



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

*Department for Levelling up, Housing and
Communities*

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Dear Richard

Thank you for your letter of 18 October 2021 to the Right Honourable Michael Gove MP, regarding the 2026 cut-off date introduced by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 and Definitive Map Modification Orders and schedule 14 directions determined by the Planning Inspectorate. As my team deal with opposed orders and schedule 14 appeals and directions your letter has been passed to me for reply.

The Planning Inspectorate determines public rights of way orders, schedule 14 appeals and requests for directions under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 on behalf of the Department of Environment Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra). Whilst I can appreciate why you have requested that the cut-off date be extended, this is not within the remit of the Department of levelling Up, Housing and Communities and you should put your request to Defra. The contact details for Defra can be found here;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>

I am sorry there has been a delay in processing and determining the order and schedule 14 direction you refer to. As a result of the national restrictions during the past 18 months to control the pandemic we have been able to process and decide fewer orders and schedule 14 direction cases. We now have more cases waiting for a decision than before the pandemic and recognise that some customers are waiting longer for their decision than we would like. We have put measures in place to deal with the current delays and we are working hard to decide more cases and reduce the length of time it takes to make decisions.

We keep the number of orders and schedule 14 cases we receive under review and liaise with Defra over expected forecasts, so we can try and ensure resources are in place to process cases within target. We have recently trained more Inspectors to undertake Definitive Map Modification Orders and schedule 14 appeals and directions and are hoping to undertake a recruitment of Inspectors who will specialise in this area of casework in the spring.

We are therefore hopeful that we will have cleared most of the backlog by early summer and be in a good position to deal with any orders and schedule 14

appeals & directions we receive as a result of the pending 2026 cut-off date in line with our targets.

Yours sincerely

Annie J Owen

Annie J Owen
Operations Team Leader Defra Team