

Devon Countryside Access Forum

Training Day visit to West Devon

Members of the Devon Countryside Access Forum, accompanied by Public Rights of Way staff, went on a training day to West Devon.

The purpose of the Training Day was to compare aspects of the Granite Way and Pegasus Trail and the economic context.

The group parked at Okehampton Station, a tourism hub, and the day commenced with meeting the Operations Manager at Okehampton Youth Hostel and cycle hire outlet. This confirmed the importance of the Granite Way as a key attraction for groups and tourists and vital for the business. It was an opportunity to discuss use of the Granite Way and potential safety and other recreational access improvements in the area.

Second stop was the pub at Sourton Down, in the process of extensive refurbishment to re-open as a pub, together with relocation of an existing cycle repair workshop. Again, the Granite Way is important to the business. The group inspected the new disabled toilets. The lack of such facilities can discourage access for disabled people wishing to use cycle/multi-use routes as existing cafes/pubs only have to make 'reasonable' adjustment which in some cases is not possible due to the nature of old buildings.

The group noted the nearby cycle hire place, closed on the day, which offers a tramper buggy and tandem for hire for use by those with disabilities or sight impairment.



Members walked a section of the Granite Way discussing surface and vegetation maintenance with Public Rights of Way staff. A proposed safety improvement, where the Granite Way crosses a small road, was brought to the group's attention. A few public rights of way join the Granite Way and these were discussed, together with the proximity of a couple of promoted trails – the West Devon Way and Two Castles Way.

The group was made aware that the Granite Way has no legal definition and a variety of agreements have been made with landowners. All sections of the Granite Way were approved by the DCC Development Management Committee, following formal planning applications.

The group then went to the Pegasus Trail and walked the recently opened stretch of the new strategic bridleway that will eventually link Dartmoor to Cookworthy Forest, using the bridleway and other public rights of way/minor

roads. Like the Granite Way this trail follows, where possible, a former railway line. This trail has been the result of painstaking negotiation with landowners by a member of the Public Rights of Way staff over the past fifteen years. Some modifications have also been

made to the surrounding bridleway network to ensure better links. The legal agreements, Public Path Orders, were approved by the DCC Public Rights of Way Committee.



Representatives of SW Riders and one of the landowners met the group and discussed the historical development of the trail, negotiations with DCC and use of contractors. The walk provided the opportunity to look at the surface – a stoned surface with surface dusting unlike the sealed surface on the Granite Way. The Forum has had many discussions on surfacing for different users at meetings and working groups. It was noted that maintenance by the Public Rights of Way Warden would be less frequent than on the more well-used Granite Way.

Starting in the wet, the sun finally shone through and the group enjoyed fantastic and far-reaching views across to Dartmoor and other parts of Devon from the Pegasus Trail. One member cycled for the whole day and gained a different, and enjoyable, perspective of both Trails.

