Dear *(type your MP’s name here),*

I am writing to you to comment on the ELMS proposals regarding access, particularly for horse riders and other users of the countryside. It is important that the new Environment Act makes access permanent and inclusive.

In the past previous schemes financed 58,000 miles of permissive access, but with funding ceasing in 2010, many of these routes disappeared, along with any businesses that depended on them. In addition some existing routes which are actively being used could also disappear under the 1st January 2026 cut-off date for claiming historic bridleways.

We need strategic access: routes that help people avoid busy roads or having to cross them; create circuits and make community links. A network of quiet lanes and multi-user off-road routes underpins the rural economy and helps landowners diversify.

As Lord Benyon stated in a letter to James Heapey MP, ‘*Public access is a key way that people can engage with the environment. Supporting access is therefore an important aspect of achieving this goal.’* He also stated that ‘*We are looking at how the future schemes could fund the creation of new paths, such as bridleways, which provide access for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians’.*

Surely making such schemes permissive would negate the cost effectiveness of them? So why not make access routes permanent automatically?

In addition, in the Agricultural Act access is defined as a ‘public good’. The Environment Bill includes access under ‘beauty and engagement’. Bridleways and byways, along with footpaths encourage biodiversity and connectivity for nature through hedge planting and green routes. For people, they help improve the mental health of those using the countryside as well as enabling physical wellbeing through exercise. It can aid local ’slow’ travel and connect local communities.

All this provides opportunities for development of local businesses and enables people to enjoy the beauty of the countryside in a wide variety of ways, all in support of the rural economy, building on permanent natural biodiversity.

For all these reasons my plea is for access routes to be made a permanent feature of our countryside and not simply permissive paths that appear today and may be gone tomorrow.

Yours sincerely

*(add your name, email address and full postal address here)*