



**Devon Countryside Access Forum
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Torrige Draft Strategic Plan 2023-2028 Consultation Response from the Devon Countryside Access Forum

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...” Section 94(4) of the Act specifies bodies to whom the Forum has a statutory function to give advice, and this includes the Forestry Commission.

The DCAF currently has seventeen members, appointed by Devon County Council, 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 welcomes the commitment to Communities, Health and Housing and in particular the bullet point related to multi-use paths and the footpath network. However, in accordance with advice the Forum has previously given, it strongly advises this is amended to read "Work with partners to expand multi-use paths, and to maintain and improve the public rights of way network and access to open spaces". Covering all types of rights of way and emphasising the maintenance and improvement angle is important as ongoing maintenance is a cost which needs to be factored in. Equally, incorporating improvement would allow for upgrading to enhance access for those with disabilities or additional user groups.

Looking at the Communities, Health and Housing and the Our Environment Our Future priorities there does not appear to be a mention of sustainable transport. The Devon Countryside Access Forum strongly advises that this should be included as it would contribute to achieving those priorities. Sustainable transport options to reach key open spaces and the coast, as well as for functional purposes, would reduce traffic congestion.

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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The Rights of Way Circular 01/09 includes the following statements.

1.4 England's extensive network of public rights of way is a unique and valuable resource, which provides the opportunity to experience the immense variety of English landscape and the settlements within it. Rights of way are both a significant part of our heritage and a major recreational and transport resource. They enable people to get away from roads used mainly by motor vehicles and enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of large parts of the countryside to which they would not otherwise have access. Rights of way provide for various forms of sustainable transport and can play a significant part in reducing traffic congestion and harmful emissions. They are becoming more important as increases in the volume and speed of traffic are turning many once-quiet country roads into unpleasant and sometimes dangerous places for cyclists, equestrians, walkers and carriage drivers.

1.5 In many areas, rights of way help to boost tourism and contribute to rural economies. They can also provide a convenient means of travelling, particularly for short journeys, in both rural and urban areas. They are important in the daily lives of many people who use them for fresh air and exercise on bicycle, on foot, on horseback or in a horse-drawn vehicle, to walk the dog, to improve their fitness, or to visit local shops and other facilities. Local authorities should regard public rights of way as an integral part of the complex of recreational and transport facilities within their area.

This response will be on the agenda for formal approval at the next Devon Countryside Access Forum meeting on 22 January 2024.



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Response sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum
Chair: Sarah Slade
Vice Chair: Chris Cole

Submitted on 13 November 2023.

Theme	Priority	Actions by us and in partnership
Local Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being ambitious & responsive to inward investment for new emerging sectors & technologies. • Encourage aspiration & facilitate growth to create a thriving economy with quality jobs. • Repurposing Town Centres. • Support rural diversification and development where possible. • Promote & support opportunities for better employment through improved training, skills, education & apprenticeships. • Support businesses and the local economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Appledore Clean Maritime Centre to establish Torrridge and wider northern Devon as a global-leading research and development destination for innovation in clean maritime technology and support industries. • We will work with Government to co-create and develop a Levelling up Partnership that strives to deliver wide ranging opportunities and benefits to Torrridge's residents, businesses and communities. • Deliver the Northern Devon Economic Strategy. • Promote the District to attract inward investment being responsive to a changing market. • Lobby and strive for improved infrastructure. • Accelerate & sustain where possible opportunities for sustainable economic growth within the district's tourism and employment offer. • Encourage business and enterprise through investment and business support.
Communities, Health and Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the availability and quality of homes to meet local needs. • Improve physical and mental health outcomes and reduce health inequalities while promoting active, culturally enriched & healthy lifestyles. • Work in partnership to reduce crime so people feel safe and secure in their communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & implement a Housing Strategy that provides creative solutions to meet the housing needs of the district. • Utilise Active Torrridge to promote and deliver health & wellbeing activities across the district. • Work in partnership to help deliver the OneDevon Five-year Integrated Care Strategy for Devon. • Deliver the Northern Devon Joint Cultural Strategy. • Work with partners to expand multi-use paths, the footpath network and access to open spaces. • Work with partner agencies to prevent, detect and reduce crime & antisocial behaviour.
Our Environment our future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align the Council's activities to meet the carbon neutral operational target of 2030. • Deliver clean, well maintained and managed streets, parks and open spaces. • Provide high-quality planning and development services. • Monitor & Manage coastal and flood defences taking appropriate actions in partnerships with relevant bodies. • Waste minimisation and increase reuse & recycling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocate all Waste and Recycling resources to one new modern Operational Centre. • Implement, monitor and report on the actions contained in a revised Carbon Plan. • Achieve carbon reduction and energy efficiency across the existing Council asset base. • Deliver the Play Strategy. • Prepare a new Joint Local Plan that aligns to the Council's objectives & strategies. • Adopt a biodiversity plan for TDC open spaces • Be responsive to erosion risks and work in partnership for the protection of our coastal assets and communities. • Work in partnership to deliver the Devon Waste Strategy and align to changes in environmental legislation.
Our Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear, effective communication and be easily accessible. • Deliver quality services to business and residents; understanding what matters to our customers. • Become a more agile and commercial council; securing our financial future while supporting "local" whenever possible. • Develop Torrridge to be a great place to work and build a career. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our communications offer to ensure we reach a wider audience. • Produce an understandable and manageable Customer Charter. • Provide quality Services supported by modern, secure & resilient ICT. • Promote the spend, shop & work local values. • Ensure modern, efficient and sustainable procurement practices. • Work with local schools and colleges to increase awareness and involvement in local democracy. • Update our HR & Workforce Plan to enable the Council to adapt to a changing employment market.