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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-717
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/06408/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
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19 October 2016

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 5 October, regarding the petition to establish statutory public access to land and water – ref: P-05-717.

This latest petition is very similar to one submitted by Canoe Wales (then the Welsh Canoeing Association) in 2009. Then the Committee recommended "a further more wide ranging inquiry be carried out with a view to bringing forward legislation in this area, which would give all stakeholders the opportunity to submit evidence". The matter then went for consideration by the Sustainability Committee. The Welsh Government has to date followed the recommendations put forward by the latter Committee, including supporting the use of access agreements on inland waters through the Splash funding scheme between 2009 - 2014.

In 2014 the Welsh Government commenced a broad based review of the legislative framework for access and outdoor recreation. This included a series of stakeholder seminars leading to the 2015 consultation on Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation.

The consultation paper examined the current legislative framework for access to the outdoors and encouraged discussion on a sliding scale of potential options, including making improvements and removing some of the restrictions in place under current access legislation, extending the definition of access land to include other areas, and implementing an entirely new legislative framework to allow for responsible recreation similar to the system referred to in the petition. The consultation received almost 5800 responses most of which were of the view that the current system is too complex and burdensome.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I agree with the petitioners, we should continue to promote Wales as a welcoming destination for those wanting to participate in recreation, tourism and adventurous activity. There are also significant health and well-being benefits from people participating in outdoor recreation activity or utilising the available access for active travel.

It is clear, from the work done to date and the continuing interest from groups such as Waters of Wales, people are very passionate about the benefits of outdoor recreation and are sensitive to the potential impact on land management and existing users. Careful consideration is, therefore, needed of the many issues raised in the consultation. I remain keen to increase the opportunities available for access to the outdoors and intend to undertake further work to develop proposals which could better support access to the outdoors in Wales.

I intend to set out the scope and timetable for developing reform proposals early next year.

Regards



Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
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Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs