



## National Development Framework: response from Ramblers Cymru

Ramblers Cymru are working to create a Wales where everyone can enjoy walking in the great outdoors and the many health and social benefits it brings. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft National Development Framework and wish to draw attention to the following issues:

- The Framework gives no recognition of the existence of the Public Rights of Way network or open access/common land.

These are existing, strategic assets with an important role in achieving national objectives relating to place making, green infrastructure, healthy communities, heritage and tourism.

The rights of way network and should be recognised, resourced and enhanced as part of creating the healthier, fairer Wales we all wish to see.

- Outcome no.1 refers to 'inclusive and healthy places'. To achieve this, there must be recognition that public rights of way are an enabler of the most inclusive, accessible, health-enhancing physical activity - walking.

The rights of way network across Wales provides the

connectivity to open access land, commons and green spaces – all of which are key to good place making and quality of life. It should be recognised in the National Development Framework as integral to development decisions; and in communities as an asset to be celebrated.

- In relation to economic development the value of walking tourism should not be overlooked. The rights of way network, national trails and promoted routes are strategic assets – all of which could be adversely affected if inappropriate development take place.

This is particularly true in relation to the Framework's approach to renewable energy developments. Great care must be taken not to damage the landscape qualities that bring so many people to Wales.

The proposed presumption in favour of development, is of concern as it covers such vast areas of Wales. Related to this, we urge Welsh Government to give careful consideration to the concerns of the Open Spaces Society in relation to Developments of National Significance and the potential for local decision making to be undermined.

- The document states that 'sustainably planned places reduce the need to travel by car' but the focus is only on active travel, not recreation. Enabling local recreation and should be key too, as this strengthens peoples' sense of place. Well maintained rights of way and their ability to link people to their surrounding green spaces will also reduce the need to travel by car, as people can spend their leisure time close to home.
- The document also refers to strategic green infrastructure in and around urban areas, and again make no mention of the existing paths network. Similarly, the National Forest section only references potential links to active travel networks, overlooking the more recreational rights of way network and its importance to local wellbeing and tourism.

Our path network is something to be treasured and we want everyone to recognise the value that it brings in connecting people to the places around them.

By joining up communities, connecting people to their local landscapes, unveiling new places to discover and continuing to maintain our network of paths, we can make Wales the best walking country in the world. Not just for us, but for future generations to come.

Through this National Development Framework Welsh Government has an opportunity to enshrine its commitment to this important asset and make rights of way as important to the future of Wales as they have been to our past.