



**Devon Countryside Access Forum
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Ms S Harper-Chung
Exe Estuary Management Partnership
c/o Devon County Council
Room 120
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
EX2 4QD

5 October 2021

Dear Ms Harper-Chung

Exe Estuary Management Plan 2022-2027

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 councils, the Environment Agency and Natural England who are partners in the Exe Estuary Partnership.

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.

Public Transport, Access and Land Based Recreation sub-theme

At its meeting on 21 September 2021, the DCAF considered the Exe Estuary Management Plan consultation questions on the above sub-theme as this falls within its remit.

70. Using bullet points please list up to THREE current issues for this Sub-Theme

1. Provision of disabled toilets. This is an existing policy in the current

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.

Management Plan (PTA6) and should remain as a priority in the revised Plan. Some toilets around the Exe Estuary are not wheelchair accessible and this deters use of the trail which is otherwise eminently suitable for disabled use. It is both the lack of availability and poor design of some existing facilities which needs to be addressed.

2. Promoting responsible and considerate use. The Trail is increasingly popular and more needs to be done to ensure users have a positive and enjoyable experience with minimal conflict with other users.
3. Promoting the Trail to disabled user groups.

71. Using bullet points please list up to THREE actions which could be taken to address the issues mentioned above.

1. Improve the design of some current disabled toilets, for example at Topsham, and explore funding to put in other facilities so that there is sufficient access. This should include discussions with pubs and other venues which might be able to improve their facilities.
2. Education about the importance of using the Trail responsibly and considerately. This could be a combination of signs, notices, social media and staff/volunteers on the Trail to engage with people.
3. Ensure that disability and specific health condition groups in the area are aware of the recreational and health and well-being benefits of using the Trail. This could be through weblinks and direct contact.

72. Do you feel the existing Policies for this Sub-Theme are relevant for the next 5 years?

Yes

73. Can you provide examples of any additional or amended Policies within this Sub-Theme which could be included in the 2022-2027 Management Plan?

- 1) Promoting the trail to schools and young people would encourage younger users.
- 2) Education about the importance of using the Trail responsibly and considerately. This could be a combination of signs, notices, social media and staff/volunteers on the Trail to engage with people.
- 3) There are sections on both sides of the estuary where the route is on-road and therefore less safe. This discourages some recreational and sustainable transport use. Increased efforts should continue to be made to secure better off-road provision through discussion with Network Rail and others.

The DCAF has also prepared an advisory note on trails and this is attached to assist in future management of the Exe Estuary Trail.

The Forum would welcome feedback on its comments.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum

Chair: Sarah Slade

Vic Chair: Chris Cole