christine Deakin

STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

Colin Brookes*
Sheila Wroughton'

STRATHCLYDE & DUMFRIES AREA

Elizabeth Lawie'
Bruce Riddell'
Jim Riddell

SUFFOLK AREA

John Bellamy'
Geoff Pratt'
Jean Pratt

SURREY AREA

Graham Butler'
Eric Fowler'
Geoffrey Kirby'
Kathleen Smith

SUSSEX AREA

Harry Comber'

WARWICKSHIRE AREA

Harry Green*
Brian Keates*
Michael Bird
Diana Strong
Steven Walisgrove

WEST RIDING AREA

Mar Grant'
Keith Wadd*
Ken Willson

WILTSHIRE AREA

Les Cornish* Edna Cornish*

C A M P 1 N G & CARAVANNING CLUB

Jim Perry* Sylvia Perry

C O U N T R Y W I D E H O L 1 D A Y S ASSOCIATION

Vincent Pedley'
Richard Bowker

HF HOLIDAYS

Robert Seedhouse*

L O N G D 1 S T A N C E

WALKERSASSOCIATION

Roger Michell'
Janet Chapman

3

OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

Donald Lee'

RAMBLERS' ASSOC SERVICES

Ron Ayerst'
Kathryn Gregory

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

Keith Pennyfather'
Keith Mascetti

GUESTS

Les Gooding
Eileen Gooding
Joan Hibberd
Ann Holt
Alan Howard
Arthur Howcroft
Margaret Ibbott
Sir Richard Lloyd Jones
Malcolm Petyt
Rite Riddell
Margaret Sharp
Paddy Tipping, MP

AUDITORS

Mike Hill

STAFF

Katey Avis
David Beskine
Annabelle Birchall
Sue Bond
Gwen Campbell
David Carter
Andrew Dalby
Janet Davis
Wendy Farr
Jacquetta Fewster
Vicky Furnival
Pam Gheerow
Sue Gittins
Catharine Gunningham
Carol Harding
George Hill
Olive Lacey
Sandra Law
Alan Mattingly
Dave Morris
Donna O'Brien
Beverley Penney
Adrian Ritchie
Janice Samuel
Frank Syrratt
John Trevelyan
Bronwen Williams
Tony Wyght

t*Denotes a member
of
National Council]

1. WELCOME

- 1.1 Alex Marshall, chairman of South Wales Area, welcomed delegates and visitors on behalf of the Area. His welcome was expressed in both the Welsh and English languages. He stressed that, when speaking about RA policies with Welsh farmers to whom Welsh was their first language, it was vitally important to be able to speak Welsh. He wished Council an enjoyable and successful weekend.

2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Council noted apologies from Vice-Presidents Geraid McGuire and Sylvia Sayer, and from David Leyshon of North Yorkshire and South Durham Area.

3. APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

3.1 The following persons were appointed:

Tellers (Saturday):	Olivia Amer	(Sunday):	Ann Ellington
	David Cobourne		Tony Lewis
	Ian Fraser		John Sanders
	Tony Lewis		Joan Welsh

Scrutineers:	Sandra Abraham	Brenda
Davies		

Marion Davies

Mailie Thomas

4. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

- 4.1 In her address as president, Janet Street-Porter said that she was glad that the conference was being held in Wales, where as a child, she had first experienced the delights of exploring the countryside on foot. She spoke of early expeditions with her parents and sister. Walking this landscape over a period of many years had been for her an important part of growing up. It was a special world which she had explored intimately. In doing so, she had taken advantage of a tradition of freedom of access to the hills which had existed for as long as anyone could remember.
- 4.2 Traditions like this could often be found in many other parts of the British countryside, most of them not recorded on maps or in documents, and few with any form of legal protection. They were often under threat and must be safeguarded for future generations. The RA must also win access to those large areas of open country where freedom to roam was at present completely denied. This freedom to roam over the moors, mountains, and other open country of Britain was not something that should be dependent on the whims of those who were lucky enough to own the countryside, but, provided it was exercised responsibly, with a respect for the land and those who made a living from it, should be treated as a fundamental human right, a right which should be protected for all time for all people. That was why it was vital that the RA's proposals for freedom to roam legislation should be approved by Parliament.
- 4.3 She expressed the association's indebtedness to Paddy Tipping MP for recently introducing its proposed legislation in the House of Commons. Although he had secured a first reading for the Bill by a large majority, it was unlikely to make much progress through the House of Commons because it was opposed by the government. The former Environment Minister Tim Yeo MP had spoken strongly against the Bill, claiming that it would give unlimited public access over any private property which led to or could be defined as open country. That was not true. It would not allow "unlimited access". Access must be on foot only, and only be freely enjoyed if the walker caused no damage to the land. Furthermore, there were many provisions in the Bill for limiting access if there were good grounds for doing so, such as protecting wildlife or allowing lambing or shooting to take place without interruption.

- 4.4 Mr Yeo had also claimed that the Bill would give local councils massive new powers to order landowners to destroy ancient hedges and demolish stone walls. That was a gross distortion of the truth. The Bill would give local authorities only modest new duties to establish access routes to areas of open country which were not already accessible by road or public rights of way. It was difficult to take Mr Yeo's concern for ancient hedges and stone walls seriously. Research commissioned by the Department of the Environment had shown that there had been a net loss of 18,100 kms of hedgerows each year between 1990 and 1993, and a loss of 10 per cent of stone walls between 1984 and 1990. Yet when he had been Environment Minister a few years ago, Mr Yeo had done little to stop such destruction.
- 4.5 Mr Yeo had also said that the Ramblers' Bill would damage conservation interests by allowing walkers to trample across valuable habitats. That, too, was completely wrong. The Bill contained detailed provisions for restricting access where there were reasonable grounds for believing that wildlife would be at risk. In fact, as most conservationists now acknowledged, there was very little conflict between access on foot and wildlife conservation. It was nonsense to allege that walkers were 'loving the countryside to death'. It would be much nearer the truth to say that over-subsidised sheep were eating the countryside to death.
- 4.6 Finally, Mr Yeo had promised to fight the Bill on behalf of the people of his rural Suffolk constituency. He appeared to disregard the fact that, if enacted, the Bill would be of benefit to a great many people in his rural constituency, and to millions of people in rural communities throughout the land. In many parts of the countryside there were few rights of way and few open spaces to which the public, including local people, had access. The Ramblers' Bill would give the rural majority access to areas of woodland, riverbank, heathland, downland, coastline and moorland which might be close to where they lived but where at present they might be forbidden from setting foot. In recent years there had been loud complaints from many rural communities when access to their local woods had been threatened by the government's policy of selling Forestry Commission woods to private owners. In some cases the RA had been able to help stop the sale or to ensure that access had been permanently protected before the sale took place. Rural communities had been grateful to the RA. They would surely be grateful if we secured for their benefit the freedom to walk peacefully over many new areas of uncultivated open countryside close to where they lived. For that is precisely what the Bill would do.
- 4.7 There had been many misrepresentations of the RA's proposals in recent months, which members must continue to counter vigorously. Already, there were signs of support from unexpected quarters. Only a few weeks ago a past president of the National Farmers' Union had expressed support for a statutory right to roam over uncultivated countryside. More farmers should be encouraged to think likewise.
- 4.8 The president told how early last year she had spoken at an agricultural conference in Gloucestershire and had said to the audience of farmers:
- 'My main message to you today is that it is very much in the interests of your industry for farmers to drop their hostility to public access in the countryside, which members of the Ramblers' Association often encounter, and instead to become access-friendly. Please be friendly to walkers. You will find that we are friends who are well worth having'.
- 4.9 She repeated that plea. In the wake of the BSE crisis, farmers' need for public support was surely greater than ever before. She appealed to farmers and landowners to support the Bill and to discuss constructively with the RA the details of the proposed legislation.
- 4.10 The detailed terms of the Bill were still open to negotiation. The RA was willing to amend it in ways which did not affect its fundamental provisions. But, whatever happened, the RA was determined to continue campaigning for the Bill until it reached the Statute Book; just as it would continue to campaign for all rights of way to be properly recorded and opened up.
- 4.11 As the new century approached, the RA's access legislation would be a wonderful gift to pass on to future generations.

4.1 2 The president's address was greeted with applause.

5. MINUTES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL 1995

5.1 With the following correction:

Page 12, **motion 4:** the final line on motion 4, 'Council agreed to this by a substantial majority', should be placed above the preceding two lines, 'Elizabeth Lawie then proposed and Tony Key seconded the motion, which was carried by an overwhelming majority.'

the chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of National Council 1995 as a correct record.

6. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN ON RESOLUTIONS PASSED OR REMITTED AT NATIONAL COUNCIL 1995

6.1 Council considered a report from the Executive Committee on actions taken on resolutions passed at National Council 1995:

Motion 12: Public Path Orders (remitted)

Terry Pollard (Northern Area) asked what progress was being made towards a change in procedure.

Edgar Powell (Hereford and Worcester Area) and John Barnard (Essex Area) both stressed the importance of action in this respect.

John Trevelyan replied that the Rights of Way Review Committee was looking at the problem constructively.

Motion 26: Footbridges (not reached and remitted)

Brian Reader (Agenda Committee) asked why the EC had decided not to take further action on this motion.

John Trevelyan replied that EC was not convinced that there was enough evidence of a problem in this respect.

Motion 29: Cyclists Code of Conduct (not reached and remitted)

Geoffrey Kirby (Surrey Area) stressed that the imminent opening of the Thames Path would add urgency to the problem highlighted in this motion.

6.2 Council noted the report.

7. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

7.1 The chairman moved the adoption of the annual report. She referred to the Jubilee year in 1995. It had been a most successful and happy year, in which a great deal had been achieved. Four million rambler miles had been walked, and 23,000 new members recruited. **All** this was on top of the normal RA work. She paid tribute to the dedication of both RA staff and volunteers.

7.2 During the year the RA had exposed a number of scandals. These included payments to landowners through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, for access which had been shown by the RA to be no value for money at all. Another scandal had been arrangements for estates to have exemption from Inheritance Tax in return for the public being granted access to land. The public had no means of telling to which land they were entitled to have access through this scheme.

- 7.3 She expressed gratitude to Ann Holt for her work on the Forestry Gazetteer and research for the access campaign.
- 7.4 There had been particular emphasis during the year on communications between the Executive Committee, Areas and Groups. This had shown itself in visits by Executive Committee members and staff to Area and Group Annual General Meetings. She herself had attended a number of Area and Group meetings, had learnt a great deal and had been greatly encouraged.
- 7.5 Finally, she referred to a Gloucestershire Area Newsletter, which had listed the Jubilee targets and described how these had been achieved. The article had concluded: "walking is for everyone. The sun shone and shone. We all had tremendous fun".
- 7.6 David Shelley (Shropshire Area) seconded the adoption of the annual report.
- 7.7 The director spoke to the report.
- 7.8 He thanked everyone for the excellent achievements of Jubilee Year. Membership was now at 1 1 5,000. This meant that there had been a 1 5,000 increase in eighteen months. The 400th RA Group had recently been formed in Avon Area. There was a membership renewal rate of 87%. All the achievements of Jubilee Year had been in addition to the normal run of RA work.
- 7.9 He referred to the number of Areas and Groups involved in the "Let's Get Going" project, and reported that guidance notes on rambling with people with various disabilities were due to be circulated later in the year.
- 7.10 He referred to the dissatisfaction with the access achieved through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, particularly because of the lack of information about where this access was available.
- 7.11 He mentioned the recent Forestry Gazetteer, which had proved particularly popular.
- 7.1 2 During the year, the RA had won a number of important legal cases regarding public rights of way. It had been influential in achieving a reprieve for the Fort William rail sleeper service. There had been most successful programmes for the winter walking events and for Open Britain Day.
- 7.1 3 The director referred to a significant improvement shortly to be seen on Ordnance Survey Landranger maps. For over 30 years the RA had been pressing Ordnance Survey to show public rights on white roads. They had now agreed to do this, and also to resume showing Forest Enterprise land open to the public. This was an outstanding example of persistent pressure over a long period finally achieving a successful outcome.
- 7.14 He referred to the successful fundraising during the year, mentioning that Areas and Groups had contributed some £30,000 to the Step Alive Fund.
- 7.1 5 Volunteers might often feel isolated in their work for the Association. In actual fact, thousands of volunteers throughout the land were engaged in RA work, to protect rights of way throughout the country and to press for access to open country.
- 7.1 6 Recently the Charity Commission had issued Standards of Recommended Practice with regard to presentation of charity accounts. Because of this, the RA would need to draw up consolidated accounts in future, including Area and Group funds. Although it might seem that this was a move towards greater centralisation, in fact there was no wish at all to take away any local democratic control from Areas and Groups. However, members of the Executive Committee, as trustees, were responsible for the proper use of money by Areas and Groups, and it was therefore important that all accounts were submitted to central office.
- 7.1 7 Speaking about Area annual general meetings, he advised against inviting speakers from the National Farmers' Union and Country Landowners' Association, stressing that Area AGMs were really occasions to work out and discuss RA policy, which could be difficult in the presence of outsiders.

- 7.1 8 He spoke of the current work towards access legislation. This was not in any way at the expense of rights-of-way work. However, there was a great chance that in the next year or two there might well be a government committed to access legislation, and the RA must be able to take advantage of this. It would be necessary to be completely united and for members to keep their nerve in the face of hostility. If the association could show that there was a popular demand for access legislation, something for which the RA had been pressing for the 60 years of its existence could well be achieved. This would benefit millions of people. He urged delegates to report back to their Areas the exciting challenge ahead.
- 7.1 9 Finally, he urged Areas to continue with recruitment. 1994 had been an excellent year; 1 995-6 could be equally successful.
- 7.20 Council greeted the director's speech with applause.
- 7.21 Terry Perkins (Manchester Area) commented that the Forestry Gazetteer had been a splendid publication, but more publicity was still needed for it.
- 7.22 Alan Mattingly replied that all the copies had now been distributed, and that publicity would continue with a view to a second edition.
- 7.23 Sylvia Franks (Agenda Committee) told delegates that the Bowland access agreements still awaited signature, although agreement had finally been reached. She mentioned that the question of access to Bowland had been called in three years ago, and the Bowland Committee reformed with a chairman from the Executive Committee and a further Executive Committee representative. However, this representative had not been able to attend any meetings in the past year, and the chairman was not now in fact a member of the Executive Committee. She asked whether the Executive Committee still intended to be represented, or whether it would prefer the Areas to take the issue back under their own auspices.
- 7.24 Kate Ashbrook replied that the Executive Committee took the issue of access to Bowland very seriously indeed, and intended to take an active part in the Bowland Committee deliberations.
- 7.25 David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area) defended the Area's choice of a local landowner as speaker at its AGM.
- 7.26 David Shelley (Shropshire Area) commented on the need for publicity for access available through Inheritance Tax Exemption arrangements. He also asked whether the RA had made any response to the National Trust statement on access to open country.
- 7.27 Alan Mattingly replied that the Trust's statement, which had been long delayed, was unobjectionable as far as it went. The RA was more concerned at the National Trust failure in many instances to dedicate rights of way on its land.
- 7.28 Bert Richardson (Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area) referred to Alan Mattingly's remark on the need for the Association to be united in pressing for access. He commented that there were a number of members who still did not view this campaign with enthusiasm.
- 7.29 Alan Mattingly replied that the booklet "Freedom with Responsibility" had been circulated to all members.
- 7.30 Edgar Powell (Hereford and Worcester Area) told delegates that a decision was still awaited from the Secretary of State on the Ombersley issue. He had been told that legal advice was still being taken.
- 7.31 John Barnard (Essex Area) asked about the prospect of regulations to prevent destruction of hedgerows.
- 7.32 John Trevelyan replied that the RA was pressing for effective regulations.
- 7.33 Mike Statham (Leicestershire Area) asked about the threat to access legislation posed by the recently formed Countryside Movement.

- 7.34 Kate Ashbrook replied that representatives of the RA had had a meeting with Sir David Steele. The attitude of the Countryside Movement to access would be carefully watched.
- 7.35 Brenda Parker (Hampshire area) asked for details of members who had been recruited through reduced membership subscription.
- 7.36 Catharine Gunningham replied that in the past year some 1 600 members had been recruited by these schemes.
- 7.37 Ken Ashby (Northern Area) referred to the fact that the Sports Council had decided not to renew its grant to the RA for 1995-6. He understood that the Sports Council had now moved away from concern with informal recreation.
- 7.38 Alan Mattingly replied that the RA had complained vigorously about this Sports Council change of policy.
- 7.39 Audrey Lennox (Avon Area) confirmed that the Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation had been abolished, but the Sports Council themselves seemed to be still supportive of rambling.
- 7.40 Ian Duffin (Hampshire Area) asked when the RA was intending to issue an update of the 1989 Guidance for Countryside Workers.
- 7.41 John Trevelyan replied that there was a commitment to make a new edition available during the next six months.
- 7.42 Council agreed to adopt the annual report for 1 995.
- 7.43 The adoption of the annual accounts was proposed by the Jack Ibbott and seconded by Ron Moore (Shropshire Area).
- 7.44 Jack Ibbott referred delegates to his comments on the accounts which had been circulated. He considered the situation shown at the end of the last financial year to be quite satisfactory. The Association now had just two funds, the General Fund and the Step Alive Fund. For the first time both income and expenditure had passed £2m, both having increased by some 12.5%.
- 7.45 He referred delegates to the bar charts, circulated with his comments on the accounts. These showed the breakdown of both income and expenditure.
- 7.46 During the year the RA had set up a subsidiary company, Ramblers Enterprises Ltd, to deal with transactions of a commercial nature such as income from sponsorship and affinity cards, which if included in the main accounts would be liable for tax. No transactions for the company appeared in the accounts for 1 994-5, other than a payment of £2 for its share capital.
- 7.47 Jack Ibbott thanked RA staff and the auditors for their work on the accounts.
- 7.48 Brian Reader (Agenda Committee) referred to the treasurer's comment that the total funds at any one time should be at least 1 5 % of the yearly expenditure. He considered that 1 5 % should be regarded as a minimum.
- 7.49 Jack Ibbott agreed that 1 5% should be regarded as the minimum figure, and suggested that this would be reviewed in future.
- 7.50 Bruce Riddell (Strathclyde Area) questioned why the amount for non-recoverable VAT was £8,000 more than in the previous year.
- 7.51 John Trevelyan replied that there was constant dialogue with Customs and Exercise, and in this case still work to be done on this figure.
- 7.52 Stuart Parker (Lincolnshire Area) and Sylvia Popham (Agenda Committee) both asked how successful the new affinity cards were turning out to be.

- 7.53 Jack Ibbott replied that no income had been received for the 1 994-5 accounts.
- 7.54 Catharine Gunningham added that a cheque for £7,000 had been received in this respect since October 1995, and that 1000 members had taken up the card.
- 7.55 John Barnard (Essex Area) commented on the relatively small amount in the expenditure side of the accounts allotted to countryside work.
- 7.56 John Trevelyan replied that this was partly due to staff changes during the year.
- 7.57 Mike Statham (Leicester & Rutland Area) asked which companies and trusts had donated money to the Step Alive Fund.
- 7.58 Catharine Gunningham referred to the list in the annual accounts.
- 7.59 Geoffrey Kirby (Surrey Area) referred to a drop of £16,000 on expenditure on training in the 1 994-5 accounts and asked the reason for this, together with current plans for training in the following year. The reply was given that in the previous year there had been a number of Jubilee training schools. There were plans for a number of training schools in the following year.
- 7.60 Council agreed to adopt the annual accounts for 1 995.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President	Proposed by:	Seconded by:
Janet Street-Porter	Pam Roberts (for EC)	Jack Ibbott

Vice Presidents:

Past Presidents:

Fay Godwin
Chris Hall
Mike Harding
Geraid McGuire
Peter Melchett

and:

Eddie Hibberd Alan Howard Prue Leith David Rubinstein Lady Sayer David Sharp Wally Smith Mike Woodcock	David Grosz (for EC)	Des Whicher
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and:

Paddy Tipping MP	Nottinghamshire	Caledonian Area (Highlands & Islands)
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David Grosz paid tribute to Bill Murray, RA Vice-President and first President of RA Scotland, who had recently died.

Chairman

Kate Ashbrook	Jo Bird (for EC)	Geoff Williams
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Vice Chairman

David Grosz

Kate Ashbrook (for EC)

Cath MacKay

Treasurer

Jack Ibbott

David Grosz (for EC)

Geoff Eastwood

Hon Solicitor

Jerry Peariman LLB

Tony Drake (for EC)

Pam Roberts

9. NOMINATIONS FOR HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

- 9.1 On behalf of the Executive Committee David Grosz proposed and Kate Walsham seconded that honorary life membership be awarded to Bruce Riddell. He had been involved with the RA for over 30 years and had been the driving force behind the setting up of Scottish Area in 1965. Council agreed this with acclaim.
- 9.2 On behalf of Manchester Area, Bruce Fairbanks proposed and Terry Perkins seconded that honorary life membership be awarded to Benny Rothman. He had been a lifelong worker for the access movement and had been imprisoned for his part in the Kinder Trespass in the 1930s. Council also agreed to this with acclaim.

10. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

Jo Bird
Tony Drake
Geoff Eastwood
Peter Gould
Peter Harwood

Geoffrey Kirby
Cath MacKay
Pam Roberts
Des Whicher

11. ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

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

John Capes
Tony Clarkson
Sylvia Franks

12. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Sylvia Popham
Brian Reader

- 12.1** The appointment of BDO Stoy Hayward was proposed by Des Whicher and seconded by Peter Harwood and agreed.

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MOTIONS

13. MOTION OF URGENCY

On behalf of Manchester Area, Terry Pollard asked for urgency for the following motion:

Water Abstraction

Conference expresses its concern over the increasing and current demands for abstraction, by water companies, from the river systems of our national parks, and especially from the Wharfe and Derwent, and by so doing, seriously reducing the biological diversity and integrity of some of our finest landscapes.

Conference calls for a national and co-ordinated approach to water catchment planning and conservation in order to minimise the adverse effects of such abstraction and ensure that present and future generations can continue to enjoy their rich heritage of national parks.

The voting was 78 for, 76 against. **As** this was not agreement by two-thirds of those present and voting, urgency was not granted.

MOTIONS FOR OPEN SESSIONS

1. Rights of way in Wales

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Geoff Williams and seconded by Peter Harwood:

Walkers from all over Britain, meeting at this General Council of the Ramblers' Association in Swansea in April 1996, and conscious of the pleasure given to millions of visitors to Wales from all parts of Britain and abroad in exploring on foot this country's beautiful countryside, call upon Mr William Hague, the Secretary of State for Wales, to ensure that all the new unitary authorities in Wales give high priority to carrying out their duty to put all their public rights of way into good order, by not later than the year 2000.

Barry Lingard proposed and Tony Drake seconded the following amendment on behalf of Gloucestershire Area:

Line 5: after the new unitary authorities in Wales", delete "give high priority to carrying out their duty', and substitute, 'are adequately funded to enable them to achieve the government's target.....

The amendment was lost.

This motion was then carried unanimously.

2. Unitary authorities in Scotland: rights of way access officers

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Grampian Area by Alison Mitchell and seconded by Jane Catto:

This Council welcomes the appointment of Rights of Way/Access Officers by several local authorities in Scotland and urges the Secretary of State for Scotland to ensure that the new unitary authorities create similar posts.

This motion was carried nem con.

3. Cairn Gorm: funicular railway proposal

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Lothian & Borders Area by Bridget Wilcox and seconded by Fred Noble:

1 3

This Council regards the proposed development of a funicular railway on the upper slopes of Cairngorm with great concern in view of the potential environmental impacts and substantial public funding requirements. It calls on the Chief Secretary of the Treasury to examine, in consultation with the Secretary of State for the Environment and Secretary of State for Scotland, whether such public funding is justified, particularly when alternative development proposals for the northern slopes of the Cairngorms would appear to offer better value for money while taking full account of environmental needs in this potential World Heritage Site.

This motion was carried unanimously.

4. Mar Lodge estate: funds for acquisition of countryside heritage

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway Area by Bruce Riddell and seconded by Elizabeth Lawie:

This National Council applauds the use of public funds towards the acquisition of Mar Lodge Estate by the National Trust for Scotland, and hopes that a favourable view will be taken of any further applications by appropriate organisations which will be for the benefit of Britain's countryside heritage.

This motion was carried nem con.

5. Damage to rights-of-way network by motorway construction

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

This National Council calls upon the Countryside Commission to survey the damage done to the rights-of-way network by motorway construction and bring forward proposals to make good that damage.

This motion was carried by a large majority.

6. New motorways and other major roads

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Inner London Area by Martin Haggerty and seconded by Thomas Lowry:

This National Council calls upon all RA Areas and Groups to initially oppose the building of new motorways, trunk roads and bypasses where such developments would extinguish or interrupt public footpaths or bridieways, or where the landscape nearby would be significantly impaired for walkers.

Geoff Williams proposed and Peter Harwood seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

7. Cycle tracks

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by Brenda Parker and seconded by Ian Duffin:

This National Council notes that national and local proposals to extend the routes available to cyclists both in urban areas and in the countryside are generally beneficial to the public. However, Council is concerned that measures to create routes shared with walkers including conversion of public footpaths could lead to the "urbanisation" of the countryside by the provision of hard, all-weather surfaces and the removal of converted public footpaths

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from the definitive map, and that there appears to be a lack of awareness of current legislation and Department of Transport guidance on the part of councils, particularly with respect to consultation and the "rural dimension" of cycle tracks.

Council instructs Executive Committee to issue guidance on the legal and practical aspects of shared use cycle routes and the policy to be adopted by RA Areas and Groups when such routes are proposed.

This motion was carried nem con.

8. National lottery funding for new footpaths

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Suffolk Area by John Bellamy and seconded by

Geoff Pratt:

This National Council notes that progress on the creation of new footpaths is impeded by the lack of

resources available to local authorities. It instructs the national Executive Committee to investigate the possibility of seeking grants from the National Lottery for creating rights of way throughout Britain where the existing network of paths is, or has become, deficient.

Geoff Eastwood proposed and Cath MacKay seconded remission to the Executive Committee:

This was agreed by Council.

9. Funding for rights-of-way work

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

This National Council deplors the inadequate funding of rights of way work in local authorities in England and Wales. Council instructs the Executive Committee to campaign for funding from central government to local government for this work to be increased, and calls upon Areas in England and Wales to campaign for their local authorities to give increased priority to rights-of-way work in the local allocation of funds.

This motion was carried by an overwhelming majority.

10. Rights of way over sea walls

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by John Dowding and seconded by John Barnard:

This National Council instructs the Executive Committee to campaign vigorously for all sea walls and embankments, built with and/or maintained by public funds, to be designated as public rights of way, unless there is a danger to public safety or national security.

Jo Bird proposed and Geoff Eastwood seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

11. Improvement of field-edge paths

The following motion was proposed on behalf of East Yorks & Derwent Area by Dennis Parker and seconded by Anne Cumberiand:

This National Council notes that on many field-edge footpaths and bridleways the surface is not in a condition suitable for the safe and convenient passage of walkers. It calls on Areas and Groups to press their highway (or planning authorities in Scotland) authorities to

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secure an improvement in the condition of such paths whether by carrying out the necessary work themselves or by arranging for the work to be carried out under contract by the farmer or other person. Where those authorities use farmers as their contractors for work on rights of way Council believes that all such contracts should be subject to two conditions:

- (i) that the rights of way on the farm are free from obstruction and comply with the requirements relating to ploughing and cropping of paths over arable land and
- (ii) that the contract offers the public purse value for money and is not a device for hidden subsidy to the farmer.

Council reiterates its opposition to any suggestion that farmers should be recompensed for the existence of rights of way over their land.

This motion was carried.

1 2. **Rights of way: ploughing and cropping**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Warwickshire Area by Harry Green and seconded by Brian Keates:

This National Council is concerned that the most serious obstacle to enjoying a country walk in many parts of lowland England and Wales still is the failure by farmers to reinstate paths after ploughing and the subsequent obstruction of the paths by crops - despite the passing of the Rights of Way Act 1990.

National Council therefore calls upon the government and its agencies to support and put maximum pressure on highway authorities in England and Wales to ensure that the law is complied with.

Council further notes that the Rights of Way Act provisions have proved to be effective where authorities have made use of them and that most of the cost of dealing with the problem can be charged to the farmers involved. Areas are therefore urged to put pressure on their authorities, where necessary, to make full use of powers given to them by Parliament.

This motion was carried unanimously.

1 3. **Reclassification of roads used as public paths: vehicular use "suitability"**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Surrey Area by Eric Fowler and seconded by Brian Reader:

This National Council is concerned at the continuing environmental damage caused by motor vehicles driving over unsurfaced tracks in the countryside.

This Council is further concerned that the question of suitability of the track is not a factor considered when deciding on reclassification of a "Road Used as Path" as either a "Byway Open to **All** Traffic", bridleway or footpath in the procedures under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section **54**, but notes that the Act is silent on the question of suitability.

This Council therefore requests the national Executive Committee to review policy again and to pursue all legal means, including if necessary, a test case in the High Court, to challenge the view that suitability is irrelevant to the reclassification procedure.

This motion was lost.

1 6

14. **Mountain areas: intergovernmental conference**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Cath MacKay and seconded by David Grosz:

This Council welcomes the UK government's decision to host the first session of the European Intergovernmental Conference on Sustainable Mountain Development in Scotland in April 1996.

Council calls upon the Prime Minister to use the opportunity of the conference to reaffirm his government's support for the World Conservation Union's publication "Parks for Life", and to endorse the application of the guidance within this publication to mountain areas throughout Britain.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

15. **Dry stone walls**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of South Yorkshire & N E Derbyshire Area by Alien Pestel and seconded by Terry Howard:

This National Council urges the government to recognise the importance of our dry stone walls, both historically and environmentally, and to stop their decline by protecting those which remain intact by providing adequate funding for their maintenance, also to encourage farmers and landowners to reinstate walls that have fallen down or been removed, by giving suitable grants.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

16. West Highland train and sleeper services

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Caledonian (H & 1) Area by John Holms and seconded by George Galloway:

This National Council applauds the former Highland Regional Council for its spirited and successful fight against cuts in the West Highland train and sleeper service. It urges the new local authority, Highland Council, to be equally vigilant and determined to ensure the continuance of this important service for walkers from all parts of Britain.

This motion was carried unanimously.

17. The National Forest

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Leicestershire & Rutland Area by Mike Statham and seconded by Alan Loasby:

This National Council, noting that grants recently paid to establish woodland in the national forest of the East Midlands of England are now approximately equivalent to the value of arable land, and noting that the Country Landowners Association has suggested to landowners bidding for grants that their tenders "should be for at least the agricultural value of the land", calls upon the government to consider carefully, and to report to parliament within six months on whether the purchase of land in the area by the Forestry Commission would be a more cost-effective means of establishing much of the forest."

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

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18. National parks in England and Wales: Swinden quarry

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Manchester Area by Terry Perkins and seconded by Bruce Fairbanks:

This National Council is most concerned over the ad hoc manner in which the Department of the Environment appears to renege on its duty to uphold the integrity of our national parks, especially with regard to quarrying.

It is clearly defined in current environmental legislation that the national interest is paramount. In the case of the Department of the Environment's decision NOT to call in the application for the massive and obtrusive expansion of the Swinden quarry in Wharfedale, this effectively flies in the face of repeated assurances by the government that our national parks are the most protected parts of the UK.

Council calls for the revocation of this outrageous permission and so restore public confidence in the integrity and future of our national parks.

Jerry Peariman proposed and Des Whicher seconded the following amendment on behalf of the Executive Committee.

This National Council deplores the decision of the Secretary of State for the Environment not to call in for his determination the application for a massive and obtrusive expansion of Swinden quarry in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Council also deplores the decision by the Yorkshire Dales National park Committee to grant planning permission for the extension.

Council calls upon the Secretary of State and the National Park Committee to give much higher priority in future to protecting, in the national interest, the peace and scenic beauty of our national parks.

The amendment was carried.

The amended motion was then carried by a substantial majority.

19. Countryside Stewardship: public access

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

This National Council instructs the national Executive Committee to campaign with all vigour for the abandonment of the Countryside Commission's ineffective public access element in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme; and divert the public funding involved to the Millennium criteria of achieving a well maintained and user friendly rights of way network by the end of the century.

Barry Lingard proposed and Tony Drake seconded the following amendment on behalf of Gloucestershire Area:

Line 1 : delete everything after the words "to campaign" and substitute "for the provision of adequate publicity to the public so that the Countryside Stewardship Scheme is of practical value to the public."

The amendment was carried.

Jo Bird proposed and Pam Roberts seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

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20. Public rights of way across trackbeds of redundant railway lines

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Lincolnshire & South Humberside Area by Ron White:

The Ramblers' Association state that it should be nationally recognised wherever public rights of way lead to former railway stations on redundant railway lines, the way across the old trackbed should remain a continuation of the public path.

As this motion had not been seconded by 12.30 pm, it was remitted to the Executive Committee.

MOTIONS FOR CLOSED SESSIONS

21. **Long-term aims for the Ramblers' Association**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Geoff Eastwood and seconded by Des Whicher:

That this National Council endorses the following statement of long-term aims for the Ramblers' Association:

This is what the RA wants to achieve:

1. A countryside which is accessible to everyone; and which can be enjoyed safely, and by people of all abilities, whether in solitude, or in the company of others.
2. Protection and care for existing rights of way, plus effective means for extending the path network wherever it is desirable to do so.
3. A legally-protected "freedom to roam" over common land, mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff, foreshore and woodland, and alongside rivers, canals and lakes; with due protection for wildlife, domestic privacy, farming and other economic uses of the land.

4. A countryside in which owners and occupiers of farmland: adopt a positive attitude towards public access; respect traditions of freedom of passage over land; and generally welcome people onto their land for peaceful and responsibly-exercised recreation.
5. A network of long-distance paths, offering a sense of personal challenge and discovery, and maintained to standards capable of accommodating the often large numbers of walkers who are likely to use such paths.
6. Effective means of conserving and enhancing the attractiveness and diversity of all of the countryside, which incorporate public consultation and involvement, and which include national park status for the most outstanding areas of countryside in Britain.
7. The availability to everyone of information about their rights of access to the countryside, and about the opportunities open to them for exploring it on foot.
8. The availability at affordable prices of accurate, first-class walking maps for the whole country, and the acquisition by everyone of knowledge of how to use such maps.
9. An understanding by everyone of their rights, traditions and opportunities for access to the countryside, combined with an understanding, respect and care for the life of the countryside.

1 9

10. A high level of participation in walking, a recreation which has considerable social, environmental, health and economic benefits.

This is what the RA wants to be:

11. An independent, voluntary organisation which is widely recognised and respected as the authoritative voice for all walkers in Britain, from local strollers to mountain walkers.
- 1 2. An organisation which, on all matters of concern to walkers in Britain, is an effective opinion-former, with a high degree of influence over all relevant decision makers, including local, national and European governments; landowners and managers; and those supplying goods and services to walkers.
- 1 3. An organisation which, where necessary, takes action to enforce the rights of the public.
14. A source of authoritative advice, information and educational material on all matters concerning walking in, and public access on foot to, the countryside of Britain.
- 1 5. An organisation which is supported by hundreds of thousands of members, with that membership reflecting a true cross-section of the people of Britain.
- 1 6. An organisation with an extensive network of hundreds of local Groups, each one pursuing the RA's objectives; and with all members in Britain having in their locality an RA group whose walks, campaigning and other activities they can regularly take part in, if they wish to do so.
- 1 7. A democratic organisation in which members have control over the association's policy, and in which there is a high degree of volunteer involvement at all levels.
- 1 8. An organisation within which there is excellent communication between all levels, and between those levels and the general membership.

In his speech, Geoff Eastwood emphasised that paragraph 3 would be reviewed in future years to take into consideration the views of RA Scotland concerning the access situation in Scotland.

Keith Wadd proposed and Max Grant seconded the following amendment on behalf of West Riding Area:

In paragraph 3, insert "where reasonably practical", after "canals and lakes".

This amendment was lost.

David Kelly proposed and Andrew Manzie seconded the following amendment on behalf of Mid Lancs Area:

Reword paragraph 3 as follows:

A legally protected 'Access to the Countryside' which would provide freedom of access with responsibility, subject to the requirements to protect and preserve wildlife, domestic privacy, farming and other economic uses of the land. This would provide access over common land, moor, heath, down, cliff, foreshore and woodland and alongside rivers, canals and lakes.

This amendment was lost.

Barry Lingard proposed and Mavis Rear seconded the following amendment on behalf of Gloucestershire Area:

After paragraph 4 add a new paragraph as follows:

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A countryside in which the public, while enjoying legal access and the countryside in general, respect private property and give due consideration to the livelihood of those who

live and work on the land.

This amendment was lost.

The motion was then carried nem con.

22. Constitutions - use of the word "national"

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Peter Harwood and seconded by Cath MacKay:

That this Council instructs that:

- (a) National Council shall henceforth be known as General Council and that, where the term 'National Council' appears in the constitution and standing orders and in the model area and group constitutions, it be replaced by 'General Council';
- (b) the national Executive Committee shall henceforth be known as the Executive Committee and that, where the terms "national Executive" and "national Executive Committee" appear in the constitution and standing orders and in the model area and group constitutions, they be replaced by 'Executive Committee';
- © where the term "Executive Committee" appears in the model Area constitution, it be replaced by 'Area Executive Committee'
- (d) national office shall henceforth be known as central office and that, where the term "national office" appears in the constitution and in standing orders, it be replaced by 'central office';
- (e) Clause 13 (b) of the constitution shall be amended to read: "The apportionment of membership subscriptions between central and area funds;" and consequently the word "national" in Standing Order CI 1 shall

be replaced by "central";

- (f) in Standing Orders B4© and C6, the word "national" shall be deleted; and
- (g) in Standing Order C22, the words "national funds" shall be replaced by "central funds";and
- (h) references in the model area and group constitutions to the "national constitution" shall be replaced by the "Association's constitution".

This motion was carried by an overwhelming majority.

23 & 24. Constitution, Clause 7 - Privileges of membership

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Geoff Eastwood and seconded by Des Whicher:

Amend clause 7 of the constitution **so** that it reads:

7. PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

Each member (or in the case of joint members, each pair of members), including affiliated local and national organisations, shall:

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- (a) receive a membership card;
- (b) be sent on request and without charge a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts of the Executive Committee;
- © receive a copy of the Association's annual accommodation list;
- (d) receive a copy of each issue of the official organ of the Association.

Each individual member and pair of joint members and affiliated local organisation shall be entitled to membership of an area.

Each individual member and pair of joint members shall be entitled to membership of a group.

Arising from this also amend the first sentence of the first paragraph of Standing Order B4 (h) to read:

- (h) The allocation of members, including affiliated local organisations, to areas; and the allocation of individual and joint members to groups.

David Kelly proposed and Andrew Manzie seconded the following amendment (originally **tabled as motion 24**) on behalf of Mid Lancashire Area:

Motion 23 to read:

Each member (or in the case of joint members, each pair of members), including affiliated local and national organisations, shall:

- (a) be sent on request and without charge a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts of the Executive Committee;
- (b) receive a copy of the association's annual accommodation list;

© receive a copy of each issue of the official organ of the association.

Each member, including affiliated local and national organisations, shall receive a membership card.

Each individual member, each of a pair of joint members and affiliated local organisation shall be entitled to membership of an area.

Each individual member and each of a pair of joint members shall be entitled to membership of a group.

Arising from this also amend the first sentence of the first paragraph of Standing Order B4(h) to read;

(h) the allocation of members, including affiliated local organisations, to areas; and the allocation of members to groups.

After discussion, both this motion and the amendment to it were withdrawn.

25. Clause 10 - Delegates at National Council

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Manchester Area by Bruce Fairbanks and seconded by Terry Perkins:

Amend clause 10, sub-paragraph (b) of the constitution so that it reads:

(b) Delegates nominated **by** and representing Areas on the following basis:

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(i) Areas which at the end of the financial year preceding the holding of the Council had an individual membership of all categories constituting not more than 3 per cent of the total individual membership of the Association: not more than two delegates.

(ii) Areas whose membership as described in (i) above constituted more than 3 per cent but less than 6 per cent of the Association's total individual

membership: not more than three delegates.

Areas whose membership as described in (i) above constituted more than 6 per cent but less than 9 per cent of the Association's total individual

membership: not more than four delegates.

(iv) Areas whose membership as described in (i) above constituted more than 9 per cent but less than 12 per cent of the Association's total individual membership: not more than five delegates.

(v) Areas whose membership as described in (i) above exceeded 12 per cent of the Association's total individual membership: not more than six delegates.

Peter Harwood proposed and Cath MacKay seconded remission to the Executive Committee. This was agreed by Council.

26. Standing Order A2: amendments to motions and distribution of National Council papers

The following motion was proposed on behalf of South Yorks & North East Derbyshire Area by Terry Howard and seconded by Alien Pestel:

Alteration to the Standing Orders under A National Council:

A2, line 3, after "meeting" change comma to full stop.

Insert new A3 to read "amendments to the alterations to the Constitution and amendments to motions must

be received in writing at central office not less than 21 days before the meeting.

Insert new A4 to read "The final agenda..... and continuing with "and all relevant paperwork shall be.... etc" as in current A2.

Alter all succeeding paragraph numbers accordingly.

This motion was lost.

27. Reduced life subscription rate

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Cornwall Area by Shirley Oliver and seconded by Hazel Perham:

This National Council instructs the Executive Committee to introduce a reduced life subscription rate for persons aged 60 years and over which should be calculated at one quarter of the ordinary life subscription rate and, where both members are aged 60 years and over, a reduced joint life subscription which should be calculated at one quarter of the ordinary joint life subscription rate.

The proposers agreed that this motion should be remitted to the Executive Committee.
This was agreed by Council.

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28. Candidates for election to the Executive Committee

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Shropshire Area by Ron Moore and seconded by David Sheiley:

This Council calls for the rules relating to election to the national Executive Committee (Executive Committee) to provide for all candidates for election, whether or not nominated in advance, to have an equal opportunity to address National Council (General Council) in support of their candidature.

This motion was lost.

14. VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

14.1 Council noted that the 1997 meeting of General Council would be held at Loughborough University on 4th-6th April 1997 and the 1998 Council at Aberdeen University on 3th-5th April 1 998.

14.2 The chairman invited bids for 1999.

15. NATIONAL PATHS WEEKEND: 17TH-18TH MAY 1997

1 5.1 Alison Mitchell (Grampian Area) asked for an assurance that the national Footpaths Weekend planned for May 1997 would involve Scotland as well as England and Wales.

1 5.2 Alan Mattingly said that while he was unable to give an assurance, EC would take note of the representations made.

16. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

1 6.1 In her closing remarks, the chairman expressed her thanks to West Glamorgan Group; particularly to John Davis who had provided the flowers at the dinner the previous evening, Pat Grattidge for all her work during the weekend, and Alex Marshall, South Wales Area chairman who had welcomed delegates to Swansea. She also expressed gratitude to the members of West Glamorgan Group who had come to the press conference the previous Friday in particularly bad weather. She extended her thanks to the staff of the university and the RA staff, particularly mentioning Janice Samuel, who had been responsible for the organisation of the event.

1 6.2 The chairman said that Council had come at an important time for the association, after the Jubilee Year and while members were looking forward both to a General Election and to the millennium. The association

aimed to see its proposals for freedom to roam responsibly across open country enter Parliament in 1997.

- 1 6.3 It would campaign for public paths in England and Wales to be in good order as the law demanded. It would lobby local authorities to give priority to opening up paths rather than diverting them and to prosecuting those farmers and landowners who criminally blocked them.
- 1 6.4 This time last year, when she had been first elected chairman, she had criticised those farmers and landowners who illegally blocked and cropped public rights of way. Their reaction had been to deny that they did this - in the face of evidence to the contrary. Of course many farmers and landowners did look after their paths properly, but many others continued to ignore footpath law. Path blocking was undoubtedly the most widespread crime in the countryside. Path surveys, carried out in the previous year in Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Northumberland, showed the horrifying extent of blocked cropped paths.

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- 1 6.5 Landowners had reacted to her criticisms last year by deliberately misrepresenting the Ramblers' case. They had wrongly accused the Ramblers of wanting to walk everywhere without restriction, and had turned deaf ears to the Ramblers' explanation that they merely wanted freedom to roam on uncultivated land, subject to good behaviour. Many times in the past year the RA had offered to meet and talk with landowners about access to their land, but had made little progress. However, the association must not be deterred, but must continue to ask landowners to talk. Meanwhile, it challenged those landowners and occupiers who had not yet done so, to get all their paths in order and to welcome well behaved walkers onto their land.
- 16.6 England and Wales were fortunate to have national parks. It was vitally important to have adequate representation of amenity interests on the national park authorities. One of the worrying features that had been apparent during the year had been the weakening of the statutory agencies, the Countryside Commission, Countryside Council for Wales, and Scottish Natural Heritage. Rather than acting as watchdogs for the countryside, they were becoming more and more lapdogs of government. The RA must lobby for them to recover their former roles.
- 1 6.7 The RA had set an ambitious work programme for the year; the workload was ever growing. She paid tribute to the work of the director, Alan Mattingly, who had been the association's chief officer for 21 years. The role of volunteers was also crucial if the association was to achieve its aims.
- 1 6.8 She passed two messages to delegates before they left. Firstly, there was a need to educate all members, to take every opportunity to tell them of the association's aims, and of how it planned to achieve them. Secondly, members must keep an eye on their local press and reply positively to hostile press publicity. They must vigorously lobby councillors and potential counsellors, and parliamentary candidates.
- 1 6.9 It had been a good and friendly weekend. It was clear that delegates were determined to achieve the RA's ends. To do this, it was absolutely vital for the association to be united. By standing together, they would succeed.
- 1 6.10 The chairman's address was greeted with applause.
- 1 6.11 David Grosz (vice-chairman) asked Council to show its appreciation of the friendly and efficient way in which the chairman had conducted Council business throughout the weekend.
- 1 6.1 2 Council registered its appreciation with acclaim.

THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS