

Kent Ramblers: Proposed Change to the Area Constitution

The Problem

One of the aspirations of Promoting Kent's Named Paths is to install information boards at key points along the routes.

A particularly obvious place to install a board is at the start of each walk. For the Darent Valley Path, this would be at Chipstead where it would replace an existing but utterly decrepit board that could be more than 30 years old. For the Eden Valley Walk it would be at Cernes Farm at the western end of the route. The Tunbridge Wells Circular walk has no defined beginning or end and the most obvious places for boards are at Southborough, Frant and in the car park at Groombridge where there used to be such a Board.

The issue that arises is that while two of the above locations are in Kent, one is in Surrey and two are in East Sussex. Paragraph 3 of our Area Constitution states:

“The territory in which the Area shall function is the County of Kent, the Medway Council Area and London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley or such other area as may be agreed with the General Council from time to time.”

So arguably we do not have the power to spend our money on installing boards outside Kent unless we get the agreement of General Council. But General Council is the Ramblers' national AGM and is no place to consider such parochial matters as Kent's desire to spend a bit of money installing information boards a couple of miles outside its borders and it is unrealistic to expect them to do so.

The Solution

Why our Constitution refers to General Council is none too clear. The model constitution for Areas includes instead the following provision:

“The territory in which the Area shall function is or such other territory as may from time to time be determined by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Area and its neighbours.”

This more sensibly requires matters of territorial function to be referred to the Board of Trustees rather than General Council and we therefore propose that the current paragraph 3 of our constitution be replaced with the following:

“The territory in which the Area shall function is the County of Kent, the Medway Council Area and London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley or such other territory as may from time to time be determined by the Board of Trustees either in consultation with the Area and its neighbours or subject to the condition that Kent Area shall only function in such other territory with the agreement of the neighbouring Area within which it falls.”

This would enable us to ask the Board to make a determination along the following lines:

“Kent Area shall be empowered to include within its functions activity and expenditure on the maintenance and promotion, including waymarking and installation of information boards, of any part of named walking routes that fall wholly or partly within its territory

provided that any activity or expenditure on parts of such routes falling outside its territory have been agreed with the Area(s) within whose territory they do fall.”