

P-05-717 Establish Statutory Public Rights of Access to Land and Water for Recreational and Other Purposes.

This petition was submitted by Waters of Wales – WoW, having collected 3,045 paper signatures and 433 paper signatures – Total = 3,478

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to implement a Bill to establish statutory public rights of access to land and water for recreational and other purposes. The bill should enshrine access rights and responsibilities for the public in the same way that the 2003 Land Reform (Scotland) Act encourages co-operative use of the outdoors for healthy, low impact recreation. This Bill must enshrine public rights of navigation for inland water, and permit access to and along water. It must remove the lack of legal clarity and restrictions which act as a barrier to sport and recreation and the promotion of Wales as a welcoming place for healthy recreation, tourism and adventurous activity at all levels of participation and enjoyment.

Additional information

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 (i) was intended to deliver much-needed public access to the countryside. Before CRoW was enacted, however, it had already been stripped of many of its intended public benefits. For example, it sought to exclude the public from inland water. CRoW was complicated, expensive, and fails to deliver the access to land and water needed by the wider public. The CRoW mapping exercise alone cost nearly £8m, to address the needs of the small percentage of the public who want to access upland areas. Welsh Government took ownership of this issue in 2009 (ii), yet at the end of 2015, recreational access to land fails to meet the needs of the wider public, and the issue of access to water has not progressed. To the contrary, costly initiatives endorsed and supported by Welsh Government have led in some cases to reduced access to inland water. Two successive Welsh Governments have acknowledged the need for change, but instead chose a process which serves only to maintain the status quo. Welsh Government's 3-year process costing at least £2.4m has, by their own admission, not delivered. Rather, it has demonstrably reduced access opportunities, for example to inland

water. Scotland implemented a permanent solution through land reform legislation (iv) for the legislative cost of £200,000, with a final cost of approx. £3m including the cost of television campaigning and public education (v).

(i) Countryside and Rights of Way Act(2000)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents/enacted>

(ii) Report of the Petitions Committee's Short Inquiry into Access along Inland Water, March 2009 (iii)

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/62377602/Welsh_Government_Letter_RefTOJG0126513_16Oct2013.pdf (iv) Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents/enacted>

(v) LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) BILL–EXPLANATORY NOTES (AND OTHER ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS)

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S1_Bills/Land%20Reform%20%28Scotland%29%20Bill/b44s