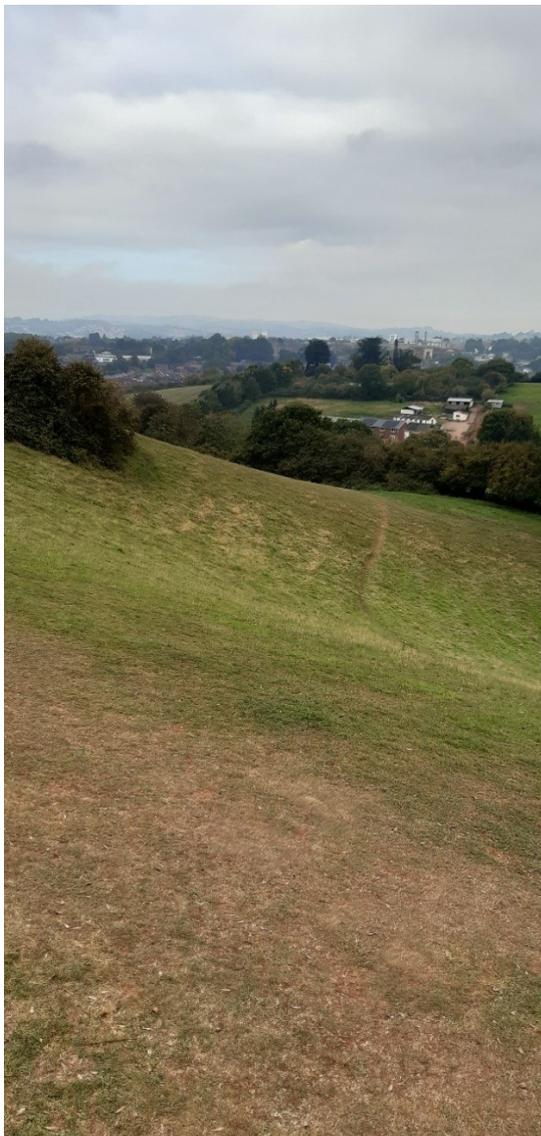


LUDWELL VALLEY PARK

Summary

As reported at the last meeting, a small working group consisting of Sarah Slade, Chris Cole, Gordon Guest and the Forum Officer, had met with the Reserves Manager and Site Manager from Devon Wildlife Trust. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss accessibility as the number of kissing gates preclude use by disabled users and people with pushchairs. This meeting took place in September under COVID-19 rules in place at the time.

Ludwell Valley Park is an extensive undulating park, 58ha in total, which includes woodland and agricultural land and is surrounded by housing and Pynes Hill business park. It adjoins a large area of playing fields and is particularly popular with dog walkers and runners. Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) took over the management of Ludwell Valley and other Exeter countryside parks on a 30-year lease from Exeter City Council in May 2019, an area of around 140ha.

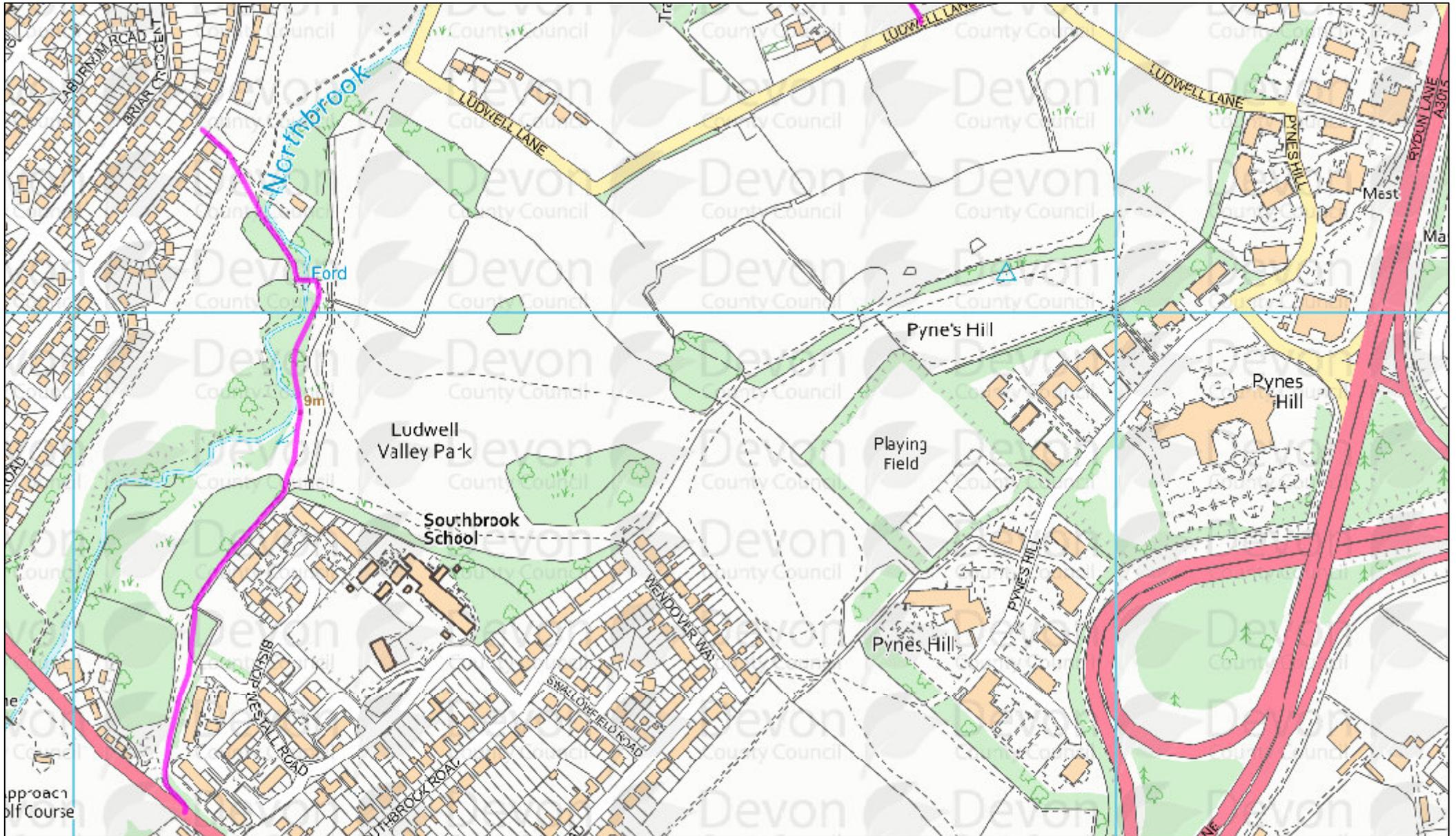


Looking east to the City from the ridge

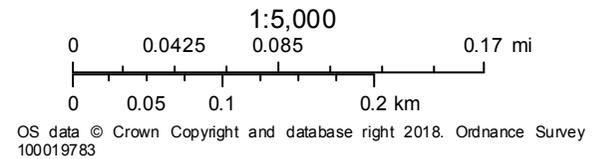


Looking north from the ridge

Devon County Council



January 12, 2021



As well as kissing gates on the periphery of the park, there are a significant number of kissing gates within the park plus field gates, footbridges and boardwalk bridges. Some of the field gates are associated with agricultural management of part of the land.



*Different entrances and types of path furniture in the park.
Photos top and bottom right by Gordon Guest.*

The working group looked at the park from the Topsham Road end and from Ludwell Lane and witnessed some of the challenges of the site, including grazing cattle and grassland management. Use of the park has increased significantly during lockdown periods in 2020/21 and higher numbers may well be sustained as people realise what is on their doorstep.

The DWT is keen to preserve the rural feel and improve biodiversity. As an urban park, it is managed differently to the DWT nature reserves. There are some urban fringe type issues associated with anti-social behaviour.

The working group, in discussions with the Devon Wildlife Trust staff, identified some areas which were potentially more accessible if phased changes could be made to

introduce accessible gates. Major improvements to surfacing had not been suggested as these were unnecessary and would reduce the countryside feel of the park. The top of the park and valley bottom presented particular opportunities where access could be improved. The group recognised the importance of cattle grazing and noted the Devon Wildlife Trust left existing gates open, where possible, when cattle were elsewhere.

The park presented an opportunity to incorporate cycling too, particularly for family groups, although there are cycling routes on the periphery of the park.

The working group offered to make specific recommendations following the next full Forum meeting.

Action

At the September 2020 meeting, the Devon Countryside Access Forum agreed to identify improvements and make some recommendations to the Devon Wildlife Trust and Exeter City Council. Within that context it is suggested that the Forum bears in mind the following comments.

The current Exeter City Council Parks and Green Space consultation identified some of the challenges in maintaining green space in the city, not least the “problems of financial pressures, especially on revenue (maintenance) budgets, increasing costs, and a legacy of previous reductions in maintenance over the past ten years to meet financial constraints. This leaves limited options to safely maintain the land and assets the council holds.” One of the themes in the accompanying ten year strategy document is “providing the evidence base to support future policy and practice to ensure that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts are appropriately allocated to support the development of parks and green space in a comprehensive and inclusive way across the city.”