



December 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about improving access to the countryside.

Let me start by assuring you that I am enthusiastic about promoting recreation in the countryside and I understand the benefits outdoor activities can produce both physically and mentally. Our countryside is of great importance, and it cannot be understated just how much the scenery means to people.

Ministers are continuing to support and enhance access to the countryside. This includes completing the England Coast Path, supporting the network of National Trails, ensuring that rights of way are recorded and protected, as well as developing ways to support access through financial provisions in the Agriculture Act for environmental land management. I am encouraged that the new schemes will make a significant contribution to the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan, including beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment.

I believe that public access is a key way for people to engage with the environment and so supporting greater access is an important aspect of achieving this goal.

Further, I know that my ministerial colleagues are looking at ways in which the UK's new agri-environment schemes could fund the creation of new paths, such as footpaths and bridleways, providing greater and safe access for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians. I know that they are working in close collaboration with interested parties to explore the best ways of making further enhancements to our wonderful access network.

I believe that everyone, including people with disabilities and limited mobility, should be able to access and enjoy the countryside. Local authorities are required to keep a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and are expected to improve access for a range of users where possible. This could include replacing stiles with gaps or gates. The Agriculture Act also gives the Government the power to provide financial assistance to support public access to the countryside. I would encourage you to contact your local council for further information on access to the countryside for disabled users in our area.

The Agriculture Act is one of the most important environmental reforms for many years and sets out powers to reward farmers and land managers who protect our environment, including providing access to the countryside. This could also include the creation of new paths, such as footpaths and bridleways, so that not as many horses have to use the roads. I am encouraged that throughout the process of designing our future agriculture policy ministers have consulted widely with farmers and others, and I hope that you were able to participate in this exercise and make your views heard.

Finally, ministers have now published the England Trees Action Plan, which sets the UK on the path to at least 12% woodland cover by the middle of the century. I know that over £500 million



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of the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund is dedicated to trees and ministers aim to treble woodland creation rates and plant 30,000 hectares of trees per year by the end of this Parliament.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**