



## Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Planning Officer  
Planning West  
East Devon District Council  
Knowle  
Sidmouth  
EX10 8HL

14 September 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

**18/1893/FUL | Construction of 1.1km length of 3m wide surfaced multi-use trail.  
(Fields between Winslade Park and lane from Kenniford Cross to Clyst St George)  
Clyst St Mary.**

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 fifteen 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 timing of this consultation did not coincide with a meeting of the Devon Countryside Access Forum. The comments are in accordance with advice previously provided by the Forum and the response will be on the agenda for formal approval at the next meeting on 9 October.

The DCAF supports in principle this section of the aspirational Clyst Valley Trail. A multi-use route is welcomed and will provide new sustainable transport links and recreational access opportunities for walkers, dog walkers, cyclists, disabled users and horse riders. The link to the Exe Estuary Trail and potentially northwards, in time, to Killerton will deliver an important and very popular trail.

The DCAF notes the route is intended to connect to the Exe Estuary Trail at Topsham. Although not specifically part of this planning application, the accompanying design and

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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access statement refers to this and the commissioning of research into design options to improve safety on the on-road section. The Forum advises that connectivity to the Exe Estuary Trail and Topsham Station needs to be thoroughly investigated to ensure routes are genuinely safe for vulnerable access users and are perceived as safe. This means that attention to the design of crossings, kerbs, passing places, visibility and speed is critical and vital for the success of the overall trail. The speed limit on the road between Clyst St George and Kenniford Farm, approaching the off-road section, should be significantly reduced from the current 60mph. Regular maintenance of hedges on narrow sections of this road is also a consideration to maximise the road width.

The Forum notes the two gates and chicane on the design drawings. The suggested gate design does not include suitable handles for horse-riders and should be changed to a higher specification with appropriate handles and latches allowing easy use by all user groups. Natural England, in partnership with the British Horse Society, carried out a trial of self-closing gates in 2015 and a report is available on this link [here](#) If gates are not required for agricultural management reasons, it would be helpful if they could be removed to allow easier access.

The planning application lacks clarity about the legal status of the route and whether it will be permissive, a bridleway (subject to a Public Path Order application), or whether it will have a different status or combination of legal categories. Although the surfacing and path furniture have been specified it is not clear how it is anticipated to deal with the associated legal changes where it is proposed to use, or divert, sections of the existing footpaths for this multi-use trail.

Bearing in mind that the route has the potential to flood, it is even more imperative that financial provision is secured not only for construction but for long term maintenance. Although not specifically a planning matter, it would be useful for funding streams to be identified.

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

Yours faithfully



Hilary Winter  
Forum Officer

*Letter sent on behalf of Devon Countryside Access Forum*

*Chair: Sarah Slade Vice Chair: Chris Cole*