

Secretary to the Forum

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**Countryside
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If calling ask for

Our reference

Your reference

Fiona MacLeod

21st May 2008

Re: High Weald Forest Design Plan – Final Proposals

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 relevant consultations. The Forum is keen to contribute to this process to ensure that proposed changes meet the needs of local people, and that the chance is taken to improve opportunities for countryside access for present and future users.

Before commenting on the final proposals, 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, 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. 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.

CAFWS welcomes the opportunity to comment on this document to protect and improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside areas, including woodland areas, on foot, by cycle and on horseback. The Forestry Commission is required, in accordance with section 94(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Forum in carrying out its functions.

The hope is that Forest Enterprise will work with CAFWS towards achieving the successful completion of projects relating to the land they manage, and which are included in the WSCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Additional comments from the High Weald Sub Forum are shown on the attached Log. I would mention that although this is not a Forum-wide response due to the timing of the consultation, this response has been approved by the Chairman.

In closing, may I emphasise that the Forum is keen to continue to contribute to the Design Plan process at a more detailed level to ensure the needs of all users are met and I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona MacLeod
Secretary
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Copy for information to:

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