Manifesto for a Walking Britain
The Ramblers

As Britain's largest walking charity, the Ramblers helps everyone to enjoy the freedom of the outdoors on foot. We are committed to supporting Britain's 9 million walkers and to protecting and expanding access to the places people love to walk – whether that’s along our treasured public rights of way network, in our towns and cities or on access land like our mountains, moors and heath. Our 26,500 volunteers make this possible: from leading walks and clearing footpaths, to organising local campaigns to protect and promote local paths.

Election 2017

With Brexit on the horizon, the relationship between the UK and the EU will take centre stage in the election. This shouldn’t mean that other issues are overlooked. We know that walking is critical in helping tackle a host of existing challenges facing the country: improving our mental and physical health; reviving local economies; and enhancing our connection with the outdoors, and each other. We’re calling on all candidates in the 2017 election to support our manifesto for a Walking Britain. In doing so, they can help unlock the potential of walking to create a happier, healthier society, a better environment, and a more prosperous economy.

Manifesto for a Walking Britain [www.ramblers.org.uk/votewalking]
Ensure public money delivers public value

Farmers and landowners work hard to make sure their businesses succeed while delivering wider benefits for society, the environment and the economy. That’s why it is right that public money should continue to support the agricultural sector. The UK’s departure from the EU provides a unique opportunity to maximise the returns on this investment by putting public payment for public goods at the centre of our new agricultural policy. Improving access needs to be at the heart of this.

The next Government should guarantee that public investment to support the agricultural industry will improve people’s access to the countryside. New agricultural policy should:

- Reward those farmers and landowners who go beyond existing legal requirements by enhancing existing public access.
- Ensure that no additional public funding is provided to farmers and landowners who don’t meet their existing legal responsibilities.
- Favour permanent access over temporary, thereby delivering long-term public benefit.

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With increasing concerns about the physical and mental health of the nation, it is more important than ever to find solutions that are practical, effective and affordable. With proven benefits for health, walking has the potential to save public money and help ensure that as we live longer, more people are able to enjoy a good later life.

The next Government should develop a properly funded strategy for walking. This should set ambitious targets to promote walking as an everyday activity, with additional support for the least active. Healthcare professionals should be encouraged to prescribe walking to those with, or at risk of, long term health problems.

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Make towns and cities safe and attractive for walking

Our cities and towns have largely been designed around car travel, leading to lower activity levels, greater dangers for other users and more air pollution. If we want to encourage people to go about their everyday lives on foot, urban areas need safe, well-connected, attractive routes and spaces with cleaner air, so that walking is the easy, pleasant choice for any journey.

The next Government should ensure that everyone has access to high-quality green space no more than 10 minutes’ walk from their home.
Secure the future of our National Trails

National Trails provide public access to some of our most beautiful landscapes. The last government made great progress on the latest addition to this network, the England Coast Path. This will give everyone the opportunity to enjoy their coastal heritage. It is critical however that there is a renewed commitment to completing the England Coast Path and ensuring the long-term viability of this, and all other, National Trails.

The next Government should re-commit to completing the England Coast Path by 2020 and develop sustainable proposals to support the long-term maintenance and management of the route.
The case for walking

Walking is good for our physical health
Four out of ten men and five out of ten women are not active enough to benefit their health, 61% of English adults and 30% of children are overweight or obese, and physical inactivity accounts for 17% of early deaths. Walking is one of the best ways to tackle this; getting active can reduce your risk of developing heart disease by 35%, colon cancer by 50% and diabetes by 50%.

Walking is good for our mental health
Regular walking improves mood, reduces anxiety, aids sleep and improves self-image. People that stay active have a 30% lower risk of getting depression and a reduced risk of suffering from dementia. Being outdoors also improves mental wellbeing, with research showing that people who spend more time outdoors report that they feel happier.

Walking can help reduce healthcare costs
Physical inactivity currently costs the country £10 billion a year in NHS time, sick days and early death. Regular walking would help slash these costs as well as save lives: if everyone did the recommended amount of physical activity 37,000 deaths could be prevented each year.

Walking supports local economies
Popular walking routes are major assets to the tourist industry. In 2011, the 6 million visitors to the South West Coast Path generated £387 million for the regional economy, supporting over 9,000 jobs. In total in 2012, visitors to England’s outdoors spent £21 billion. Walkers in the English countryside spend over £6 billion a year, supporting up to 245,000 full time jobs.

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Walking is good for the environment

Walking is the most sustainable form of transport. By walking rather than taking the car, people help to relieve pressure on public transport, reduce pollution, prevent traffic jams and tackle climate change.

Walking is a free and inclusive means of transport

For short journeys walking is the most reliable and popular option. In 2011 only 3% of trips were made by bicycle while 23% were on foot.

Walking is good for your neighbourhood

Getting out on foot allows you to have more contact with your neighbours and your local area. Studies have shown that this helps to improve community cohesion and reduce crime and the fear of crime.

By properly investing in the places people walk, encouraging walking and improving access to the outdoors, we can build a healthier, happier Britain. Get walking today!
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