



Department  
for Environment  
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Lord Gardiner of Kimble  
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Rt Hon Sir Hugo Swire MP  
House of Commons  
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26<sup>th</sup> March 2018

*Dear Hugo,*

Thank you for your letter of 23 February to the Secretary of State on behalf of Hilary Winter of the Devon Countryside Access Forum about future funding for national trails. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I recognise that our national trails are valued by many people. They provide public enjoyment for walkers from this country and abroad and bring local economic benefit through tourism. They also provide opportunities for improving the environment and for getting local communities involved in caring for them.

Central government funding for the ongoing management and maintenance of national trails is agreed on an annual basis and distributed as grant-in-aid by Natural England in line with a national funding formula. I can confirm that for 2018/19, Natural England will continue to support national trails according to the new deal funding formula as recommended by the Funding Formula Review Group in 2015, with additional budget available for the maintenance of stretches of the new England coast path as the new access rights come into force.

Natural England has now written to the Chairs of each of the national trail partnerships to let them know that Natural England will be funding the partnerships in 2018/19 at the same level of funding as in 2017/18. A meeting with the partnerships, Natural England and the Department will be arranged to discuss longer-term funding.

Going forwards we will work with the national trail partnerships, the new coastal access authorities and other stakeholders to explore options for a more sustainable funding model, to ensure that these important national assets are maintained in future years while making them less reliant on the public purse.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*John*

