

**WEDNESDAY, 23 AUGUST 2017**  
**For immediate release**

**“Forward thinking Wales on way to making history” says cycling charity**

**Cycling UK calls on public to endorse Welsh proposals to increase cycling access**

Cycling UK and OpenMTB today (Wednesday, 23 August) backed Welsh Government proposals to open up most footpaths in Wales to cycling and horse riding and have called on the wider public to show their support similarly via the Trails for Wales campaign.

Currently, cycling and horse riding are only permitted on 21% of the entire rights of way network in Wales. This prevents people using tracks and trails which are eminently suitable for cycling, whilst allowing them to cycle on muddy bridleways a 4x4 would struggle to cope with.

The Welsh Government’s consultation, "Taking forward Wales’ sustainable management of natural resources”, proposes changes to the legislation to allow cycling and horse riding on footpaths where suitable, a move welcomed by Cycling UK and OpenMTB in their consultation response.

In 2015, through their joint campaign, Trails for Wales, Cycling UK and OpenMTB made this recommendation to the Welsh Government. The campaign was backed by over 4000 members of the public and highlighted the health, social and economic benefits of a similar policy move in Scotland, where a Transform Scotland report estimated the economic benefits of off-road and leisure cycling at between £236.2m and £358m per year.

Cycling UK, via their Rides of Way report published in February this year, found that one-third of cyclists ride regularly on trails whose status they do not know. This suggests the current rights of way network is confusing and needs simplifying, a move backed by the Welsh Government in their consultation. The report was based on the views gathered from over 11,000 off-road cyclists, and also found a further 74% of them consider the current rights of way network unsuitable.

With the prospect of meaningful change coming from the Government, Cycling UK is urging as many people who enjoy cycling off-road, whether it be for family rides or mountain biking, to take action and support the creation of Trails for Wales at [www.cyclinguk.org/trails-for-wales](http://www.cyclinguk.org/trails-for-wales)

Duncan Dollimore, Cycling UK’s Head of Advocacy and Campaigns, said:

“The Welsh Government is rightly looking for opportunities to manage its wide range of wonderful natural resources, recognising in their consultation the uncertainties that may come with Brexit. These proposals will help more people enjoy the outdoors, while also benefiting the rural economy - their forward thinking is on way to making history.

“Wales is a world class destination for cycling in all its forms, whether you’re looking for a gentle family wander or heading to one of the many trail centres for an off-road

adventure. Opening up suitable footpaths to more cycling will only increase the appeal for more people to come and visit Wales for a great cycling experience.

“The Welsh Government wants cyclists input, wherever they live – not just Wales. We had a fantastic response rate for our campaign Trails for Wales in 2015, so if you support greater opportunities to cycle off-road then head to [www.cyclinguk.org/trails-for-wales](http://www.cyclinguk.org/trails-for-wales)”

Stace King, OpenMTB spokesperson said:

“It is fantastic to see the Welsh Government respond so positively to the Trails for Wales campaign, producing a genuinely forward-looking set of proposals.

“The current access system in England and Wales simply does not work, but real change is within reach in Wales and we strongly encourage riders to help us and Cycling UK secure better access now and for future generations.”

Cycling UK is part of Outdoor Access Wales, a coalition of organisations supporting improved access to the Welsh outdoors for non-motorised recreation in order to make Wales a world class destination for active pursuits.

**ENDS**

For more information contact the national Cycling UK Press Office on 01483 238 315, 07786 320 713 or email [publicity@cyclinguk.org](mailto:publicity@cyclinguk.org)

**Notes to editors:**

1. To take action in support of Trails for Wales, go to:  
<https://action.cyclinguk.org/page/13078/action/1?ea.tracking.id=PR>
2. Cycling UK, the national cycling charity, inspires and helps people to cycle and keep cycling, whatever kind of cycling they do or would like to do. Over a century’s experience tells us that cycling is more than useful transport; it makes you feel good, gives you a sense of freedom and creates a better environment for everyone.  
[www.cyclinguk.org](http://www.cyclinguk.org)
3. OpenMTB is a network of representatives from mountain biking groups across England and Wales – including advocates, volunteer trail builders, guides, writers and more. [www.openmtb.org.uk](http://www.openmtb.org.uk)
4. Cycling UK’s consultation response is dedicated to the late Mike Hall, who supported the original Trails for Wales campaign saying, “Bikes are brilliant, and the countryside is for everyone.” The Executive Summary and consultation response are available for download at: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/blog/mark-slater/trails-wales>
5. “Taking forward Wales’ sustainable management of natural resources” is available for download at:  
<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/taking-forward-wales-sustainable-management-natural-resources> (see Chapter 4)
6. Cycling UK campaigned for increased access in Wales with its Trails for Wales campaign in 2015, [www.cyclinguk.org/campaign/trails-wales](http://www.cyclinguk.org/campaign/trails-wales) following the

Welsh Government consultation: 'Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation'

<http://gov.wales/consultations/environmentandcountryside/improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors/?lang=en>. The Green Paper received 5,796 total responses, with over 4,000 responses backing Cycling UK's calls for adoption of Scottish-style access laws.

7. Cycling UK's Rides of Way survey, infographic and tables are available for download at: [www.bit.ly/cyclinguk-ridesofway](http://www.bit.ly/cyclinguk-ridesofway)
8. Cycling UK has a long-established history of facilitating better access to the countryside. In 1968 Cycling UK secured access for cycles to use bridleways. The organisation later fought successfully for a presumed access policy in the Scottish Land Reform Act (2003), and ensured that the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) included provision for restricted byways rights to be claimed on the basis of past cycle use.
9. Outdoor Access Wales is an alliance formed of Cycling UK, OpenMTB, the British Horse Society, Ramblers Cymru, BMC, Waters Wales, Disabled Ramblers, Cambrian Caving Council and Open Spaces Society. [www.outdooraccesswales.org](http://www.outdooraccesswales.org)