



**Devon Countryside Access Forum  
c/o Public Rights of Way team  
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Mr B Grubb  
Senior Planning Officer  
Climate Change, Environment & Transport  
County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
EX2 2QD

30 August 2022

Dear Mr Grubb

### **A379 bridge – 1:12 cycleway**

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 county councils.

The DCAF currently has nineteen 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.

Thank you for consulting the Devon Countryside Access Forum on the proposed bridge over the A379, south west of Matford. This will be an important improvement to road safety, enabling pedestrians and cyclists to cross the busy road between housing and education areas. The Forum notes the reference to ‘inclusive mobility through the site has been a key factor in the layout of the Bridge and its approaches.’

A ramp of 1:12 on part of the bridge is on the cusp of acceptability and, ideally, a less steep gradient would have been greatly preferred. However, the DCAF notes the constraints of the site and problems associated with the landfill site. Your proposal to include some landing sections would be appreciated as these would enable resting

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.

places for people including mobility scooter and wheelchair users and those with pushchairs. As well as local residents, schools often have pupils with disabilities.

In its response to consultations on the new bridges at Sidmouth and Marsh Barton Station, the DCAF stressed the importance of landings referring to guidance from the Disabled Ramblers <C:\FAMILY\IAN\PROJECTS\Countryside for All\Guide\FinalEDIT2005\SHEETS.wpd> ([disabledramblers.co.uk](http://disabledramblers.co.uk)) and the Sensory Trust [Ramps and steps design and planning - Sensory Trust](#) These do vary in their recommendations but the DCAF advises that Devon County Council seek to achieve the highest number of landings possible given the steepness of the ramp.

The 3D illustration is helpful and the DCAF is very concerned at reference to a 'tricky step' from the landing area to the ramp. Any step leading off a ramp could be an obstacle or safety issue for those using mobility scooters or wheelchairs and the DCAF would welcome further details on this point. It could well mean users having to proceed further along the ramp without stopping when they need to do as they cannot negotiate the step. The landing areas need to be of sufficient length and also allow turning. The DCAF assumes that the ramp itself will have a non-slip surface. Given the importance of this bridge to the surrounding housing areas and schools, the DCAF advises that all efforts should be made to incorporate a design without a step to the landings so that the use of these is not compromised.

The recent publication from the Department of Transport on inclusive mobility (2022) states "The Countryside for All Good Practice Guide: A guide to Disabled People's Access in the Countryside defines two main types of non-urban context in which its recommendations apply: 'Urban fringe and managed landscapes', such as countryside areas near towns or managed recreation sites; and 'Rural and working landscapes', such as farmland and woodland with public rights of way. It recommends that there should be a resting place at least every 200 metres in 'Urban fringe and managed landscapes' and at least every 300 metres in 'Rural and working landscapes'. The gradient of paths in these two contexts should not exceed 1 in 12 and 1 in 10, respectively. There should also be level landings provided on all paths that have a gradient in excess of 1 in 20. Each landing should consist of a space with minimum dimensions of 1200mm (wide) x 1500mm (long), and a landing should be provided for every 750mm of vertical climb." [Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The Sustrans Greenways Design Guide (point 9.13) states that any access point should have a minimum clear width of 1.5 metres. In addition, any access point should be able to accommodate the design cycle vehicle (which is 1.2 metres wide x 2.8 metres long) [Sustrans traffic-free routes and greenways design guide - Sustrans.org.uk](#) A design cycle vehicle might include a tandem, cargo bike or wheelchair friendly tricycle.

If possible, benches on a viewing platform or landing would be an enhancement to the overall scheme and allow people to rest or socialise, for example parents or carers with pushchairs.

The capability of mobility scooters and wheelchairs has improved immeasurably in recent years but the basic principles of responsibility to improve access for all still apply. The public right of way currently crossing the road (Exminster FP 13a) will be diverted onto the new bridge which will encourage use.

The DCAF recommends that an Access Audit is carried out to ensure plans for the ramps and landing areas (and access onto these areas) meet accessibility requirements, as well as the safety audit you mention.

This response will be on the agenda of the Devon Countryside Access Forum's next meeting on 19 September for formal approval.

The DCAF would welcome feedback on its comments.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Hilary Winter.

Hilary Winter  
Forum Officer

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

*Chair: Sarah Slade*

*Vice Chair: Chris Cole*