

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

18th May 2023

Dear Anthony,

RE: ACCESS TO NATURE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about access to nature. I have read your comments with interest.

Thank you also for your kind invitation to the Backbench Business Debate on access to nature on the 18th May 2023. Unfortunately, owing to prior, longstanding diary commitments, I was unable to attend, although please rest assured that I will continue to follow the issues raised closely.

The 'Environmental Improvement Plan' includes a commitment to ensure that everyone lives within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space. Through the £14.5 million 'Access for All' programme, the Government has targeted measures to improve access to our protected landscapes and countryside. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is working to complete the England Coast Path, which will be the longest waymarked and maintained coast walking route in the world.

Through programmes with Community Forests and Forestry England, Ministers are creating large-scale, publicly accessible woodlands near towns and cities. DEFRA supports land managers to provide woodland access through the Countryside Stewardship and England Woodland Creation Offer schemes. The Environmental Land Management promotes long-term permissive access for recreation, bringing people closer to nature and contributing to the rural economy.

DEFRA will retain the deadline for registering historic rights of way, as originally intended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*. Given delays caused by COVID-19, the Secretary of State extended this deadline by five years from the 1st January 2026 to the 1st January 2031. Other reforms focus on the recording of historic rights of way. Additionally, local authorities will have increased powers to reject weakly evidenced applications, ignore irrelevant objections, and agree appropriate modifications directly with landowners, and to correct obvious administrative errors on the definitive map through a significantly shortened process.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE