



Wales: A Common Cause

The Open Spaces Society's action plan for the Welsh Assembly Government, 2011-2015

The Open Spaces Society (in full the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society) is Britain's oldest national conservation body. Founded in 1865 we campaign to create and conserve common land, town and village greens, open spaces and public paths, in town and country, throughout Wales and England. We are consulted by the Welsh Assembly Government on all applications for works on common land, and by highway authorities on all changes to the public-path network.

Eight per cent of Wales is common land, and commons are immensely important for their natural beauty, wildlife habitats, archaeology and opportunities for informal recreation. No other type of land offers such a range of public benefits. They are also crucial to the Welsh economy and sustainability because they provide grazing land (especially for hill farmers), and are significant tourist attractions.

We are calling on candidates for the Welsh Assembly Government election in 2011 to commit themselves to the following action points—

- 1 Resources to sustain common land, town and village greens, open spaces, public paths, walking, horse-riding and cycling as vital to Wales's economic diversification.**
- 2 Implementation of the Commons Act 2006 without delay, providing for updating of the registers, formation of commons councils and clarification of the law on works on common land.**

- 3 Use of Glastir to secure better management of common land, including employment of shepherds to avoid fencing.
- 4 Change of the law so as to give local authorities a duty to take action against unlawful works on common land.
- 5 Speed limit of 20mph on all unfenced roads across common land, to safeguard stock, the landscape and public access.
- 6 A timetable for processing town and village green applications, so that legitimate applications are swiftly resolved (and mischievous ones swiftly rejected).
- 7 A requirement for common land and town and village greens within or adjacent to proposed development to be a material planning-consideration.
- 8 A right of appeal, and a requirement to provide suitable alternative land, before public open space is taken for another purpose.
- 9 Sufficient resources to create a public path along the Welsh coast by 2012.
- 10 All public paths in Wales recorded, open and easy to use, with all public highways included on the definitive map of rights of way.
- 11 Strict enforcement of Glastir conditions which require public paths on all such land to be kept clear of obstruction.
- 12 Abolition of the intimidating and costly magistrates' court provision for path changes (public inquiries or hearings are preferable in all cases).

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