

# National Access Forum Written Contributions

**NAFW 80: 4 March 2025**

## Introduction

This note is collated and edited by NRW from submissions from Forum members and NRW staff prior to National Access Forum Meetings to facilitate the sharing of information.

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# British Horse Society

[Helen.donnan@bhs.org.uk](mailto:Helen.donnan@bhs.org.uk)

## The British Horse Society's Equestrian Access Strategy

Our Equestrian Access Strategy aims to enable every horse rider and carriage driver to be able to ride or drive from their stable onto a safe network of off road-paths, and until that time, to be able to access those safely via the road network. Follow the link for more detail.





<https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/yi1kyqr5/2025-bhs-equestrian-access-strategy.pdf>



## Active Travel routes are also equally important for safe passage, for riders.

### Signage

Talks with Road Safety Wales and Active Travel Advisors to WG have acknowledged the importance of the need for equestrians, depending on routes and locations, not to be actively discouraged from using them, particularly if there is not a safer alternative route. The BHS encourages LAs to consider appropriate signage to help prevent unnecessary conflict and to use signs that include the horse.

28	Diagram 955 Route for use by pedal cycles only	
29	Diagram 956 Route for use by pedal cycles and pedestrians only	
30	Diagram 956.1 Route for use by pedal cycles, horses and pedestrians only	
31	Diagram 956.2 Route for use by pedal cycles, horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians only	

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/362/schedule/3> schedule 3 of the Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 2016

## British Horse Society Dead Slow Campaign

How we work to keep Horses and riders Safe.

We would prefer all our routes to be off road but to keep riders safe, the Society, our members and volunteers work with MP's, MS and LA's, the Police, and Road Safety Partnerships to ensure equine safety remains a top priority. Our Safety team hosts and attends events across the UK to raise awareness of the serious issues in respect of riding on the roads faced by equestrians.

Access and Safety track side by side – Equestrians would prefer safer off-road riding, but we do have to navigate busy roads at times to get to the countryside.

The 20mph – **Road Accidents stats Wales website** - They show there were around 100 fewer people killed or seriously injured on roads with 20mph and 30mph road speed limits in the 12-month period after the introduction of the 20mph default speed limit, compared to the same period a year before.

Supported by Road Safety Wales – Highways Teams across Wales, taken from cluster locations on our reporting system app and map.

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/go-riding-and-learn/record-an-incident/incident-report-form/>

This may have an impact on horse riders feeling safer riding out where they have no choice but to use a road to get to safer off-road riding.

National Stats – 2024 – 58 horses have died.

97 injured, 80 people injured, 33% victims of road rage or abuse, 81% drove too close, 81% passed too fast.

## Wales and the Channel Islands

Area	2023		2024	
	Incidents	Horse fatalities	Incidents	Horse fatalities
Anglesey	10	0	6	0
Carmarthenshire	39	0	53	0
Ceredigion	31	0	14	0
Conwy	7	0	11	0
Denbighshire	4	0	3	0
Dyfed	0	0	0	0
Flintshire	13	0	4	0
Gwent	8	0	18	0
Guernsey	0	0	1	0
Gwynedd	24	0	5	0
Mid Glamorgan	17	0	3	0
Monmouthshire	10	0	7	0
Neath Port Talbot	5	0	5	0
Pembrokeshire	35	0	13	0
Powys	24	2	19	0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	28	0	25	0
Vale of Glamorgan	9	0	12	0
South Glamorgan	0	0	2	0
West Glamorgan	19	0	7	0
Wrexham County	20	0	25	0
Jersey	5	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>0</b>

**Digital Health and care Wales -Stats** – Also provide figures of Animal- rider or occupant of animal -drawn vehicle injured in transport accident.2023/24.

Admissions – 137 Male 21, Female 116, Emergency 134, 0-14= 27, 15-59= 87, 60-74=3, Total bed days = 323.

## Six hundred riding routes have been added to OS Maps to help riders find best bridleways nearby.

The British Horse Society has also partnered with OS Maps to add over 600 horse-riding routes on the OS Maps route planner. This has been a great step forward in improving the equestrian community's access to riding routes.

## The Rideathon Challenge is back!

Through the month of May, help save our disappearing off-road routes by pledging to ride, carriage drive, walk or cycle 25km or more!

Together, we will ensure the joy, freedom, and adventure of riding and carriage driving remains.

However, you choose to do it this May, let us save our off-road routes.



[www.bhs.org.uk/support-us/our-campaigns/rideathon/](http://www.bhs.org.uk/support-us/our-campaigns/rideathon/)

## Memorandum of Understanding between the British Horse Society and Sustrans

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/gwkcqdke/bhs-and-sustrans-mou-202408.pdf>

Sustrans and the British Horse Society share many common objectives, and we believe there are significant benefits to both organisations working together. The National Cycle Network often consists of safe traffic-free routes which can also provide safe passage for equestrians and thereby help to reduce the number of riders and horses being killed on our roads. Sustrans are also working to make the on-road Network safer by introducing more formal Quietway's to improve safety for all users.

## Regional Partnership Working with Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru/NRW, British Horse Society/ Cymru, and Affiliated Equestrian Access Group.

Thank you! from all the equestrians in the South-Central area and NRW Senior Management Officer Jonathan Price for meeting Debbie James who is the BHS Volunteer County Access Bridleways Officer for Rhondda Cynon Taf and Secretary for Brynna and Taff Ely Bridleways RCT, for finding a resolution to restricted access. The group is fully insured under the insurance of the BHS and have signed a permit contract for a fee with NRW and have received their allocated keys. Riders became anxious at finding out that the horse stile had been removed and a locked gate put in place due to alleged reports of

antisocial behaviour involving motorised vehicles. The removed stile can be seen discarded at the verge. Responsible user groups can now share the permissive routes.



## Elan Valley Trust

Elan Valley Trust has four key strategic aims - one of which focuses upon facilitating public access to the Elan Estate for physical recreation, health & wellbeing.

We have some initiatives and updates which may be of relevance to share:

Firstly, a new strategic plan (2024-30) which can be found on our website <https://elanvalley.org.uk/about/elan-valley-trust>

### Local provision:

- With the support of HLF funding we have developed an old farmstead into a bunkhouse to provide accommodation - with a specific focus upon those wishing to access the estate for outdoor activities (walking cycling etc)
- Continued provision of two mountain bothies and small scale self-catering accommodation
- Ongoing work to provide access infrastructure - footpaths, creation of cycling trails and promotion of the estate to visitors
- Continued work as an International Dark Sky Park in reviewing and advising on suitable infrastructure to maintain dark skies and monitoring of light pollution

### Education and engagement activities:

- Provision of outreach activities bringing local school children to the estate for a range of activities
- School outreach and engagement as part of the dark skies offer
- Stargazing and photography opportunities
- Provision of volunteer activities to engage in conservation projects e.g. Peat restoration, woodland management, preservation and monitoring of rare species (including Curlew)



## Challenges

- We suffer from damage caused by irresponsible or illegal off-road vehicular access and are trying to find ways of working with stakeholders to address this
- Ongoing challenge of funding to deliver and maintain infrastructure and events
- Balancing the provision of access with our objectives to manage the land in ways that are positive for nature conservation and that take account of the local community and business

## Paddle Cymru

[phil.stone@paddlecymru.org.uk](mailto:phil.stone@paddlecymru.org.uk)

## Change of organisation name

From January 2025 Canoe Wales re-branded as Paddle Cymru. The name change is in line with our direct NGB partners in the home nations. They have become Paddle UK, Paddle Scotland and Paddle Northern Ireland.

## Paddle Cymru Disability Programme

The initiative focuses on promoting inclusivity, well-being, and empowerment in paddlesport for people with disabilities. By making paddlesport accessible, everyone, regardless of ability, can experience its physical and mental health benefits. The project is structured in phases: Phase 1 involves consultation, policy development, and research to establish inclusive practices and assess current barriers. Phase 2 focuses on increasing accessibility through sharing stories, training, and collaborations with clubs, charity and schools. Phase 3 emphasises embedding accessibility within clubs to gain their Disability Sport Wales Insport award, paddle trails that are accessible on the Paddle Cymru website, and community partnerships, and Phase 4 aims to sustain and expand the program by supporting more clubs, hosting disability-focused events, and reaching out to local media to raise awareness and continue fostering inclusivity in paddlesport.

## Alistair Dickson stepping down as CEO

During his time with us, Alistair has played a pivotal role in shaping the future of Paddle Cymru. He successfully guided the organisation through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, implemented improved governance structures, including the development of a sub-committee framework, and built a talented and committed staff team. Under his leadership, we launched our rebranded identity as Paddle Cymru and created the 2024–2028 strategic plan, which sets an inspiring course for the organisation's future.

Alistair's vision, passion and leadership have left an indelible mark on Paddle Cymru. He will be greatly missed by the Board and staff alike, and we thank him for his outstanding contributions to our community.

Jethro Moore has been appointed as Interim CEO of Paddle Cymru for the next three months. With extensive experience in paddlesports and leadership, Jet will play a key role in ensuring stability and progress during this transition.

His expertise and commitment to the paddling community will help drive our mission forward, supporting our members, athletes, and partners across Wales. We look forward to working with Jet during this period.

## Ramblers Cymru

Email: [RamblersCymru@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:RamblersCymru@ramblers.org.uk)

## Step Forward project in North Wales

Ramblers Cymru have secured funding through the Actif North Wales' innovation fund to deliver a 1-year walking programme for young women aged 18-25, focusing on three areas of North Wales: Wrexham, Rhyl and Holyhead.

The *Step Forward Walks for Women* project will be formally launched on 7<sup>th</sup> March. If you'd like to know more, or can help us reach potential participants, please email our new Regional officer: [Olivia.Evans@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Olivia.Evans@ramblers.org.uk)

## Pathways partnership in Carmarthenshire

We have also secured funding to continue our Pathways partnership with Carmarthenshire Council. This project is engaging community volunteers to survey the entire Rights of Way network and has just reached the 500km milestone.

Volunteers are receiving training, including map reading and navigation skills, and the information they gather is helping inform practical improvement work on their local paths.

## Monmouthshire Paths to Community

As part of our Paths to Community project with Monmouthshire County Council, MonLife Countryside Access staff are working alongside Ramblers Cymru community volunteer groups to improve signage and accessibility.

So far they've surveyed over 100km of paths, installing 87 way markers and clearing over 2.5km of vegetation.

## Party conferences

We will be attending the forthcoming Plaid Cymru, Liberal Democrat and Labour conference as part of our manifesto influencing work. We would welcome any opportunities to meet Forum members who may be in attendance to discuss any access-related issues. Please contact [Rebecca.Brough@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:Rebecca.Brough@ramblers.org.uk)



## Funding & Resources

Our Path Accessibility Fund is currently open for applications. This fund aims to improve accessibility of the path network through removal of physical barriers, or surface improvements. Applications can come from individuals or organisations, and further information is available here: <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/what-we-care-about/path-accessibility-fund>

An example of what work is funded, and how the local authority and landowner support was key to its achievement, can be seen in this project in Abergynolwyn: <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/what-we-care-about/path-accessibility-fund-abergynolwyn-gwynedd>

## New Community Development Officer

We have a new role in Wales – Community Development Officer – which oversees and develops our community focused projects. Heather Martin, who was previously our North Wales regional Officer, has been appointed and will be identifying opportunities and partnerships to support our work across Wales.

Following a 9-month period where the post was unfilled, we also have a new Communications Manager. Alice Smith joined us in January and will help us promote our project, advocacy and partnership work.

Please get in touch if you have any opportunities you think may be of joint interest.

## Natural Resources Wales

### Countryside Code

[alison.roberts@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:alison.roberts@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are running a short, targeted campaign under the messaging of the Countryside Code and its supplementary code, the Dog Walking Code to increase awareness of livestock worrying (particularly sheep) amongst the dog walking and dog ownership community. Stakeholders, at an NRW led Countryside Code promotion workshop, last year, identified dogs not being under control near livestock as one of the key challenges they faced. Additionally, feedback from the NAFW has contributed to this campaign.

NRW have contracted a PR agency, Working Word, to deliver the campaign up to end of March 2025, which coincides with much of the lambing season. The campaign has also been developed in partnership with Natural England, as joint owners of the Code, to

ensure wider cross-border reach. In partnership, NRW's own communications are working with Natural England's communications, through DEFRA.

The campaign aims to produce the following outputs:

- Press release - Focussing on sheep worrying by dogs in the countryside and dogs that may have escaped from premises. This was released on 21st February 2025 and has been developed with Natural England/DEFRA with input from the Kennel Club. [Press release link here](#)
- Social media - Working with an illustrator to produce one post per week with a focus on how the public/ dog owners can keep their pets and livestock safe. These will be released across Wales and England carrying responsible messages from the Countryside Code relating to dogs and sheep/livestock.
- A separate e-mail has been circulated to NAFW members outlining the first set of social media posts for information and links to share with their own networks, where possible.
- Social media Influencer - Working Word will be sub-contracting a bilingual social media influencer with an extensive network of followers to deliver the key Countryside Code messages relating to dogs and sheep. This will be shared in the next few weeks.
- Provision of campaign material – packaged material of the above for future Countryside Code work that relates to livestock/sheep worrying. This will be available in the Countryside Code toolkit which partners can access.

All material will be bilingual and carry the branding of the Countryside Code so it can be shared with partners for future use. NRW are asking the NAFW members to note the above and share any content with their wider networks if they are able.

## Wales Coast Path: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Review update

[sioned.humphreys@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:sioned.humphreys@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

## Coastal Change captured using Citizen Science

60 coast snap cradles have now been installed across the coast of Wales in areas where there is significant coastal change. The signs and mobile phone cradles encourage walkers to take and submit pictures of the coast to help the Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre to track these changes to the coast due to erosion and sea level change. The programme was launched 3 years ago and since then 5000 images have been submitted by those walking the path. The images are collated into time lapses and provide a essential insight to the rate of erosion and coastal change. Further information, time lapses and background information can be found by visiting [Coastsnap | Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre](#)



(Images of newly installed sites – Newborough, Anglesey & Traeth Penllech, Gwynedd)

## Business have their say

1000 businesses located close to the Wales Coast Path and National Trails in Wales (Offa's Dyke Path, Glyndwr's way and Pembrokeshire Coast Path) have recently taken part in a comprehensive survey - the first for over a decade. DJS research were commissioned to undertake the work on behalf of NRW and the results have provided an insight into the range of businesses that operate along the coast. Operators were asked a series of questions including the importance of the paths to their businesses, their views about the paths and the reports have provided a series of recommendations for future activity. A webinar for those who manage and promote the paths will be held in early March to share the findings and discuss future engagement with businesses.



## A new view of our paths

Work is being undertaken to capture the Wales Coast Path on Google Street View. Wales Coast Path and Local Authority officers are working in partnership to film the path using 360 cameras. The footage is proving to have a variety of uses including for those planning their route, for accessibility - helping people to make decisions on whether they are able to walk specific sections of the route and also for a variety of internal uses including planning, commissioning maintenance and improvements. The insight provided by the Google platform confirms that this resource is well used by the public with some sections gaining 45,000 views in a matter of months. Planning is underway to capture the remaining sections of the Wales Coast Path during the next year.



## National Forest for Wales update

[nationalforestwalesstatus@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:nationalforestwalesstatus@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

In 2024, 40 new woodlands were welcomed into the National Forest for Wales. The network continues to grow, with new sites recommended on a quarterly basis. It currently consists of 55 woodlands covering over 3600 hectares, with sites located across the whole of Wales. Woodlands are diverse in age, size and setting and woodland managers include private owners, charities, community groups, local authorities, and environmental non-government organisations. The National Forest network also includes 26 Welsh Government Woodland Estate blocks managed by NRW. In total, the current National Forest area covers 68,675 hectares.

National Forest for Wales liaison officers based within Natural Resources Wales facilitate and enable woodland owners with their ambitions to create and enhance woodlands and develop the National Forest for Wales network. This has been key to success to date, with opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practice through in person visits and online webinars. The team is also working with Visit Wales to produce a series of videos which highlight the variety of woodland sites and raise awareness of the National Forest for Wales network. These videos will be launched in 2025.

We are evaluating the feasibility of moving towards a landscape approach with focussed work in the Mawddach catchment with the Eryri Rainforest Partnership, with pilots being funded through WG and delivered through Local Nature Partnerships. A more strategic approach to delivery will help lay the foundations for a National Forest trail, connecting the National Forest for Wales network across the length and breadth of Wales.

We are also working with Forest Research to develop a National Research Forest for Wales, promoting collaborative tree-based research, and enabling National Forest woodland owners and researchers to work together.



# Wales Natural Beauty and Landscape Mapping

An integrated mapping tool for strategic landscape planning

[olwen.maidment@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:olwen.maidment@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

The mapping is due to be completed and published in 2025.

This will be followed by an analysis stage, including identification of areas to focus detailed assessment and examining the links between natural beauty and biodiversity, resilience to climate change and well-being.

The Wales Integrated Natural Beauty mapping forms part of NRW's Designated Landscape programme, which is grant funded by the Welsh Government. The natural beauty mapping project arose out of a need for a consistent applicable methodology and evidence base to inform future landscape designations and management across Wales.

The mapping is a tool to support national landscape analysis and strategic decision making. It provides an evidence base to inform future decisions for our landscapes by NRW, WG and our partners, including potential future designations (statutory and non-statutory). It is not for decisions at a local or site scale but can inform areas that may require local and site-specific management.

The mapping uses the recognised natural beauty criteria set out in NRW's Procedural Guidance 2022 to map natural beauty. Additional datasets are included to inform biodiversity, resilience to climate change and well-being in a landscape context. The mapping has been carried out with extensive consultation and an iterative process of testing with stakeholders within NRW and externally.

The mapping provides:

- Mapping of natural beauty across Wales
- Mapping showing biodiversity, resilience to climate change and well-being in a landscape context to inform analysis
- Ability to interrogate how criteria and datasets have informed the four themes

Potential uses:

- Identify areas to focus detailed assessment for future landscape designations
- Identify other areas for landscape conservation and enhancement such as regional parks or landscape partnerships
- Inform Future Wales & Regional Plans, including Strategic Development Plans
- Inform Area Statement work and State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR)
- Inform land use planning & Sustainable Farming Scheme
- Strategic framework for identification of OECSs
- Discussion may identify other potential uses

# Welsh Government: Designated Landscapes & Countryside Access Branch (DLCA)

[accessandrecreationmynediadahamdden@gov.wales](mailto:accessandrecreationmynediadahamdden@gov.wales)

## Access Reform

### Digital Map Project

21 Local Authorities (LA) have shared their Public Rights of Way (PRoW) datasets with DataMapWales (DMW) so far. DMW have made significant progress drafting a working copy of a digital map of the PRoW in Wales. Over 70 local authority and national park authority staff attended events on 29 January and 12 February where the project's aims and potential was more fully explained. DMW demonstrated some of the ways the working copy of the PRoW digital map can be used and highlighted its future potential. The next step is to process the information and feedback that was received across the 2 events, before deciding the best way to proceed over the short and long term, and setting out the project's next steps. We anticipate we'll be ready to engage more widely in the early Autumn.

### 2026

The draft Legislation (Procedure, Publication and Repeals) (Wales) Bill initially included provisions to repeal sections 53 to 56 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This was removed when the UK Government announced a change of its position and commenced sections 53 to 56 of the 2000 Act in relation to England (extending the cut-off date from 2026 to 2031).

In December, the UK Government announced it would be repealing the cut-off date.

The Welsh Government continues to support the repeal of sections 53 to 56 and is considering their inclusion within the Legislation (Procedure, Publication and Repeals) (Wales) Bill. To note that the legislation relating to the 2026 deadline has never been commenced in Wales, so this deadline is not in force at the present time. Repealing sections 53 to 56 is seeking preventing the introduction/commencement of this deadline at a future date.

### Open Access Mapping Review

NRW has requested that Welsh Government use the powers provided by section 10 (3) of Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 to set a new date of 2034 (from 2029) for completion of the next review of open access mapping. NRW is seeking an extension as this would allow time for WG to make the change from a periodic review under CRoW



to one of continual review. The request to extend the review is currently being considered by Welsh Ministers.

## Access Improvement Grant (AIG)

The Access Improvement Grant will continue for 2025-2027. A £2m budget will be available for 2025-2026 (2026-2027 budget to be confirmed)

Funding to LAs is expected to be used for the following:

- Removing barriers e.g. removing stiles, replacing stiles with gates
- Climate change resilience e.g. repairs following storm damage, upgrading furniture/infrastructure
- Create or improve more doorstep opportunities or in areas of multiple deprivation
- Improvements to information e.g. waymarking, promotion, filming of routes
- Create or improve opportunities for recreation outside of the footpath network e.g. increase or improve opportunities for cycling, horse riding, water related recreation.

Authorities will be expected to have a published ROWIP, Local Access Forum and participate in the WG digital map project.

END