

1st October 2015

Landscape and Outdoor Recreation Branch
Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group
Welsh Government
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion SY23 3UR

Dear Sir or Madam

Welsh Government Green Paper on improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation

I am writing in response to your consultation on improving opportunities to access the outdoors, in particular questions 11 and 14.

It is encouraging to see the Welsh Government openly considering the benefits of improving access in Wales, and I would urge you to be bold in your ambition and draw on the success of our experience here in Scotland.

As you will know, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, established statutory rights of non-motorised access to most land and inland water in Scotland for passage, recreation, education and commercial activities. Guidance on responsible access and responsible land management with regard to access is given in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, which was approved by the Scottish parliament. Together these provide what is regarded by most outdoor organisations as world class arrangements for public access to both land and water.

These rights have become one of Scotland's unique selling points, and there is a growing body of evidence of the economic benefits outdoor recreation brings to Scotland. It has also been evident that, with better understanding of rights and responsibilities and use of the tools for access management contained within the Act and the Code, the potential conflicts envisaged by objectors to the legislation have largely not materialised. The experience has been overwhelmingly a positive one, in which users and landowners have respected each other and the environment.

Wales is not dissimilar in make up to the central belt of Scotland, where around 70% of the population lives. I believe Wales now has a great opportunity through this consultation to move towards a future where people take full advantage of the potential of the outdoors to improve health, wealth and wellbeing. Ramblers Scotland would be happy to support you in sharing our knowledge to help you move towards this goal.

Yours faithfully

Jess Dolan
Director