



Devon Countryside Access Forum
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**Killerton Estate Vision
Stakeholder Consultation
March 2022**

Response from the Devon Countryside Access Forum

1. Do you feel the level of ambition for the habitat creation and land use change is:

Not ambitious enough

About right

Too ambitious

Comments

No comment submitted.

2. Do you feel the level of ambition for visitor access, enjoyment and sustainable movement, is:

Not ambitious enough

About right

Too ambitious

Comments

The Plan is a 50-year vision. Without a timeline, costings or indication of funding streams it is unclear what the delivery priorities are and where and when recreational improvements will take place. It would be very helpful to see a phased plan. The overall vision will require extensive partnership working and access to significant funding streams.

The significant focus within the Plan on improved access to the whole Killerton Estate, including Killerton House and grounds, Ashclyst Forest and the wider estate is welcome. Ashclyst Forest, for example, has the potential to benefit the physical and mental health of many more people through improved access and infrastructure.

While access/land use change is an important part of the vision, it has to be set in the wider context. Planning policy protects the best and most versatile land and, even where planning consent is not required, this is a principle that could usefully be applied to other changes in land use.

The change in land use also has an impact on recreational enjoyment. Significant areas are allocated for woodland/agro-forestry, and this will naturally change the recreational experience. Consideration needs to be given to this in planting regimes associated with new recreational paths/areas to ensure an enjoyable and scenic experience.

The aim to make the estate genuinely accessible for all will require consideration of path furniture such as stiles, kissing gates, steps and horse barriers which currently impede mobility scooter users or horse riders. A detailed plan is required to assess any barriers, working alongside tenant farmers. Much of the current estate adjacent to Killerton House, in Danes Hill wood and Ashclyst Forest and along the river is poorly designed for mobility scooter access and an accessibility audit is required.

Details for the visitor centre and hubs do not specifically mention mobility scooter access and accessible toilets.

Education and information are required to ensure that the working requirements of tenant farmers and conservation needs are respected. The plans will attract greater numbers of dog walkers, often walked off lead. Some dog control or dog restricted areas may be required to ensure wildlife benefits are not compromised.

Significantly increased visitor numbers will require sympathetic management in order to achieve the Plan's objectives and ensure future resilience. For example, visitors to Haldon Forest Park now number around 500,000 per annum. The growth of Cranbrook, Exeter and 7,000-10,000 new houses in Cullompton Garden Village will bring many more potential visitors. Safe routes to access the estate from these communities are highly desirable to avoid increased traffic.

Ensuring safe, sustainable access to the estate is imperative. The design of the proposed railway crossings and the green bridge should be accessible to all users, including horse riders and mobility scooters.

Traffic-free routes are important to encourage sustainable transport. The Clyst Valley Trail, 'quiet lanes' identified in the Plan and the proposed new bridleway are

prerequisites to the success of this. The quiet lanes proposals will require specific local consultation and should ensure vehicular access for residents is not impeded.

While safe, sustainable access is to be applauded, provision for car parking will still be required and in sufficient quantity as this will remain a destination serving a very wide area and, given limited joined-up alternative transport provision within Devon, will continue to need to be accessible to those arriving by car.

Mobility scooters are not currently allowed on Devon buses or trains and for wheelchair users the estate is some distance from bus stops. The estate potentially offers significant recreational opportunities for this growing group of users, particularly with the increased range of batteries.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the balance between attracting new groups and income generation.

3. Is the Plan compatible with your organisation's objectives?

Yes

Comments

The ambition to improve access to the estate and associated facilities falls within the Devon Countryside Access Forum's objectives. However, considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the many special places within the Estate are not lost and that the access experiences currently enjoyed by those visiting the estate are not denuded.

The proposed improved network of strategic routes by which people may access the Killerton Estate, on foot, by bike and using other sustainable means of transport, is welcome, recognising that careful consideration will be needed about detail. Improved links with Exeter, Cullompton and Cranbrook are obvious priorities. Likewise the focus given to improved public transport links are important and must be seen as more than a statement within the Plan.

4. Are you or your organisation willing to help deliver the Plan?

No

Comments

This is not within the scope of the Devon Countryside Access Forum which has no financial resources or staffing capacity.

5. Have we missed any challenges or opportunities?

Much access is presently low-key. Consideration will need to be given to increased usage and the safety and surfacing of paths. Currently access allows horses to move at various speeds and it would be a shame if this opportunity was lost.

6. Do you have any other comments?

Catchment areas for the Killerton Estate are defined in terms of “drive time”. A different mind-set might follow from use of “walk time”, “cycle time” or “public transport travel time”.

The categorisation of potential audiences into “good fit”, “medium fit” and “poor fit” needs further consideration. The rationale to include “University, City Centre, Poltimore, St Thomas, Exwick, Stoke Hill and Pennsylvania” as “poor fit” is not clear or meaningful, given the proximity to the Killerton Estate and their demographic characteristics, including pockets of deprivation. Equally, Cullompton, including the new garden village, is seen as only a medium fit. The estate will attract people from across the age spectrum.

More emphasis should be given to the scope for further work with local schools and other formal and informal educational settings in seeking to achieve the Plan’s objectives, including those related to access and sustainability.