



Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Mr T Taylor
Site Manager
RSPB
Hawkerland Brake Barn
Exmouth Road
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5 February 2019

Dear Mr Taylor

Fire Beacon Hill

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. This letter is being copied to the Town Council as one of those above-mentioned bodies and as owners of the land.

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 Devon Countryside Access Forum discussed this consultation at its meeting on 24 January.

Forum members welcome positive management of this access land site which is a valuable recreational area on the outskirts of Sidmouth, crossed by the East Devon Way, several footpaths and bridleways and an unsurfaced unclassified County road.

The Forum would encourage increased joint working with the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission on nearby parcels of land as this could create enhanced access opportunities.

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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It is not within the remit of the Forum to advise specifically on vegetation management by the RSPB, but use of temporary electric fencing on a rotation basis for grazing purposes is not seen to deter access use.

The Forum recognises the importance of maintaining and improving the natural capital of the site but would like to ensure that any management changes bear in mind recreational access and that, where possible, improvements are considered as part of the overall plan for Fire Beacon Hill. For example, the DCAF has produced a position statement on disability access, attached, and would welcome any changes to path furniture and accessibility that would benefit disabled users.

This is a popular site for dog walkers and, as you will be aware, there is complex dog legislation implemented at district council level for all land and at national level for access land. In developing a Management Plan that potentially involves other partners and includes non-access land, it will be important for dog walkers to be aware of any restrictions and fines and which area of land they apply to.

If the management regime on Fire Beacon Hill varies significantly from that currently in place, the Forum would wish to see effective communication channels established so that access users are aware of the reasons for any amendments.

The DCAF would like to be involved in the further consultation later this year.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of Devon Countryside Access Forum

Chair: Sarah Slade Vice Chair: Chris Cole