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If calling ask for

Our reference

Your reference

Fiona MacLeod

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Draft Marine Bill consultation

I am writing on behalf of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS), **an independent statutory advisory body** set up to give access advice to a number of bodies including all levels of government, in response to this consultation. The Forum works closely with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and other local authorities and a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) has been developed by WSCC to pinpoint deficiencies in the present network of public rights of ways (prows) and to prioritise future access.

The Forum has a remit to protect and improve public access to the countryside including the coast and is keen to contribute to this consultation. As a result, the comments attached in Appendix 1 relate only to the Coastal Access Part 9 of the Bill.

CAFWS would like to emphasise the importance of considering the needs of the three main users of public rights of way (prows):

- **Walkers** – the need is to access the countryside and coast, especially using circular routes of various lengths; internal paths need to link up with the wider network of prows and other means of accessing the countryside and coast. Areas for **dog walking** must be accommodated.
- **Cyclists** – using cycle tracks and bridleways – an improved network will contribute to sustainable access to work and school
- **Horse riders** – riding is becoming a more and more important recreational activity around the urban fringe and contributes to the local economy

In addition, attention must be given to recreational access for all types of mobility impaired user groups, and Government initiatives highlighting the benefits of walking for health.

The Forum welcomes the opportunity to review the consultation and has confined its comments to its primary function – to protect and improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside and coast on foot, by cycle and by horse. In accordance with section 94(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Defra is required to have regard to relevant advice from this Forum in carrying out its functions.

The Forum hopes these comments are helpful and looks forward to being involved at all stages of this and future consultations.

Yours sincerely,



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Copy for information to:

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All members of CAFWS

Marine Bill Team (by email)

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