



Annual Report 2025-2026

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)
for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature














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Contents / Annual Report 2025-2026

1 /	APPG Officers, Members and Secretariat	2
2 /	Aims and Objectives of the APPG	3
3 /	Parliamentary Activity 2025-2026	5
	3.1. APPG Meetings in Parliament	5
	3.2 Reports	6
	3.3 Roundtables and briefings	8
4 /	Visits and engagements	9
5 /	Looking ahead: 2026-2027 priorities	10



1/ APPG Officers and Secretariat

Officers			
Role	Name		Party / Organisation
Chair & Registered Contact	Andy MacNae		Labour 
Co-Chair	Phil Brickell		Labour 
Vice Chair	Baroness Evans of Bowes Park		Conservative 
Treasurer	Ms Polly Billington		Labour 
Secretariat			
	Catherine Flitcroft		British Mountaineering Council 
	Ben Seal		Paddle UK 
	Kate Conto		Ramblers 



2 / Aims and Objectives of the APPG

Statement of Purpose:

To engage and inspire parliamentarians to act as champions for outdoor recreation and the positive effects that come from access to nature; to help encourage more people to have active lives and ensure we have accessible green and blue spaces; to be an advocate for responsible access to the outdoors, and to provide a platform and focus for the various representative organisations involved in outdoor recreation.



2 / Aims and Objectives of the APPG

Vision and Mission Statement:

Our vision is for a natural health service that is free and available for all.

Our mission is to promote policies and initiatives that:

- Address the inequity in access to the outdoors by expanding and enhancing access rights so that everyone, everywhere can enjoy the benefits.
- Enable more people to be more active, more often in natural places.
- Promote responsible access and encourage everyone to respect, protect and enjoy natural places.
- Celebrate the unquestionable health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature.
- Unleash the potential for outdoor recreation to drive economic prosperity.
- Encourage collaboration between government departments.

We will achieve this by:

- Conducting inquiries and research to inform policy development.
- Engaging with stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives and expertise.
- Raising awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation and access to nature through events and campaigns.
- Influencing legislation and government strategies to prioritise investment in this area.
- Monitoring the implementation of policies and holding decision-makers accountable.

Through our work, we aim to ensure that the benefits of outdoor recreation and access to nature are recognised as essential components of a thriving society, contributing to improved public health, environmental sustainability, and economic prosperity.



3 / Parliamentary Activity 2025-2026

3.1. APPG Meetings in Parliament

Inaugural Meeting

19th May 2025

This meeting was used to look at and agree the strategic objectives of the APPG regarding the desire to expand opportunities for outdoor recreation and public access to nature, and to build on the economic and health benefits that come alongside this. These will be used as a statement of ambition to be presented to the Secretary of State, seeking clarity on the timetable / aspirations of the Government's proposed Access to Nature Green Paper. To support the forthcoming Green Paper, the APPG plans to conduct a stakeholder inquiry focusing on removing barriers to participation. Future APPG meetings may address specific challenges like water access and wild camping, and how to further integrate outdoor activity into national policy.

Meeting

7th July 2025

The July 2025 meeting of the APPG focused on the economic and health benefits of outdoor recreation. Led by Chair, Andy MacNae MP, the group were also updated on the APPG Inquiry which was launched on July 1st. The committee plans to collaborate with various government departments to integrate the

findings of the Report into new policy areas. Future meetings / events will include a formal report launch in September and potential joint sessions with other parliamentary groups to address responsible access and joint initiatives.

Meeting

21st October 2025

The APPG meeting focused on public access to nature and the limitations of current access legislation in allowing more forms of recreational activities to take place. Members wished to see green and blue spaces be integrated into national planning and water reform legislation. The committee is planning several actions, including meetings with ministers and parliamentary debates, to elevate the status of outdoor recreation on the government's agenda. Discussions also focussed on the strong connection between natural environments and public health, with a specific focus on reaching underserved communities through preventative health initiatives. Future meetings will include site visits to urban and rural locations to evaluate barriers to access, and to celebrate the anniversary of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

Meeting

16th December 2025

The December APPG meeting highlighted the ongoing efforts to improve public access to nature and the legislative gaps hindering these goals. Members expressed concern regarding the Environmental Improvement Plan 2025, specifically the lack of a clear timeline for the Access to Nature Green Paper and the need for primary legislation to reform public rights. A significant portion of the discussion focused on the legal status of caving, with advocates arguing that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 should include underground exploration as "open-air recreation". The committee plans to lobby for parliamentary time to debate such issues, and coordinate with other departments to resolve policy disconnects. Future actions include writing formal letters to ministers.

Meeting

26th January 2026

This meeting saw the launch of the Sport and Recreation Alliance Report Reconomics 3.0, which highlights the significant value of outdoor recreation as an accessible solution to public health, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion challenges.

The report reveals 34m people now use outdoor recreation, an increase of 3.1m in a decade, contributing £22bn to the UK economy and generating one million jobs. Furthermore, it estimates a social value of £46.8bn and over £5bn in savings to the NHS.

Discussions centred on translating these findings into genuine policy, with access legislation and the forthcoming Access to Nature Green Paper being crucial. A major priority for the committee is addressing inequality of access, ensuring that marginalized populations and children benefit from nature-based activities through cross-departmental cooperation. Participants also highlighted the need for collaborative partnerships between various APPG groups and outdoor organizations to create a unified approach to recreation policy.

3 / Parliamentary Activity 2025-2026

3.2. Report

Inquiry launch

1st July 2025

On July 1st 2025, the APPG launched a 'Call for Evidence' as part of a new inquiry to examining ideas for changes in policy and legislation that would enable more people to access green and blue spaces. The inquiry welcomed evidence from people of all backgrounds, to shape ideas for enabling more people to enjoy the outdoors.

Access to nature delivers multiple health, economic and environmental benefits for society. Despite this, access to nature in England is still fragmented and unequal and too many people face practical barriers when accessing the outdoors. Approximately, only 30% of adults in England live more than 15 minutes' walk from an accessible green or blue space. Fewer than 4% of rivers have clear navigation rights. Roughly 20% of people cannot use a Public Right of Way because of mobility issues, a result of unnecessary barriers on the network such as gates and stiles.

The Government's manifesto included a commitment to improve access to nature, with more details expected later in 2025.

- It is estimated that over 34 million people, including 1.9 million children, engage in outdoor activity. Outdoor Recreation activities have experienced some of the most positive swings post COVID of all activities tracked in Active Lives Survey.
 - Outdoor activities generate around £22bn for the UK economy, with around £8.4bn being generated by trips that involve outdoor recreation.
 - Despite this, the UK ranks lowest of 14 European Nations on nature connectedness. We also rank 11 out of 15 nations on levels of physical activity. Physical inactivity is linked to 1 in 6 deaths in the UK.
- The inquiry considered ideas for new legislation and / or policy proposals which would:
- Enable more people to make use of existing access opportunities (including open access and public rights of way).
 - Improve access to landscapes (woodlands, riversides, water bodies, downland) and the safeguards needed for the environment and land management.
 - Enable more people to undertake a broader range of responsible outdoor activities and the safeguards needed for the environment and land management.
 - Ensure green and blue spaces are more evenly distributed and better connected.
 - Ensure access to nature is better used to support health and wellbeing outcomes.
 - Increase access to sites of public or historic interest
 - Enable more people, particularly children, young people and underrepresented groups, to regularly experience and engage with green and blue spaces.



3 / Parliamentary Activity 2025-2026

Parliamentary launch of APPG Report 19th September 2025

The final report was published in September 2025 having gathered views from over 750 organisations and individuals. *Outdoors For All: Recommendations for Government on Access to Nature* provides bold and practical advice to the Government, outlining policy and legislative options to achieve inclusive access for more people.

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Paddle UK and The Ramblers, acting as the Secretariat for the APPG, worked together to facilitate the Inquiry.

The report emphasises the need to balance access with environmental protection and respect for other users and landowners, and was officially launched in parliament on 19th September.

The report contains 40 recommendations in total. Key recommendations from the report include:

- Expanding Access: Establish statutory rights to responsible access across a broader range of landscapes, including but not limited to inland waters, woodlands and other suitable natural environments,
- Improving Existing Access: Establish an Access to Nature Investment Strategy enabling local highway authorities to apply for resources based on assessed local needs and opportunities aligned with national priorities. Remove barriers like stiles, and simplify footpath upgrades
- Accessing Blue Spaces: Expand access rights for swimming and non-motorised craft on inland waters through new legislation or amendments to existing acts, such as the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW), an Access to Nature Bill, or the upcoming Water Reform Bill
- Children Spending Time Outdoors: Establish a requirement for all children and young people to experience at least one residential outdoor experience, linked to curriculum outcomes at KS2, using Pupil Premium to ensure inclusion for all
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing Outcomes: Enshrine access to nature as a statutory public health responsibility by amending the Health and Social Care Act
- Planning and Transport: Improve public transport links to and from green and blue spaces, including increased frequency, expanded routes and affordability
- Governance, Strategy and Accountability: Publish a long-term Government plan to improve public access to nature, with a clear vision, strategy, legally binding targets, backed by an Access to Nature Investment Strategy to direct funding
- Awareness and Education: Overhaul the Countryside Code to promote access and responsible behavior. Implement a National Ranger Service, and transform the Ordnance Survey App into a free, universal tool.



3 / Parliamentary Activity 2025-2026

3.3 Roundtables and briefings

Greater Access to Nature Roundtable 25th November 2025

A group of 22 MPs came together to call for greater access to nature, during a Parliamentary event on 25th November. The drop-in session brought together Parliamentarians and representatives from outdoor recreation organisations, to discuss the future of public access to the outdoors, including both green and blue spaces.

The event was held to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CRoW). Passed in 2000, the Act gave the public new rights to explore some of England's wildest and most remote areas on foot. However, similar progress is still needed to improve access to both green and blue spaces for activities such as canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, swimming, and more.

The MPs, or their representatives, heard from experts on access rights, water quality, and outdoor recreation. They also discussed recommendations from the recent (APPG) for Outdoor Recreation report, "Outdoors For All: Recommendations to Government on Access to Nature."



4 / Visits & Engagements

MPs Away Day, Lee Valley Regional Park 18th March 2026

The APPG hosted a day of adventurous activities to give Members of Parliament a first-hand experience of the sector's value for health and wellbeing.

The event aimed to build stronger relations with MPs and foster a new group of ambassadors who speak up for outdoor recreation in Parliament.

The day gave MPs and their staff a chance to participate in activities including white water rafting on the Olympic course at Lee Valley.



5 / Looking Ahead

2026-2027 Priorities:

Responding to Green
Paper on Access to Nature

Report into Inequality
of Access

Raising awareness of the
importance of outdoor
recreation and access
to nature through events
and campaigns.



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