



## Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Mr J Cross  
Chief Executive  
Natural England  
County Hall  
Spetchley Road  
Worcester  
WR5 2NP

22 February 2018

Dear Mr Cross

### **Funding for the South West Coast Path National Trail**

The Devon Countryside Access Forum, a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, met on 25 January. Members were extremely concerned to learn that it is proposed to reduce funding for SWCP maintenance by 50% in the next financial year.

The South West Coast Path is an iconic National Trail, the longest in the country, which attracts many walkers from all over the world as well as local residents. It is vitally important to the tourist industry in Devon, making a significant contribution to the local economy as well as supporting many jobs, both directly and indirectly.

The South West Coast Path Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Year 5 (2015), produced by South West Research Company Ltd in October 2016, showed that in Devon there were over 3m users of the SWCP, spending over £179m and supporting business turnover of just over £279m and supporting around 4,000 full-time equivalent jobs. These figures illustrate the importance of the path.

Members of the Devon Countryside Access Forum feel strongly that national Government, through Natural England, should be retaining or increasing its contribution to the SWCP. Any funding reduction will have a major impact on the Trail as it is likely that existing standards would be difficult to deliver without having a severe impact on the maintenance of other public rights of way across the County, including in the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Public rights of way elsewhere in Devon are also important to the economy and it is a legal obligation to keep these in a good state. Population increases in Devon and higher levels of short

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a local access forum. It 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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break holidays are likely to lead to more use of the South West Coast Path and associated rises in erosion and maintenance costs.

As the SWCP will form part of the England Coast Path, a Government aspiration, funding for the path at an adequate level will help to ensure that this ambition can be properly delivered.

The DCAF urges Natural England to reconsider its financial commitment for the forthcoming year.

The Forum would welcome your feedback.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter  
Forum Officer

*Letter sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum*

*Chair: Sarah Slade  
Vice Chair: Chris Cole*

The Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act). Its statutory remit is to give independent advice “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...”

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