



## Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth Resilience project  
Network Rail Ltd.  
167-169 Westbourne Terrace  
LONDON  
W2 6JX

26 February 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth Resilience Project**

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 Secretary of State for the Department of Transport.

The DCAF currently has fourteen 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.

Members of the Devon Countryside Access Forum note the proposals to improve the resilience of the rail line between Parson's Tunnel and Teignmouth and recognise the importance of this. A working group was held on 10 February to consider access related elements and the following comments have been approved by the whole Forum. This response will be on the agenda for formal approval at the next meeting on 23 April.

The Forum has already produced two position statements relevant to this proposal; the first on greenspace and the other on disability access.

#### *Existing proposals*

The Forum recognises the importance of greenspace and green corridors to health and well-being. The resilience project proposals accord with some of its green space aspirations and in particular:

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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- 1) The wider seafront promenade walk, part of the South West Coast Path, is supported. The Forum notes and welcomes the wider viewing area at Sprey Point and the incorporation of benches.
- 2) The inland path, linking to the seaward path, will provide a circular walk for walkers, dog walkers and those with mobility vehicles and buggies.
- 3) The rail crossing and ramped access will improve safety and access for those with disabilities.
- 4) The ramps connecting Smugglers Lane to Holcombe Beach will enable improved access to this area.

#### *Additional aspirations for improved access*

Forum members made several observations and advises that these should be given further consideration at this early stage in the development process. There are opportunities to make further alignments to access and appropriate links.

- a) Ramps connect to Holcombe Beach but there is no provision for disabled parking at the bottom end of Smugglers Lane. This would be a welcome addition in enabling disabled users to make full use of this additional access.
- b) There is no ramped access leading to the beach at Sprey Point. This would not only improve access to this part of the beach for disabled users but also provide escape access to ensure disabled people are not cut-off at high tide. To minimise impact on the beach, the ramped access could be built into the revetment.
- c) Additional escape access steps should be included in the plans.
- d) The amenity area at Smugglers Lane could include seats and an interpretation/information board about the history of the area and development of the resilience project.
- e) The Forum's aspiration is to encourage provision of access for the maximum groups of users. This is a costly scheme of which access is only a small element. In this context, the Forum advises that cycle use should be explored along the new landward path. This would enable cyclists, including family groups, to cycle and enjoy sea views. A widening of the path from the planned 3m should be investigated to see whether it is technically feasible without impacting on the beach, as well as whether a segregated route would be beneficial in view of the anticipated popularity of a shared-use route. Calming measures, such as rumble strips, could be put in place. The Forum is aware of safety considerations around shared-use and 3m would be insufficient to allow safe use or a divided path. Not permitting cyclists could mean that, for example, families with small children who could otherwise use small bikes/trikes would therefore not be able to enjoy the full walk, and this does seem a missed opportunity.
- f) In conjunction with e) above, the provision of cycle racks would allow people to dismount and enjoy this area on foot. This would also encourage people to visit the area using more sustainable methods of transport.
- g) Sensitive low-level lighting may be appropriate to enable maximum and safe use of the area, particularly by users with visual impairment who often holiday in one of the Teignmouth hotels catering for their requirements.
- h) The aesthetics of the scheme, as viewed from open space and beaches, are critically important in terms of enjoyment.

*Consultation process and general comments*

The Forum would encourage involvement by young people in the consultation process, if this has not specifically been undertaken already.

It is hard to differentiate the full difference between what is there now and the current proposals and in particular impacts on the beach area at all levels of tide.

There does not appear to be any information on the impact of works on current recreational access to the area and how this will be addressed over the lengthy period of building work.

The Forum would encourage Network Rail to work with partners to ensure that travel links to the seawall from communities at both ends of the project are as sustainable as possible.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum would like to be kept informed as the plans develop and to be consulted on any access related proposals.

Yours faithfully



Hilary Winter  
Forum Officer

*Response sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum*

*Chair: Sarah Slade  
Vice Chair: Chris Cole*