OUTDOORS
FOR ALL

Outdoors For All

is supported by the following organisations:

Bat Conservation Trust
BHPA
BMC
British Canoeing
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The British Horse Society
British Orienteering
Campaign for National Parks
The Camping and Caravanning Club – The Friendly Club
Canal & River Trust – Making life better by water
CPRE – The countryside charity
we are cycling UK
disabled ramblers
Endurance GB
Friends of the Earth
froglife – leaping forward for reptiles & amphibians
Great Britain Outrigger
Hayfield Kinder Trespass Group
Mountain Training England
Mountain Training Cymru
National Trails UK
National Trust
Open Spaces Society
oia – outdoor industries association
The Outdoor Swimming Society
Plantlife
people's trust for endangered species
Ramblers
Right to Roam Campaign
Running Industry Alliance
RYA
Sport+ Recreation Alliance
sustrans – Join the movement
Swim England
The Wildlife Trusts
TRF – Trail Riders Fellowship

OUTDOORS FOR ALL

Access to nature and the outdoors is good for our minds and bodies. It makes sense for our economy, prosperity and the future of our natural environment.

We are proud of our rich and varied landscapes - from rivers, canals and lakes, to mountains, crags, coastlines and urban green and blue spaces. Every day, people across the country are walking, wheeling, horse-riding, swimming, paddling, boating, camping, cycling, flying, climbing or simply relaxing in these spaces. People from the most remote parts to the hearts of our cities get so much from being in our great outdoors.

However, research tells us that the UK ranks lowest of 14 European nations on nature connectedness. It also ranks 11th out of 15 European nations on levels of physical activity. It is no coincidence that those nations that rank higher than the UK have far more freedom to enjoy their outdoor spaces. The government has set its sights on getting 3.5m more people active by 2030, through its Sporting Future Strategy. It has also committed to

giving the public access to green and blue spaces within a 15-minute walk of home, through its Environmental Improvement Plan. The most cost-effective means of realising both of these targets is through an expansion of our rights of access to the outdoors.

Current access to green and blue spaces is distributed unevenly.

Less than 4% of rivers in England have an uncontested public right of access. Our path network is frequently inaccessible and 19.6m people do not live within a 15-minute walk of green and blue spaces. The land which gives us our current and limited right to roam covers just 8% of England. This right extends only to pedestrians and excludes others such as equestrians, paddlers and cyclists.

Physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and is estimated to cost the country £7.4bn per year. Obesity is estimated to cost the UK economy £58bn a year. The cost to the UK economy of poor mental health has been estimated to be in the range of £53-56bn. Our population is 20% less active than in the 1960s and is forecast to be 30% less active by 2030. Good access to green and blue spaces would bring more opportunities to be active and help reduce pressure on the NHS. This could save an astonishing £2.1bn in health spending every year.

Policies that enable people to be active, lead healthy lifestyles and support mental and physical wellbeing are often the same policies that help promote a sustainable economy, build stronger communities and protect our environment.

New rights of access must provide a duty to behave responsibly and respect to those who live and work in rural communities. It is vital to balance public enjoyment with protection of the natural world. Where there is clear evidence that conservation and enjoyment of the outdoors cannot be reconciled, the long established 'Sandford Principle' should be followed. This would ensure that greater weight was given to nature.

UK ranks lowest of 14
European nations on nature connectedness

UK ranks **11th** / **out of 15**
European nations on levels of physical activity

Physical inactivity is associated with **1 in 6**
deaths in the UK

Physical inactivity is estimated to cost the country **£7.4bn**
(including £0.9bn to the NHS) **annually**

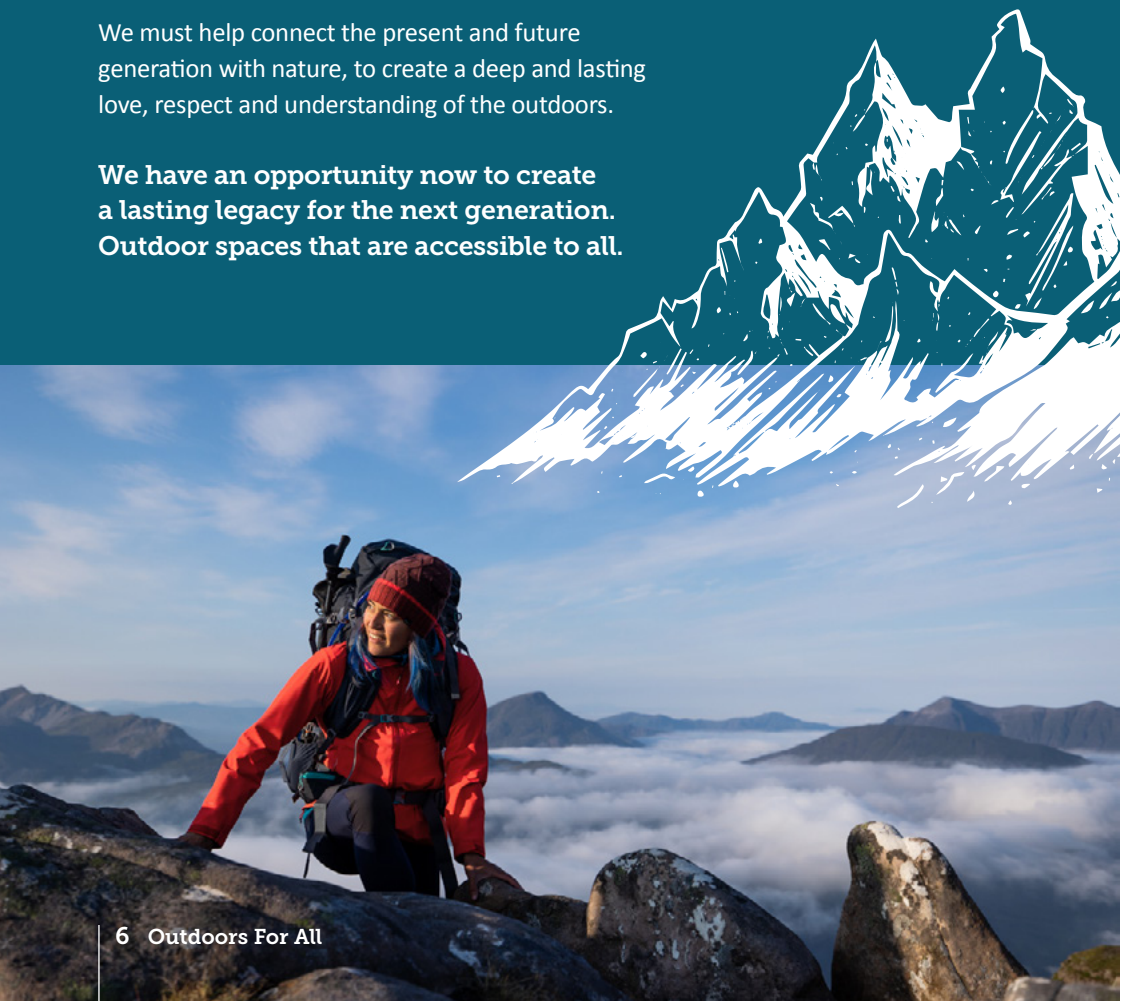
Our population is **20%**
less active than in the 1960s... and is forecast to be 30% less active by 2030

Good access to green and blue spaces could save **£2.1bn**
in health spending every year.

PEOPLE CARE FOR WHAT THEY LOVE, BUT THEY ONLY LOVE WHAT THEY KNOW

We must help connect the present and future generation with nature, to create a deep and lasting love, respect and understanding of the outdoors.

We have an opportunity now to create a lasting legacy for the next generation. Outdoor spaces that are accessible to all.



OUR VISION

... a natural health service that is free and available for all:

1 MORE PEOPLE, MORE ACTIVE, MORE OFTEN

Outdoor spaces in the countryside and in our towns and cities that are welcoming, accessible and in good condition. Spaces that can be enjoyed responsibly by everyone, supported by a culture which addresses barriers to access for all.

2 NATURE-RICH SPACES THAT EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, CAN ACCESS

Outdoor spaces that are healthy and rich in native wildlife. Stakeholders respecting each other's rights and working together to recover and enhance the natural world.

3 A COMMITMENT TO RESPECT, PROTECT AND ENJOY OUR SPECIAL SPACES

Visitors, communities and custodians of our landscapes united by a shared responsibility to respect, protect and enjoy our precious surroundings. This should be deeply embedded within our culture from an early age.

To achieve this vision, the next government needs to take a long-term approach, committed to addressing deep inequalities in public access and outdoor recreation. They also need to support improved educational provision to enhance people's knowledge of how to access the countryside responsibly.

Central to delivering a more expansive and inclusive outdoors is new access legislation.

ACCESS TO NATURE PRIORITIES:

New legislation is required to deliver the government's commitment to ensure everyone lives within a 15-minute walk of an accessible green or blue space.

It's also needed to expand the freedom to roam, to help protect and improve the existing paths and access network, and to establish sound frameworks to support public access and outdoor recreation in the long-term.

A new bill will create opportunities for more people to enjoy more land and water for activities such as cycling, walking, wheeling, climbing, horse riding, wheeling, caving, swimming, flying and paddling. Crucially it will enable everyone throughout their lives, regardless of personal circumstances, to live well through better access to the outdoors.

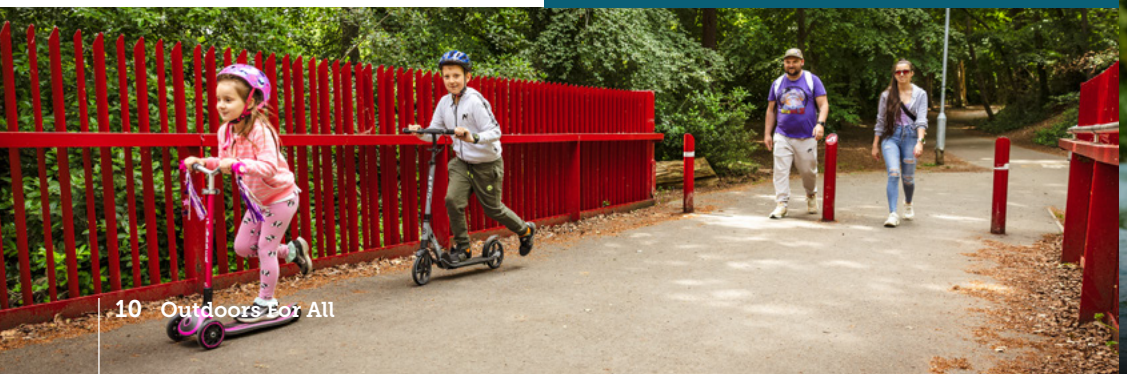
We are calling on a future government to ensure there are provisions to:

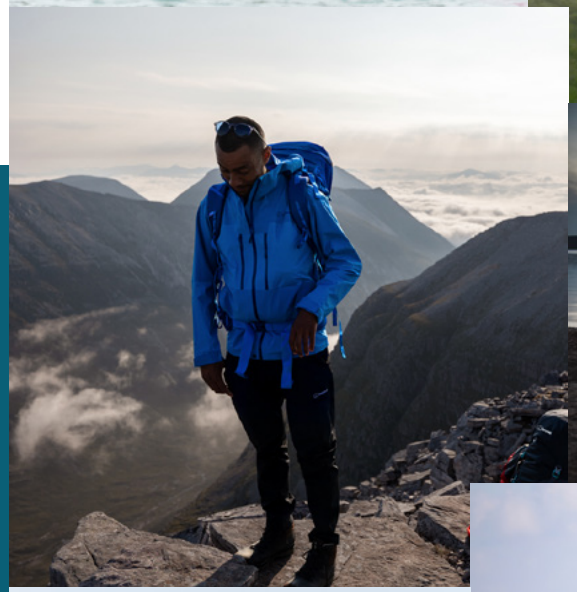
- Extend public open access rights to more landscapes. These include waterways, woodland, riversides, and downland, creating more areas for us to enjoy land, water and air, with many more and better connected spaces close to where people live.
- Repeal the cut-off date for registering historic rights of way.
- Amend the Environment Act 2021 to require, not just enable, public access targets and for Environmental Improvement Plans to set out a clear strategy for improving access to nature.
- Public access options to be embedded in the Environmental Land Management Scheme, supporting farmers and landowners to create more opportunities for people to access the outdoors.
- Establish an Access to Nature Investment Strategy to target resources to both rural and urban areas. This could provide additional funding for local authorities, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Navigation Authorities and National Trails to maintain, enhance, and extend new and existing access opportunities.
- Make the 15-minute to nature commitment a legally binding target, based on Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards.

- Strengthen the purposes and duties of protected landscapes to enable them to deliver more on nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Maintain investment in promotion of the Countryside Code, ensuring environmental responsibility and good practice for both recreational users and land managers is widely promoted.
- Ensure that all children are given the opportunity to spend regular and extended periods of time in nature, at school and at each stage of their education, giving every child an equal right to participate in outdoor activity.
- Embed understanding of nature, and essential outdoor life skills such as risk-benefit assessment, self-sufficiency, navigation, and swimming, in early year learning and throughout schooling.
- Ensure that spending on active and sustainable travel includes schemes that enable people to access the natural environment without having to use a car.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, it demonstrates that there are tangible measures to help maximise and strengthen policies on outdoor recreation for everyone alongside nature recovery.

A new access bill would ensure this was prioritised and delivered. Within the first 100 days of a new government, Defra, as the lead department for public access, must commence the necessary policy development and stakeholder engagement to pass a bill (the first for a generation) before the end of the next parliament.





4%

Less than 4% of rivers in England have a public right of access.

8%

Our current 'right to roam' gives us access to just 8% of England

19.6m

19.6m people do not live within a 15-minute walk of green and blue spaces.

1 in 6

Physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK