



Devon Countryside Access Forum
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Mr T Hynes
North Devon Biosphere
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14 July 2017

Dear Mr Hynes

Meddon Green Local Nature Reserve – Management Plan 2017-2027

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). Its remit is to advise “as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area...” It has a statutory function to give independent advice to named bodies, including Parish Councils, under section 94 of the CRoW Act and they are required to “have regard” to “any relevant advice given to them.”

The DCAF currently has seventeen members who represent the interests of landowners/managers, access users and other relevant areas of expertise such as conservation and tourism.

The consultation did not coincide with a public meeting of the Forum but this response will be on the agenda for formal ratification at the next meeting on 12 October.

The Forum would like to make the following comments on the Management Plan for Meddon Green LNR.

The DCAF supports conservation of this important Culm grassland site in a way which also promotes education and access to the site. The recreational access prescriptions identified in the Plan which will allow these objectives to be secured are welcomed, in particular:

10.1 Maintain informal paths to ensure access for people to enjoy the site in a controlled manner making sure sensitive areas are avoided.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is required, in accordance with Sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, to provide advice as to the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment.

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10.10 Develop interpretation boards to advertise both the presence of the reserve and to inform and advise visitors.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum advises that the word 'informal' should be removed from point 10.1, to avoid the Management Committee having to maintain all desire lines that might be created on the site as these might not necessarily accord with conservation aims.

The proposed installation of benches is welcomed and will allow people to rest and enjoy the site.

The health and well-being benefits associated with having a local green space are well-documented and the Forum also recognises the value of community involvement and volunteering. Involving nearby schools and youth groups as part of the educational aspirations would be beneficial.

As the site is improved and becomes more accessible the Management Committee may need to include an advisory notice about walking with dogs, and consider whether leads are required to reduce the impact on Culm grassland flora and fauna. A dog bin at the access point to the reserve is a further consideration.

The DCAF is currently preparing a position statement on disability access and has had a number of discussions about the increasing need to plan for disabled users. The Forum advises that the entry points to Meddon Green LNR should allow full access by disabled people. A number of suitable gates are available, including radar key entry options. These would allow people using wheelchairs or tramper type vehicles to access the site plus family groups with child buggies. Further information can be provided if required.

Additional notices may be needed to indicate activities which the Management Committee might wish to ban such as BBQs, or the use of bicycles or motorised vehicles which could otherwise impact on people's enjoyment of the nature reserve and conservation objectives.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum trusts that its comments will be taken into account and would welcome feedback.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of Devon Countryside Access Forum

*Chair: Sarah Slade
Vice Chair: Chris Cole*