Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Lord Benyon
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

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Ms Jane Noble   Our ref: PO2021/16930/SN
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West Sussex PO19 1RH   21 July 2021

Dear Jane,

Thank you for your letter of 21 June to the Secretary of State on behalf of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) about the Public Rights of Way network. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I welcome the information about WSLAF. The Government is a great supporter of the health and wellbeing benefits that access to the countryside can bring. As articulated in the 25 Year Environment Plan, public access to the countryside provides a huge range of benefits, including improving physical and mental health and supporting local communities and economies.

The Government is exploring how to reward provision for public access to and enjoyment of the countryside as a public good through the future environmental land management schemes.

Defra is looking at how these schemes could fund the creation of new paths, such as footpaths and bridleways, which provide access for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists, where appropriate. We are working with stakeholders and end users to determine the specific land management actions that will be paid for under our new schemes.

We are exploring how to reward the provision of beauty, heritage and engagement as a public good through the future environmental land management schemes. For example, the types of activities that may be paid for through the Local Nature Recovery or Landscape Recovery schemes could include rights of way, navigation and recreation infrastructure, education infrastructure, events and services. Over the course of the scheme pilots we will continue to work with land managers to make sure we get the right offer for the schemes.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON LORD BENYON