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Our reference

Your reference

Fiona MacLeod

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**Mid Sussex District Council Pre Submission Core Strategy**

I am responding to the above consultation 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. The Forum is keen to contribute to the planning 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 document, 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 and has confined its comments to its primary function – to protect and improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside on foot, by cycle and on horseback. Mid Sussex District Council 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.

CAFWS believes that, when rural footpaths are absorbed into a new area of housing development, it is important to aim to retain some of the rural character and link these routes with the adjacent countryside. Existing trees and shrubs should be retained wherever possible and strengthened where necessary. Old field division can be used to align new paths and cycle tracks. Planning guidelines should deter the urbanisation and enclosure of paths, which should be open, attractive to use and safe.

Appendix 1 details comments on the Strategy as a whole and Appendix 2 demonstrates at a lower level how the approach could be adopted in Mid Sussex. I would mention that although this is not a Forum-wide response due to the timing of the consultation, this letter and the Appendices have been approved by the Chairman.

In closing, may I emphasise that the Forum is keen to continue to contribute to the process to ensure the Strategy delivers the needs of all users. We look forward to future similar consultations and hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,



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Copy for information to:

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