

## **Summary of OpenMTB joint response to Welsh access green paper.**

OpenMTB and its partners, British Cycling, Welsh Cycling and CTC - the national cycling charity, would like to praise the Welsh Government for providing an opportunity to debate the future of countryside access.

We fully support the Welsh Government's headline proposal to modernise access provisions by introducing a right of responsible access right to all land (with obvious exclusions such as the curtilage of buildings, structures, military training areas etc.) We feel that we can best point to the successful introduction in Scotland of similar rights under the Land Reform Act as showing that such a right both can and will work in Wales, and that those isolated problems that are encountered can be successfully managed.

The consultation also asks for discussion of more moderate changes that could bring about increases in access. To this end we have called for a consolidation of existing rights of way classes under a common sense test of reasonable and responsible use. We also believe there is an unassailable argument for extending cycle and horse access to existing tracks across open access and publicly owned land. It makes no sense that a stone track, built over open access land with public funds, where walkers are allowed to roam freely, should remain off limits to cyclists for no justifiable reason.

Finally, the consultation asks for suggestions on interim steps that could be taken to improve the working of current legislation, and to reduce the administrative burden placed on all parties by rules that predate the existence of mountain biking as a recreational pastime. To this end we have proposed a number of reforms. These include allowing local authorities to permit minor diversions around farmyards without an expensive definitive map modification process, together with amendments to the Cycle Tracks Act and the rules governing events on public rights of way. We have also put forward more practical proposals to increase access for cyclists that could be achieved immediately through simple changes in existing policies, without need for legislative change.

We believe that overall, the Welsh Government's proposals could yield significant economic, social, transport, recreational and health benefits for both residents and visitors. With the outdoor activity sector already contributing 10% of the Welsh tourist economy we are in favour of any steps which would further deliver much needed income and employment to rural areas.