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**Countryside  
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for  
West Sussex**

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Our reference: JN/2010.01

**Dave Waterman**  
Recreation & Access  
Defra

18th January 2010

(Sent by e-mail to: Dave.Waterman@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Waterman

**CAFWS Response to the Consultation on The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and structures (gate, gap & stiles) on rights of way – Good practice guidance for local authorities**

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS).

**This letter constitutes formal advice from the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex. Defra is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.**

**Comments**

The Forum welcomed the good practice guidance and generally felt it was a sound document that would be helpful to access practitioners. It welcomed that each route should be looked at individually and consideration for access balanced with the needs of landowners. Beyond this it has no particular comments to make on the document.

However there is concern that highway authorities, particularly in today's economic climate where many budgets are being cut, are stretched to adequately resource initiatives such as investigating and replacing furniture with less restrictive options and would welcome more finance being available for this important initiative. Saying this the Forum is, on the whole, pleased that West Sussex County Council is running a gaps and gates for stiles programme, which is making over 100 structures on rights of way more accessible each year.

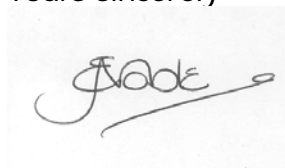
Resources are also required to make information available on which routes are suitable for those with mobility issues - able bodied walkers can grab an OS map with relative confidence that they can use the rights of way shown on it, however those with disabilities often have to rely on others to check routes first or be prepared to be disappointed and turn back when a structure they cannot negotiate is encountered. Publicity budgets are often the first to be cut but information is often the key to enable disadvantaged groups the opportunity to enjoy the countryside.

## About CAFWS

CAFWS, a Local Access Forum, is an independent statutory advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 to give advice on countryside access matters. It has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape). More information about the Forum and its work can be found at [www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws).

Thank you for considering these comments. Please can CAFWS be included in any similar future consultations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Noble', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jane Noble

Forum Officer, Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex  
<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws>

Copy for information to:

Peter Brown – Chairman, CAFWS  
Glynn Jones – Vice-Chairman, CAFWS  
All members of CAFWS  
Cath Hart – Regional LAF co-ordinator  
Craig Bowdery – Secretary to the Forum

Lisa Creaye-Griffin – WSCC Rural Operations Group  
Manager  
Deborah Urquhart – WSCC Cabinet Member for  
Environment & Economy