



Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Ms S Clark
Exe Estuary Management Partnership
c/o Devon County Council
Lucombe House
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter EX2 4QD

22 February 2018

Dear Ms Clark

Draft Exe Estuary Codes of Conduct – Dog Walking

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.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum was pleased to be consulted on the draft Dog Walking Code and welcomes the useful and positive information that will be made available to dog walkers in the Exe Estuary area. At its meeting on 25 January 2018 members agreed to make the following comments in response to the consultation.

1. ‘Walkies’ section

The Devon Countryside Access Forum advises that:

- a) This section should be more prominent and extended as it is a dog walking code. It is a good opportunity to reinforce messages in national guidance.
- b) Dogs should be kept under ‘close’ control should be amended to ‘effective’ control. This would reflect the national guidance adopted by a range of organisations following extensive discussion a couple of years ago. See www.dogwalkingcode.org.uk The text should explain that ‘effective control’ means on a short lead or close enough for you to call your dog back on command.

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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- c) A statement on worming should be added, for example 'Please keep your dog's worming up to date'.
- d) The Exe Estuary is a very busy trail. A statement along the lines of 'Prevent your dog from approaching cyclists, other people and their dogs, children and horse-riders unless invited to do so' would be very helpful.
- e) It might be useful for the instruction 'Do not allow your dog to chase birds or other wildlife' to be in the 'Walkies' section. The Forum advises that that this should include livestock e.g. 'Do not allow your dog to chase birds, wildlife or livestock.'
- f) The 'Walkies' section should include a statement along the lines of 'Please look at the map to see where dogs are not permitted for nature conservation reasons, or where there are lead or seasonal restrictions.'
- g) A link to the national dog walking code would be useful. See www.dogwalkingcode.org.uk for more information.
- h) Devon and Cornwall Police have some helpful dog advice on their website. <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/parenting/dogs/>

2. Text and visual comments

- a. When the code is finalised, it would be helpful if the on-line version is easy to read without any sections being upside down. Html format would be good.
- b. It is not clear how the leaflet is intended to fold for easy use. It would appear that the dog picture is a front cover but other sections on page 1 do not follow the right layout to permit easy reading if folded. The wildlife sections appear to be separated and would be better following on from each other.
- c. Some information could be conveyed in fewer words e.g. there is some repetition in the section on the Exe Estuary and the section on codes, and between 'Be Bird Aware' and 'Watch Out for Wildlife.' It may be possible to increase text size by expressing some information more concisely, or perhaps by moving from the active to passive voice.
- d. The DCAF advises that the colour and text of the leaflet should be checked for ease of use for people with visual impairment, for example colour blindness. The red with pale red tint may not be sufficiently clear on page 1 and likewise use of greens and reds on the map.
- e. A small point but there is some inconsistency in the use of capitals. For example, 'Want to know more' has only a capital for the first word, unlike other sections
- f. Under pollution, the Coastguard is mentioned as the only contact. The Forum advises that the Environment Agency should be added.

3. General comments

- A. There seems to be a fair balance between areas where dogs are excluded and other areas. Wardens are frequently out on site at Dawlish Warden to explain restrictions.
- B. The map is useful to plan a walk.
- C. Forum members noted that some people continue to ignore beach restrictions.

The Forum hopes that its advice will be considered in developing the final code of conduct. If you require any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to make contact.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of Devon Countryside Access Forum

Chair: Sarah Slade

Vice Chair: Chris Cole