

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY
NOTTINGHAM, 10th-11th APRIL 1999**

*** denotes a member of Council (voter)**

VICE-PRESIDENT

Geoff Eastwood*
Chris Hall*
Alan Howard*
Jack Ibbott*
Richard Lloyd Jones*
Gerald McGuire*
David Rubinstein*
Wally Smith*
Paddy Tipping MP*

CHAIRMAN

David Grosz*

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Cath MacKay*

TREASURER

David Hunt*

HONORARY SOLICITOR

Jerry Pearlman*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Kate Ashbrook*
Peter Ayling*
Jo Bird*
Tony Drake*
John Holms*
Terry Pollard*
Brian Reader*
Mavis Rear*
Pam Roberts*
Geoffrey Williams*

AGENDA COMMITTEE MEMBER

John Capes*
Tony Clarkson*
Sylvia Franks*
Ron Moore*
Sylvia Popham*

AVON AREA

Julie Boston*
Ray Hart*

BEDFORDSHIRE AREA

Ian Lindsay*
Bob Wallace*

BERKSHIRE AREA

Pam Hall*
Jane Kiely*
Cliff Lambert
John Moules

BUCKS & W MIDDX AREA

David Bradnack*
John Esslemont*

CALEDONIAN (H&I) AREA

Ken Davidson*
Raymond Gray*
Jennifer Gray

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA

Stan Hampton*
Steve Horner*
Tessa Capes
Janet Cartwright
Christine Kirby

CENTRAL, F & T AREA

Chic Nash*
Linda Nash*

CORNWALL AREA

Hazel Perham*
Mary Weston*

DERBYSHIRE AREA

John Hayes*
Joy Osborne*
Arthur Osborne
Keith Walkerdine

DEVON AREA

Nan Adams*
Jean Mills*

DORSET AREA

Alan Brown*
Ron Bryant*

DYFED AREA

Peter Harwood*

E YORKS/DERWENT AREA

Dennis Parker*
Trevor Oates

ESSEX AREA

John Barnard*
Michael Cullen*
Adrian Vincent-Jones*

GLAMORGAN AREA

Alex Marshall*
Terry Squires*
Ian Fraser

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA

Barry Lingard*
Frank Wragg*
David Low
John Newbury

GRAMPIAN AREA

Irene Cruickshanks*
Alison Mitchell*

GREATER GWENT AREA**HAMPSHIRE AREA**

Dave Pardy*
Brenda Parker*
Owen Plunkett*
Don Anderson

HEREFORD & WORCS AREA

John Coleman*
Derek Starkey*
Trevor Antill

HERTS & N MIDDX AREA

David Allard*
Annette Cotter*

INNER LONDON AREA

John Archer*
Mike Biggs*
Les Douglas

ISLE OF WIGHT AREA

Tim Hough*
Mike Marchant*

KENT AREA

Chris Barrow*
Michael Collins*
Peter Skipp*
Jean Bomber
Keith Potter
Michael Stokes

LAKE DISTRICT AREA

Peter Jones*
Jo Leighton*
Jean Gilligan
Joan Hibberd
Freda Leighton
Audrey Shaw

LEICS & RUTLAND AREA

Raymond Phipps*
Brian Taylor*
John Peachey
Ellen Sandeman

LINCOLNSHIRE AREA

Stuart Parker*
Len Wilson*
Mick Clapham
Brett Collier
Pat McClure
Alan Nash
Janet Nash
Colin Smith
Miriam Smith
Barbara White
Ron White

LOTHIAN/BORDERS AREA

Arthur Homan-Elsy*
Joan Martindale*
James Harrower

MANCHESTER AREA

Gloria Gaffney*
Terry Perkins*
Keith Pennyfather

MERSEYSIDE AREA

Gloria Thayer*
Vi Williams*
Barry Davies
Mike Kendrick
Donald Merchant

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

Ron Cheetham*
David Kelly*

N YORKS/S DURHAM AREA

Alan Hutchinson*
Bryan Spark*

NORFOLK AREA

Ann Kershaw*
Harry Kershaw*

NORTH EAST LANCS AREA

Susan Baxendale*
Vivian Roberts*

NORTH WALES AREA

Pete Bland*
Mary Robinson*
Margaret Fernley
Dave Hollett
Vera Hollett

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AREA

Peter Ellement*
Gill Howe*
Jean Perkins

NORTHERN AREA

Mavis Harris*
Tony Jones*
Maggie Ramsdale
John Swift

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA

David Harrison*
Kevin Matthews*
Andy Adam
Judith Anson
Nancy Ashbridge
Chris Baker
Pauline Baker
Peter Baker
Ron Bason
Alan Billington
Ellen Bishop
John Bolland
Mona Bolland
Carol Bristow
Sue Carter
David Dobson
Rod Fillingham
Pauline Finlay
Pam Footitt
Andy Gillaspy

Irene Gore
Keith Gore
Sue Gosrani
Chris Harrison
Joyce Hazeldine
Betty Henderson
Alec Kingsmill
Marian Kingsmill
Stella Lane
Warwick Langtree
Ted Limb
Ruth Mathieson
Susan McGuire
Tim O'Brien
Richard Parrey
Jenny Peck
Rita Rippin
Sarah Rich
Eileen Sampson
Elise Smith
Alex Staniforth
Marian Staniforth
Chris Thompson
Andy Thornton
David Turner
Jo Turner
Judy Valentine
Paul Wagstaff
Andy Watts
Carol Woods

NTH/MID CHESHIRE AREA

Daphne Thomas*
Tony Wakefield*

OXFORDSHIRE AREA

Peter Barbour*
John Gordon*
Monica Beadle

POWYS AREA

Harry Chandler*

S & E CHESHIRE AREA

Harry Hadfield*
Justin McCarthy*

S YORKS/NE DERBY AREA

Terry Howard*
Allen Pestell*
Ann Barclay
Peter Barclay
Roy Bullen
Irene Bunting
John Bunting
Jack Burling
Roy Cannon
Margery Clutterbuck
Christine Deakin

Arthur Soar
Margaret Taylor
SHROPSHIRE AREA

William Hodges*
Dennis Nisbet*
Vivienne Hodges

SOMERSET AREA

Brenda Prentice*

STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

Colin Brookes*
Ray Lloyd*

STRATHCLYDE, D&G AREA

Elizabeth Lawie*
James Riddell*

SUFFOLK AREA

John Andrews*
Molly Brown*
Ron Brown

SURREY AREA

Graham Butler*
Kate Colley*
Brian Seller*

SUSSEX AREA

David Barber*
Janet Barber*

WARWICKSHIRE AREA

Frank Mackey*
Steven Wallsgrave*
Michael Bird
Janet Satchwell

WEST RIDING AREA

Frank Reynolds*
Keith Wadd*
Rodney Waddilove

WILTS & SWINDON AREA

John Bamford*
Pat Crabb*
Erica Bamford

CAMPING & CARAVANNING CLUB

Jim Perry*
Sylvia Perry

COUNTRYWIDE HOLIDAYS ASSOCIATION

Vincent Pedley*
Margaret Whiteside

DISABLED DRIVERS ASSOCIATION

Mike Bruton*
Roger Fitzwater

HF HOLIDAYS

John Cass*

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOC

Janet Chapman*
Edward Marsh

OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

Donald Lee*

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SERVICES

Ron Ayerst*
Kathryn Gregory

RED ROPE

Barrie Dobson*

ULSTER FEDERATION OF RAMBLING CLUBS

Paddy McAteer*
Gillian Little

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

Janet Cuff*

VISITORS & GUESTS

Annabelle Birchall
Ann Holt
Arthur Howcroft
Margaret Ibbott
Paul Lakin
Kate Walsham
Des Whicher

STAFF

David Beskine
Rachael Bryett
Gwen Campbell
Kate Conto
Vanessa Crawford
Janet Davis
Jacquetta Fewster
Vicky Furnival
Becky Gill
Sue Gittins
John Hall
Carol Harding
Katey Karam
Penny Kempe
Dave Morris
Beverley Penney
Charlotte Prager
Paul Rees
Adrian Ritchie
Janice Samuel
Liane Sparks
Paul Strong
Frank Syrratt
Nicky Warden
John Watkins
Bronwen Williams
Clare Wilson
Anthony Wyght

1. WELCOME

- 1.1 Paddy Tipping MP, Vice-President of the Association and President of Nottinghamshire Area, welcomed delegates and visitors on behalf of the Area. He mentioned in particular Nottinghamshire's associations with Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest and the work which was being done in the north of the county to create a new deciduous woodland, with public access, on old colliery sites, and the great efforts which Nottinghamshire Area had made in persuading Nottinghamshire County Council to reduce its target date for having its rights of way in good order from 2015 to 2007, even though an enormous effort would be needed if that earlier target date was to be met.
- 1.2 Paddy then spoke about the access campaign. The campaign for access to the country's wide open spaces was an old one. He himself had spoken about it at many RA council meetings. It was achievable now because the Government was firmly committed to legislation which would provide for access to mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common. Discussions on the content of the 1999 Queen's speech were now taking place and there was a real possibility that a countryside bill covering access, rights of way and SSSI protection would be included. It was vital that RA members continued to speak to their MPs to stress the importance of introducing this new legislation as soon as possible. Enactment of the access legislation would be a fitting way for ramblers to celebrate the millennium, finishing work which had begun in 1884, and providing the public with access to the wild open land, their land.
- 1.3 David Grosz, RA Chairman thanked Paddy Tipping and added his own welcome to delegates and visitors. He commented that it was when he was at Nottingham University that he had first started rambling. He said that the news about the access legislation showed that the voice of the RA was being heard and that this was emphasised by the fact that Kate Ashbrook had been appointed to the new Countryside Agency and that Cath MacKay and Jerry Pearlman had been appointed, respectively, to the Peak District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks Authorities.

2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Council noted apologies from President Andrew Bennett MP and David Bateman, John Foster (vice president), Eddie Hibberd (vice president) and Ken Willson.

3. APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

- 3.1 The following persons were appointed:

Tellers (Saturday):	Alec Kingsmill Marian Kingsmill Jenny Peck Rod Fillingham	(Sunday):	Paul Wagstaff Heather Beverley Judith Anson Eileen Sampson
Scrutineers:	Keith Gore Irene Gore		John Bolland Mona Bolland
Timekeepers:	Chris Baker Sarah Rich		

4. MINUTES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL 1998

- 4.1 With the following corrections:

Page 5, 6.2 should read "Terry Pollard (Executive Committee)..." not (Northern Area)
Page 8, after 6.31, Mary Robinson had further asked about the increase in funds made available to Areas which amounted to

£100,000. Similar increases had occurred in preceding years.

Page 12, **Motion 4**, sub-paragraph (b) should read “if it is necessary to achieve...”

the Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of General Council 1998 as a correct record.

5. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN ON RESOLUTIONS PASSED OR REMITTED AT NATIONAL COUNCIL 1998

- 5.1 Council considered and noted a report from the Executive Committee on action taken on resolutions passed at National Council 1998:

Motion 6: Shared-use cycle routes (carried)

- 5.2 Graham Butler (Surrey Area) asked if any further action had been taken on this issue which was of particular concern to Surrey Area.

Motion 9: Motor traffic on country roads (carried)

- 5.3 Elizabeth Lawie (Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway Area) asked about further progress with this initiative.

Motions 10: Roads without footways (carried) and 11: Organised walks and public transport (carried)

- 5.4 Julie Boston (Avon Area) expressed concern about slow progress in pursuing these issues and the lack of awareness about them at Group level.

Motion 13: Wind turbine development (carried)

- 5.5 William Hodges (Shropshire Area) said that EC's action on this motion had been disappointing. Alan Howard (vice-president) called for a high profile campaign against wind farms and Dennis Parker (East Yorkshire & Derwent Area) commented that wind farms were now an issue in the lowlands to the east of the country. In the context of this motion and others, David Rubinstein (vice-president) asked that the new EC should take into account that the right to roam would be worthless unless there was a beautiful countryside to roam in.

Motion 14: Linkage between subsidies and access (carried)

- 5.6 Dennis Nisbet (Shropshire Area) commented that there should have been a stronger response on this matter. Farmers should not be in receipt of subsidies if they were breaking the law. John Barnard (Essex Area) asked if MAFF had been consulted on this issue.

Motion 17: Location of RA central office (carried)

- 5.7 Joy Osborne (Derbyshire Area) asked if council could be told about the consultant's report.
- 5.8 David Beskine, Director of Campaigns, responded in respect of those motions on campaign and policy issues. He said that efforts were being made to influence central government policy in respect of shared-use cycle tracks, that Areas and Groups were opposing shared-use schemes and were being given support in doing so and that contacts with Sustrans were being maintained so that their thinking could be influenced.
- 5.9 The RA was undertaking a lot of countryside work and there was a huge demand for assistance from Areas and Groups. Care needed to be taken that we were not duplicating work being undertaken by CPRE and others.
- 5.10 The concept of cross-compliance was gaining ground and an attempt had been made to

incorporate a provision on the subject into Gordon Prentice's Access bill.

- 5.11 Frank Syratt, Director (acting), commented that there were problems associated with the RA seeking Sports Council funding because we had little or no involvement in capital projects to which a lot of Sports Council money was directed. The RA's fundraising and marketing officer consequently directed a lot of her efforts on other sources of funding which were likely to prove more productive
- 5.12 Frank Syratt further said that the consultant's report on relocating central office could be made available to council. Its conclusion was that although there was no barrier to relocation there would be no financial gain because the present office was very economical to run. Any decision to move would therefore rest on whether the RA wanted to move. EC had decided to return to the matter at a later date.

6. ANNUAL REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS

Annual Review

- 6.1 The Chairman moved the adoption of the annual review and the Director (acting) explained that in a new departure, the old annual report and accounts had been replaced with two new format documents: the Annual Review and, separately, the Accounts plus legal and administrative information. The review covered the calendar year 1998 and it had been designed to serve a dual purpose: both as the annual report and as a document which could be used to promote the RA.
- 6.2 Jane Kiely (Berkshire Area) seconded the adoption of the annual review.
- 6.3 Brenda Parker (Hampshire Area) commented that the Review did not contain a breakdown of membership figures by Area and Sylvia Popham noted that the Treasurer had been omitted from the list of officers.
- 6.4 Harry Hadfield (South & East Cheshire Area) said that although it was a very attractive document, it should perhaps only be repeated every five years because of the expense. Kevin Matthews (Nottinghamshire Area) considered it to be a very attractive document, a credit to the Association and worth producing every year. John Barnard (Essex Area) suggested that perhaps a smaller glossy document should be produced alongside the annual report and accounts in their old format. Joy Osborne (Derbyshire Area) asked how much the review had cost.
- 6.5 Council agreed to adopt the annual review for 1998.

Accounts

- 6.6 The adoption of the accounts for the year to 30 September 1998 was proposed by David Hunt and seconded by Jack Ibbott (vice-president).
- 6.7 The accounts were presented by David Hunt. In response to comments on the Annual Review he said that the cost had been £10,000 and that the print-run had been 5,000. The last page included a simplified profile of the accounts.
- 6.8 David Hunt drew council's attention to the importance of covenanting subscriptions: it was estimated that if all members did so the RA would gain an extra £200,000.
- 6.9 The income for the last financial year had been similar to that for 1996-97 since growth had been slow and income from legacies had reduced. There had been a deliberate policy to reduce reserves and a lot of that money had been spent on the access campaign.
- 6.10 Dennis Parker (East Yorkshire & Derwent Area) asked if any thought had been given to

introducing a monthly direct debit system. David Hunt said that this would be considered.

6.11 Terry Perkins asked about the conflict between ethical investment and obtaining the best returns on investment. David Hunt commented that the RA's investment advisers were aware of the RA's objects and so could take them into account.

6.12 Harry Hadfield (South & East Cheshire Area) asked if the purpose of Ramblers Enterprises Ltd could be explained. David Hunt said that this was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Association.

6.13 Council agreed to adopt the accounts for the year to 30 September 1998

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President

Andrew Bennett MP

Proposed by:

Kate Ashbrook (for EC)

Seconded by:

Mary Robinson

Vice-Presidents

Proposed by:

Seconded by:

Past Presidents:

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

and:

Geoff Eastwood
John Foster
Eddie Hibberd
Alan Howard
Jack Ibbott
Richard Lloyd Jones
David Rubinstein
Lady Sayer
David Sharp
Wally Smith
Paddy Tipping MP

David Grosz (for EC)

Des Whicher

John Bunting

Terry Howard
(for South Yorks. & North East Derbyshire Area)

Allen Pestell

Chairman

David Grosz

Pam Roberts (for EC)

Kate Walsham

Vice Chairman

Cath MacKay

Peter Harwood (for EC)

Geoffrey Williams

Treasurer

David Hunt

Mavis Rear (for EC)

Brian Reader

Hon Solicitor

Jerry Pearlman LLB

Geoffrey Williams (for EC)

Jo Bird

8. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

Kate Ashbrook
Peter Ayling
Jo Bird
Peter Harwood
Kevin Matthews

Brian Reader
Mavis Rear
Mary Robinson
Geoffrey Williams

9. ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

- 9.1 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

Ron Moore
Sylvia Popham

10. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

- 10.1 The appointment of Sayer Vincent was proposed by David Grosz and seconded by Peter Harwood and agreed.

11. SPECIAL MEETING OF EC

- 11.1 The Chairman proposed that General Council approved the suspension, on 19 March 1999, by the Executive Committee of that part of Standing Order B1 which requires 14 days' notice for the calling of a special meeting of the Executive Committee.

Council agreed to this measure.

MOTIONS

OPEN SESSION MOTIONS

1. Emergency motion on access

Council agreed that the following motion on access should be considered. The motion was proposed on behalf of Northamptonshire Area by Peter Ellement and seconded by Kate Ashbrook:

This General Council welcomes the historic announcement by the government that it will introduce a right to roam to 4 million acres of mountain, moor, heath, down and common land in England and Wales "as soon as parliamentary time permits". We call on the government to introduce the legislation in the 1999 Queen's speech in recognition of the immensely popular support for this measure, and as a fitting way to mark both the equally historic 50th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, and the millennium.

The motion was carried unanimously.

2. Access to woodland (Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area)

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

This General Council notes that woodland is relatively abundant in many areas that are deficient in other types of open country and that provision of freedom to roam in privately owned woodland is often much less than in that owned by the Forestry Commission, local authorities and charities. It therefore resolves that, in the event of Parliament enacting access legislation not including primary provision for access to woodland, the [RA] Executive Committee should press for appropriate further legislation at the earliest opportunity.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

3. Young people (Nottinghamshire Area)

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

This Council recognises the significance of work being done to encourage more young people in their twenties and thirties to join the Association.

In order to enhance the long-term development of the Ramblers' Association, we urge the Executive Committee to

- (a) develop a coordinated strategy to encourage and support the formation of Groups for people in their twenties and thirties;
- (b) investigate other ways of making the Association and its campaigns more appealing to people in this age group.

Geoff Williams proposed and Brian Reader seconded the following amendment on behalf of the Executive Committee:

In paragraph 2 (a) delete from "the formation ... to end of sentence and replace with "the involvement of people in their twenties and thirties;"

This amendment was lost.

The unamended motion was then carried *nem con*.

4. Involvement of children and young people

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

This General Council recognises the need to involve more children and "young people" in the Ramblers' Association.

It therefore calls on the Executive Committee to have an officer whose responsibility is to investigate ways of increasing the membership of children and "young people" along with providing suitable material and publications for this age group.

Geoff Williams proposed and Brian Reader seconded the following amendment on behalf of the Executive Committee

In paragraph 2, lines 1 and 2, after "Committee" delete "to have an officer whose

responsibility is”

This amendment was carried by 66 votes to 58.

The amended motion was then carried *nem con*.

Amended motion reads:

This General Council recognises the need to involve more children and “young people” in the Ramblers’ Association.

It therefore calls on the Executive Committee to investigate ways of increasing the membership of children and “young people” along with providing suitable material and publications for this age group.

5. Rights of way campaign

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

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to organise an effective campaign to get all rights of way in England and Wales open, walkable and recorded.

Janet Cuff proposed and Gloria Gaffney seconded the following amendment:

On the third line delete “recorded” and insert instead “accurately recorded by both local authorities and Ordnance Survey”

This amendment was accepted by the movers, and carried.

The amended motion was then carried unanimously.

Amended motion reads:

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to organise an effective campaign to get all rights of way in England and Wales open, walkable and accurately recorded by both local authorities and Ordnance Survey.

6. Footpath network

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area by David Allard and seconded by Annette Cotter

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to give a high priority to securing the improvement and expansion of the footpath network, particularly near to large centres of population and to promote pilot schemes.

The motion was carried *nem con*.

7. The new Countryside Agency for England

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee and Suffolk Area by John Andrews and seconded by Cath MacKay.

This General Council welcomes the new Countryside Agency for England and urges it to be the champion of the countryside and its enjoyment by the public. In particular, we want the Countryside Agency to be an effective force for freedom-to-roam legislation and getting all public paths reopened, the protection of National Parks and

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the designation of the New Forest and the South Downs as National Parks.

We welcome the recognition by its predecessor, the Countryside Commission, that in order for the rights of way network to be brought into good condition and effectively managed (i) adequate long-term funding arrangements need to be put in place and (ii)

highway authorities need to carry out their rights of way duties properly. However, we call upon the government to reject those aspects of the Commission's recommendations, which will make it easier to alter the routes of paths and to close the definitive map to claims based on historical evidence.

Further to this, the Association calls upon Government, as it prepares to amend rights of way legislation, to introduce no measures which will cause injustice to walkers.

This motion was carried unanimously.

8. Scottish Land Reform

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by John Holms and seconded by Mavis Rear:

This General Council welcomes the proposal from the Secretary of State for Scotland that a Land Reform Bill should be amongst the earliest legislation to be considered by the Scottish Parliament. Council notes the proposals to secure the public interest when major properties change hands, including new compulsory purchase powers to enable local communities to purchase land in selected areas.

This motion was carried unanimously.

9. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - future administration and funding

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Mid Lancs Area by David Kelly and seconded by Tony Clarkson:

This General Council welcomes the Countryside Commission's recommendation that the government marks the 50th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, with legislation for the protection and enjoyment of the countryside.

Council welcomes the Commission's recommendation that the management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) be made a statutory duty and that the necessary core funding for the management of protected countryside should be provided from the public purse. However, Council is concerned that the recommendations will not adequately address the pressures on AONBs arising from the limitations of existing planning controls.

Council accordingly calls on the Government:

- (i) through legislation to give local authorities statutory duties to pursue the objectives for which AONBs were designated and for producing statutory management plans;
- (ii) to ensure that the new duties are backed up by adequate central government funding;
- (iii) to ensure that if local authorities are required to select from a list of options and/or templates for delivering the core functions and the management of AONBs, it is shown that each option and/or template will perform to the same

high standard, and that every possible constituent authority would not have an effective veto about what functions would reside with the AONB body.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by Owen Plunkett and seconded by Brenda Parker:

Paragraph 3, sub-paragraph (ii): delete “adequate central” and insert “reliable and permanent”.

The amendment was carried by 54 votes to 46.

The amended motion was carried *nem con*.

Amended motion reads:

This General Council welcomes the Countryside Commission’s recommendation that the government marks the 50th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, with legislation for the protection and enjoyment of the countryside.

Council welcomes the Commission’s recommendation that the management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) be made a statutory duty and that the necessary core funding for the management of protected countryside should be provided from the public purse. However, Council is concerned that the recommendations will not adequately address the pressures on AONBs arising from the limitations of existing planning controls.

Council accordingly calls on the Government:

- (i) through legislation to give local authorities statutory duties to pursue the objectives for which AONBs were designated and for producing statutory management plans;
- (ii) to ensure that the new duties are backed up by reliable and permanent government funding;
- (iii) to ensure that if local authorities are required to select from a list of options and/or templates for delivering the core functions and the management of AONBs, it is shown that each option and/or template will perform to the same high standard, and that every possible constituent authority would not have an effective veto about what functions would reside with the AONB body.

10. Access for less-able bodied people to the countryside

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Disabled Drivers Association, Countryside Access Group and Glamorgan Area by Mike Bruton and seconded by Terry Squires:

The General Council applauds the work of the Countryside Access Group in seeking to establish a strategy for access to the countryside for mobility disabled people, underpinned by disability discrimination legislation. It fully supports the aspirations for access to much of the general network of footpaths and trails by disabled people, noting emphasis on protecting legitimate rights of landowners and avoidance of urbanisation of the countryside.

The General Council notes the following key objectives of the strategy:

- (a) recognition of increasing use of rugged designs of wheelchairs, scooters and buggies;

- (b) need for removal and/or redesign of stiles, kissing gates and where possible steps;
- (c) acceptance that path surfaces should be largely left as found.

The General Council instructs the Executive Committee to incorporate these principles into the present thinking and future policy of the Ramblers' Association and calls on government agencies and highway authorities to amend their practices accordingly.

The movers proposed the deletion of the final paragraph and the insertion in its place of the following:

The General Council instructs the EC to take into account the needs of disabled people in present thinking and future policy.

The amendment was carried overwhelmingly.

The amended motion was then carried overwhelmingly.

Amended motion reads:

The General Council applauds the work of the Countryside Access Group in seeking to establish a strategy for access to the countryside for mobility disabled people, underpinned by disability discrimination legislation. It fully supports the aspirations for access to much of the general network of footpaths and trails by disabled people, noting emphasis on protecting legitimate rights of landowners and avoidance of urbanisation of the countryside.

The General Council notes the following key objectives of the strategy:

- (a) recognition of increasing use of rugged designs of wheelchairs, scooters and buggies;
- (b) need for removal and/or redesign of stiles, kissing gates and where possible steps;
- (c) acceptance that path surfaces should be largely left as found.

The General Council instructs the EC to take into account the needs of disabled people in present thinking and future policy.

11. Walker's day return tickets

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Inner London Area by John Archer and seconded by Mike Biggs:

This General Council calls upon the Association's Executive Committee to press vigorously through appropriate channels for a requirement for train operating companies to offer to the public "walker's day return tickets", facilitating linear walks between stations on different lines. The cost should not be greater than that of a cheap day return ticket to the further of the two stations to be used.

The motion was carried *nem con*.

12. Footpaths alongside eroding features

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Kent Area by Peter Skipp and seconded by

Chris Barrow:

This General Council is concerned that public paths are liable to damage and loss by erosion of coastal, river and inland cliffs, banks and slopes, and instructs the Executive Committee to determine what action may be taken to protect and restore such paths for public use and enjoyment and, in particular, to add urgently the case of the loss of cliff top paths to its consideration of the erosion issue.

The motion was carried unanimously.

13. Law on public rights of way

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Merseyside and West Cheshire Area by Gloria Thayer and seconded by Vi Williams:

That this General Council draws the attention of HM Government to the right and proper penalties which exist for contempt of the privileges of the House of Commons; and accordingly reminds them of the contempt and disregard for the legislation passed on the public's behalf by Parliament, represented by the continual flouting of the law of the land by the obstruction of public rights of way on the part of landowners and tenant farmers.

David Kelly proposed and Tony Clarkson seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION MOTIONS

14. Amendment to Standing Order C2

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by David Hunt and seconded by Jo Bird:

Line 1: Delete all after "The subscriptions of" to the end of C2 and then add "all members of the Association shall be determined by the Executive Committee".
Consequential amendment: Delete C5 and re-number subsequent standing orders.

Justin McCarthy proposed and Chris Hall seconded the following amendment:

Second and third lines: delete "the Executive Committee" and insert "General Council".

The amendment was lost overwhelmingly.

The motion was then carried by a large majority.

15. Setting budget allocations

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

This General Council agrees that it should be consulted on priorities in setting budget allocations, thus assisting in the implementation of the RA's long- term aims as envisaged by the 1996 policy, para 17.

The motion was lost by a large majority.

16. Funding for countryside objectives

The following motion was proposed on behalf of North Wales Area by Mary Robinson and seconded by Harry Chandler:

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to review its budget priorities and to allocate significantly increased funding for the pursuit of the Association's countryside objectives.

Alan Howard proposed and Terry Pollard seconded remission to EC. This was agreed by 77 votes to 47.

17. Volunteers

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Kate Ashbrook and seconded by Brian Reader:

This General Council welcomes the decision to produce the volunteers' handbook. General Council calls on all who act in an official capacity for the Ramblers' Association to adhere to RA policy and to encourage and educate other members similarly to do so. It recognises that failure to follow policy that has been democratically decided can have a damaging impact on our public image, campaigning work and credibility.

The motion was carried.

18. Outreach

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

This General Council notes that the RA is shortly to appoint an Outreach Officer, and recommends as a matter of urgency that in consultation with Areas a set of guidelines for Let's Get Going projects be drawn up dealing with such features as the amount of RA funding that may be offered, the number of years funding may be offered for the same project, RA membership of project leader(s), insurance requirements, and monitoring of the project.

Cath MacKay proposed and Terry Pollard seconded remission to the Executive Committee. This was agreed *nem con*.

[At this point, suspension of Standing Order A10 and the substitution of new time limits on speakers of five minutes for the proposer of a motion and three minutes for other speakers was proposed and seconded. This was agreed overwhelmingly.]

19. Governance Review/Constitution Review

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Dyfed Area by Peter Harwood and seconded by Geoff Williams:

This General Council, recognising the need for the fastest possible process in completing the current internal reviews of the RA's constitution and governance procedures, accepts that the outcome needs to be well integrated and efficient. It also, however, believes that because of their far reaching significance for the Association, they need to be transparent, inclusive and to have had all the realistic options fully debated throughout the RA's democracy before final decisions are taken.

It therefore instructs the Executive Committee to ensure that the Governance

Review is carried out in parallel with the Constitution Review and that the maximum consultation with members be carried out on governance issues to at least the level that the Constitution Review has and will achieve.

The motion was carried unanimously.

20. Discounts on membership subscriptions

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Cambridgeshire Area by John Capes and seconded by Steve Horner:

This General Council urges the Executive Committee to consider offering incentive discounts to members to encourage them to pay their subscription by direct debit.

The motion was carried.

21. Local records

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Staffordshire Area by Colin Brookes and seconded by Ray Lloyd:

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to encourage all Areas to liaise with their county or local records office, in order to deposit acceptable records for safe keeping, and public access.

Terry Howard proposed and Jerry Pearlman seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This proposal was lost.

The motion was then carried.

The closing time for discussion on motions having been reached, the following motions were remitted to the Executive Committee:

22. HF Holidays' advertising in "Rambling Today"

This General Council of the Ramblers' Association, in order to represent and promote the interests of all walkers throughout the UK, agrees that the policy of "Rambling Today" not to accept advertising from HF Holidays for their walking holidays in the UK should be reversed, provided HF Holidays undertake that a coded reference will be provided for responses to the advertisement, and that anyone who responds quoting that reference, will only be sent HF Holidays' brochure for UK holidays.

23. Safe walking routes (Hampshire Area)

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to develop and implement a campaign to have a duty placed on all highway authorities to publish, implement, and annually update prioritised plans to establish safe walking routes, which link up all footpaths and bridleways which are presently only joined up by roads dominated by motorised traffic, by the year 2020.

24. Width of public footpaths (East Yorkshire & Derwent Area)

That this General Council resolves that the width of a new or diverted public footpath should be 2.5 metres and a new bridleway 5 metres, except where physically impossible and instructs the Executive Committee to amend its shopping list accordingly.

25. Countryside Council for Wales funding (Executive Committee)

General Council is concerned that Countryside Council for Wales have received a standstill financial settlement for 99/00, resulting in a cut of 2.5-3% in real terms.

It therefore resolves:

to take every possible opportunity to re-establish the importance of the environment and its responsible use in Wales's new political process;

by campaigning for a re-instatement of monies "lost" to ensure that the level of funding is at least retained;

in particular, to try and ensure that there is no reduction in funding for the opening of the public rights-of-way network and on any access to open country legislation.

26. Planning permission right of appeal (Oxfordshire Area)

This General Council urges the Executive Committee to join with other relevant bodies to press for changes in legislation to allow objectors to the granting of planning permission a right of appeal if permission has been allowed, in the same way that a developer has a right of appeal if permission has been denied.

27. Mountaineering training (Lothian and Borders Area)

General Council is concerned about the rising number of incidents involving mountain rescue in the Scottish mountains. It seeks to join with other voluntary organisations, the Scottish Sports Council, the Scottish Education Department, and their counterparts in England and Wales, to improve the awareness of the dangers of mountains in winter conditions.

28. Converting footpaths into cycle routes (Surrey Area)

This General Council is concerned at the number of proposals that have emerged in recent months for converting footpaths into cycle routes without going through formal legal procedure under the Cycle Tracks Act or any other legislation, and often without proper consultation. This General Council endorses the Executive's actions in opposing such proposals that have come to its attention.

This General Council, whilst recognising that the Cycle Tracks Act is not perfect, reminds local authorities that this piece of legislation was passed by Parliament for the very purpose of providing a legal framework for the creation of new cycling routes. This General Council believes that for local authorities to ignore the Act by encouraging cycling along footpaths without going through formal procedures is to invite conflict, and, furthermore, to flout the clear intention of Parliament. This General Council also urges local authorities to make full and proper consultation whenever they are considering proposals for new cycle routes.

This General Council does recognise that cyclists, like walkers, are vulnerable road-users, but recognises also that if cyclists and walkers are in conflict, then walkers are the more vulnerable. This General Council recognises that provision for off-road cycling needs to be made, but is firmly of the view that this provision should never be at the expense of, or to the detriment of, walkers.

29. Bells on bicycles (Avon Area)

This General Council calls upon the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions to require that, for the safety of pedestrians, all bicycles be fitted with bells or audible horns.

30. Genetic manipulation and bio-diversity (Manchester Area)

Conference, mindful of current agricultural practice that has driven much of our wildlife to the verge of extinction, by use of pesticides, herbicides and the wholesale destruction of our hedgerows, calls on the government to institute a 5 year moratorium on the introduction of genetically modified food, in order that due consideration can be given to the possible adverse effects for the future of the bio-diversity of our flora and fauna and the well being of consumers.

31. Rhizomania (Norfolk Area)

This General Council demands that the powers contained in Article 22 of the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1993 - which empower the closure of cross-field public rights of way where rhizomania is confirmed, or even suspected - be amended. Council therefore instructs the Executive Committee to seek:

- (i) the provision of an alternative path at the field edge, wherever a cross-field path is closed under Article 22;
- (ii) that any certificate of rhizomania infection must have an expiry date, rather than be open-ended; otherwise, rights of way are closed without limit of time and without review. There should be an inspection at the end of each prescribed term and re-certification only if necessary.

12. VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council noted that the year 2000 meeting of General Council would be held at the University of Kent on 14-16 April. It was further noted that the 2001 meeting would be held at the University of Bath on 6-8 April and the 2002 meeting at the University of Durham on 11-13 April.

13. DIRECTOR (ACTING)'S CLOSING REMARKS

- 13.1 In beginning his remarks, Frank Syrratt made special mention of the Van Hoogstraten case. The appeal for funds to assist in legal action against Mr Van Hoogstraten had raised £120,000 which was a record for an individual RA appeal. This high profile case was also assisting with recruitment and membership now stood at 127,000.
- 13.2 Frank then thanked Nottinghamshire Area for their work as hosts for General Council, in particular, Alex Staniforth, Alan Beverley and Chris Thompson, and other members of the team who had acted as tellers, time keepers and scrutineers, and the Notts-Derby Walking Group for their work with the roving microphones. He also thanked the university staff and the RA staff, in particular Janice Samuel for all of their work before and during the weekend.
- 13.3 He was pleased to welcome John Bunting as a new vice-president and thanked Paddy Tipping for opening General Council and for his help and support over the last few years.
- 13.4 Finally, Frank gave particular thanks to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on behalf of Council and staff for the support and leadership which they had shown over the preceding weeks which had been a difficult time for staff and EC members alike.

14. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

- 14.1 The Chairman echoed Frank's thanks and extended them to his fellow EC members, delegates to Council and to all of the RA volunteers who were behind them. He also gave special thanks to the RA press office, led by Paul Rees, for the tremendous amount of work which they undertook. It was thought that about 200 articles about council had appeared in the local and regional press and national news releases were planned for the coming week.
- 14.2 He gave special mention to delegates from the Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs, Paddy

McAteer and Gillian Little, attending council for the first time as representatives of the RA's newest nationally affiliated organisation. He hoped that they had found Council an interesting and rewarding experience.

- 14.3 The Chairman said that was very proud to be Chairman of the RA, particularly at such an exciting time. The government's announcement about the proposed access legislation had been a great achievement and special thanks were due to David Beskine and the access team, Beverley Penney and her team in Wales and Peter Harwood and the Welsh Council Executive Committee for their efforts in helping to secure this. In Scotland, the situation was just as encouraging and again thanks were due to Dave Morris and his team, Kate Walsham and Scottish Council Executive Committee.
- 14.4 He added that the enormous contribution which Ramblers Holidays made to RA funds should not be forgotten and he thanked Ron Ayerst, Geoff Eastwood and the staff at Ramblers Holidays for their efforts.
- 14.5 He noted that four members of the last Executive Committee were no longer members: Tony Drake, Pam Roberts, Des Whicher and Kate Walsham. He thanked them for their service to the Committee and to the RA and, in particular thanked Tony Drake who had been Area Footpath Secretary for Gloucestershire since 1949, had been attending National/General Council meetings since 1952 and had been an EC member since 1979. Tony's service to the Association was immeasurable. The Chairman's comments were greeted with a standing ovation.
- 14.6 Finally, the Chairman commented that he felt the weekend could be summed up in the speeches given by Kevin Matthews and Mike Bruton: the common features in their endeavours on behalf, respectively, of younger ramblers and ramblers with disabilities, were vision, a sense of direction, and flexibility. These were features which the whole Association could and should embrace.
- 14.7 The Chairman's remarks were greeted with applause.

THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS

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