



**Devon Countryside Access Forum**  
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## **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

### **Devon Countryside Access Forum**

#### **POSITION STATEMENT Access and Recreation**

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a statutory local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its remit is to provide 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...” Its geographical area of coverage is Devon, with the exception of the Unitary Authority areas and National Parks which have their own forums.

The DCAF has fifteen members, appointed by Devon County Council, who represent the interests of access users, landowners/managers and other areas of expertise such as health and conservation.

The Position Statement on AONBs has been prepared in order to provide a consistency of advice across the five AONBs within Devon. Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act makes it a statutory function of forums to give advice to specified bodies, including Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conservation Boards.

The DCAF considers the following aspects to be important in the Management Plans for the AONBs.

#### **Vision Statement**

The Devon Countryside Access Forum recognises the function and primary purpose of the AONBs. It supports a vision conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and landscape of the AONB. Opportunities to appreciate the tranquillity of the AONB and enjoy the scenery through quiet enjoyment should be the focus of chapters on access and recreation.

#### **Key facts**

The AONB Management Plan should identify the extent of recreational opportunities in the AONB including the length of public rights of way, area of

access land, important recreational trails and routes and other opportunities for recreational access such as beaches, country parks, permissive access and Forestry Commission, National Trust and Woodland Trust land.

### **Objectives and Policies**

These are inter-linked. The DCAF has identified the following aspects as key matters which AONBs should include within their Management Plans. AONBs should:

#### *Maintenance and improvement*

- a) liaise with the local highway authority over opportunities to sensitively enhance access and remedy deficiencies for particular groups of users;
- b) refer to the role of the local highway authority in maintaining public rights of way, unsurfaced unclassified County roads (uUCRs) and cycle/multi-use routes;
- c) acknowledge the financial and other constraints which might limit the extent of future local highway authority involvement in public rights of way maintenance and improvements;
- d) refer to the role of Parish Paths Partnership (P3) groups and other voluntary groups in maintaining public rights of way and other areas of land enjoyed by the public;
- e) liaise with the local highway authority and other partners to identify funding sources to enable improvements to take place, particularly links between paths;
- f) liaise and consult with landowners when new routes are proposed;
- g) ensure surfacing of multi-use routes permits access by all users. Routes should be compatible with the landscape and sensitive to the location.
- h) seek to work with partners to improve the safety of access users, particularly on roads or where rights of way join roads;
- i) make reference to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (DCC, 2005) and the Devon Countryside Access Forum. The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a statutory local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, with a remit to provide independent advice on the "improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.." Members of the DCAF represent the interests of access users, landowners/managers and other areas of expertise.

#### *Promotion and economic and health benefits*

- j) work with the local highway authority and other partners to promote quiet, sensitive and sustainable recreational activities within the AONB;
- k) encourage people to linger and enjoy the landscape and spend money in the local economy;
- l) encourage the promotion of activities which support the health and well-being of residents and visitors to the AONB;
- m) seek opportunities to advise and educate the public on responsible use and enjoyment of the AONB;
- n) seek to encourage the use of public transport to explore the AONB.

*Other matters*

- o) make reference to links with the Local Nature Partnership;
- p) liaise with planning authorities to explore the potential to secure developer contributions towards green infrastructure and associated facilities;
- q) ensure website information is up-to-date and accurate and identify links to associated information, for example access guides;
- r) identify policies to support the objectives and include details on potential partners;
- s) include measurable indicators to measure progress on priorities.

Whilst recognising the local distinctiveness of each AONB, the DCAF would value and encourage AONBs to adopt a unified format for their AONB Management Plans.

The DCAF has developed statements on planning related priorities for public rights of way and access and on liaison with landowners/managers when new routes are proposed. It has also done work for Devon County Council on developing a policy for multi-use of routes and associated design standards.