



## Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Ms S Avon and Mr J Steward  
Green Spaces  
Leisure and Environment  
Teignbridge District Council  
Forde House  
Brunel Road  
Newton Abbot  
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8 December 2017

Dear Sian and Jon

Thank you for showing us around the Dawlish SANGS site recently. It was very useful and interesting to discuss the funding, development, land management and access use of the site. It's a wonderful resource for people in Dawlish and should, as intended, take some pressure off protected sites at Dawlish Warren and the Exe Estuary.

The working group thought it would be helpful to summarise its advice arising from the visit.

### ***Disability access***

The size of the site offers many recreational access opportunities for people with limited mobility, or those who are frail, with associated health and well-being benefits. Access could be improved by:

- a) Ensuring gates are easily opened by people in wheelchairs or mobility scooters. At the moment the gates do not comply with the Equality Act 2010. The main gate adjacent to the car park would be the priority. Subject to funding constraints, DCAF members advise that use of other gates should be assessed to see which could be adapted. The one leading from Shutterton Lane may be a further priority particularly as new housing is developed. Self-closing gates with trombone handles, or other mechanisms such as a chain and weight, would be preferable and some gates are described in the Natural England report 'A trail of self-closing bridlegates: 2015'.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4580441024102400>



It is possible a gap, rather than gate, could be used but safety implications would need to be assessed particularly as the main gate is by the car park. Equally, security for grazing stock would need to be considered if this is a future option.

- b) Including a couple of disability parking bays would encourage people with limited mobility to use the main car park.
- c) Waymarking trails suitable for wheelchairs or mobility scooters would be helpful, either in a leaflet or with symbols on small posts. Gordon offered to bring some access users with different types of vehicle to assess some routes in the New Year and is also happy to trial it again with a small scooter. Gordon also offered to accompany you on a tramper buggy experience if this would be helpful. A tramper buggy for hire would be interesting but the costs and managing the hire need more consideration, especially when you have no building on site and it is not permanently staffed.
- d) The positioning of stepped areas, rather than ramps, on the tarmac adjacent to the main gate is not ideal and may present difficulties for users with mobility vehicles/wheelchairs, or be a trip hazard. Altering the gate may overcome this to some extent.
- e) The steep incline from the Lookout may be challenging for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Gordon achieved it without difficulty as the site was dry. However, some rough surfacing stone, very shallow steps (wheelchair accessible) or an alternative zigzag path may need to be considered for use in wetter conditions.

The DCAF has recently adopted a disability position statement and this is attached for information. This provides further links which may be of interest.

### ***Surfacing and paths***

Members were impressed with how free-draining and firm the paths on the site are. The system of mowing a number of paths to low grass will provide a flexible way of dealing with future problems of erosion or encouraging people to take certain routes. It is hoped there is the budget for this.

The natural feel of the site, alongside a built-up area, is important and may encourage people to explore other areas. Members did not consider that any further work needed to be done on re-surfacing at the current time. This is something to keep under review and, depending on usage, pinch points through hedges or gates for example might need to be hardened up if they become excessively muddy or there is erosion or puddling. The gate area onto Shutterton Lane which Gordon looked at was rather boggy. A ramped wooden walkway would be another option.

### **Other matters**

#### ***Widening use***

The Park caters well for the dog-owning members of the community and provides an excellent resource where dogs can run free. However, it is also a site which backs onto housing, and so offers tremendous recreational potential for families, children and



particularly non-dog owners living nearby. Forum members thought that it would be useful for Teignbridge District Council to consider cycle use to widen up opportunities for more people to use the Park. This could potentially be in specific areas, or on defined routes, and trialled as a pilot. Wherever possible, the Forum likes to see access for the widest group of users.

### ***Voluntary involvement***

The Forum is well aware of the social and health benefits arising from having volunteers or Friends Groups associated with countryside sites and this is something members would support. The site may well have future maintenance priorities to ensure the Park remains open and easily accessible, for example cutting of paths or hedges and removal of ragwort.

### ***Future funding***

Members hope that the long term maintenance of the Park has been secured. New projects and improvements on site could potentially be funded through additional s106/CIL monies or Town and Parish (TAP) fund finance. Elsewhere in Devon TAP funding has been used for path improvements and interpretation.

The site is obviously well-used and is likely to become more so. The interpretation boards and varied agricultural and land uses will add interest and it is encouraging that various events are planned. It was evident that visitors welcomed the chance to talk to you.

This letter will be on the next DCAF agenda for formal approval on 25 January 2018.

The Forum would be pleased to receive your feedback.

Yours sincerely

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Hilary Winter  
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of the DCAF working group. Members: Sarah Slade (Chair), Chris Cole (Vice Chair), Simon Clist and Gordon Guest.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a statutory local access forum set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its members are volunteers, appointed by Devon County Council, to provide independent advice on “the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment”. The members represent the interests of landowners/land managers, access users and other interests such as tourism and conservation.