

Dear

### **Making the Most of Coastal Access**

As a member of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), I am writing to express my continued support for the implementation of the new coastal access rights under Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act and urge the Government, in its duty to provide improved public access, to continue with the roll out of Natural England's scheme over the coming years.

As the national representative body for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers with over 70,000 members across Wales and England, the BMC believes that access to the English coast, as outlined in Natural England's scheme, is essential both for the health of the nation as well as the economic prosperity of our coastal communities. The BMC, along with other national bodies, has spent the past four years campaigning for a permanent right of access to the coast with a new right to walk along England's coastline and a permanent right of access to a coastal margin around the coast.

There is a commitment by the treasury to save £6bn in the coming year; the concern here is at what price? Natural England has recently finalised its Coastal Access Scheme which outlines plans for the establishment of a coastal path and coastal margin with an estimated cost of £50m over ten years. There are now fears that a Government looking for billions of pounds of cuts may find this important scheme an easy option to cut despite its long term importance.

The plan to roll out improvements in access to our coast should continue unabated. The estimated 72 million leisure visits to the coast each year generate significant income. For example, in the south west the coastal path generates over £300 million for the regional economy every year. On an economic basis alone, it therefore makes little sense to delay the implementation of this important scheme, which has the potential to boost local coastal economies still further.

If the Big Society is about empowering communities, redistributing power and fostering a culture of volunteering, then the coastal access scheme could in fact prove an exemplar project, creating opportunities for organisations such as the BMC to help roll out this scheme.

I believe that Government should continue to support coastal access with the creation of better coastal access for quiet recreation and urge you to make this view heard in the House of Commons.

Yours sincerely,