

APPENDIX 1

Government response to the petition:

“Extend the 2026 deadline for the recording of historic footpaths & bridleways.”

We are committed to protecting rights of way. The cut-off date is currently 2026 and could be extended by regulations for up to five years. We are discussing a potential extension with stakeholders.

The Government supports access to the countryside and the benefits this can bring. We are committed to protecting, enhancing and increasing our green and blue spaces, including our network of public rights of way, which are a vital part of our national heritage.

We intend to pass legislation this year to streamline the processes for recording and changing rights of way. This will make it easier and quicker for local authorities to process applications and add rights of way onto the definitive maps, protecting them for the future. As part of this we will bring into force the cut-off date which is the deadline for registering historic rights of way. This will provide certainty about where rights of way exist.

The cut-off date is currently 2026 and could be extended by regulations for a maximum of five years. There are different views on a possible extension, and we are considering this option. An earlier cut-off date will provide certainty about where rights of way exist for users and landowners, as soon as possible. A later cut-off date would allow more time for unrecorded rights of way to be recorded. We are working closely with stakeholders to understand these different views and will take them into account when reaching a decision.

The Government is also supporting and enhancing access to the countryside in other ways. We are working to complete the 2,700 mile England Coast Path that, when completed, will be the longest waymarked and maintained coastal walking route in the world. There will also be new public rights of access to areas of coastal land such as beaches, cliffs and foreshore, in many places for the first time.

We continue to support our network of National Trails and we intend to create a new National Trail across the north of England. We are also looking at how the Environmental Land Management scheme could fund improvements to access, including the creation of new paths.

Our 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to connect more people from all backgrounds with the natural environment for their health and wellbeing. We are committed to supporting people to access and enjoy outdoor spaces.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs