



**Devon Countryside Access Forum  
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Mr M Saunders  
Sustainability Officer  
Strategic Development & Planning  
North Devon Council  
Barnstaple  
EX31 1DG

4 January 2023

Dear Mr Saunders

### **North Devon and Torridge Landscape Character Assessment**

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 and district councils and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

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.

This response submitted by the Devon Countryside Access Forum will be on the agenda for the next meeting on 31 January for formal approval.

The DCAF welcomes the inclusion of references to the public rights of way network in the Landscape Character Assessment. To achieve consistency it would be helpful if the public rights of way network could be highlighted for all the Devon Character Areas, with the exception of Lundy.

The review makes no reference to the England Coast Path and the associated spreading room available for recreational access. There may well be instances where Natural England has proposed roll-back provisions in its reports on the England Coast

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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Path, based on the National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping and subsequently approved by the Secretary of State, and this may impact on those areas in the Assessment where concern is raised about the resilience of the South West Coast Path. The Forum advises that the Assessment should reflect designation of the England Coast Path.

For consistency, green infrastructure links to facilitate sustainable recreation and travel, and connections to public rights of way and trails should be reflected in the plans for all Character Areas, with the exception of Lundy. This would accord with climate change policies.

A couple of the landscape guidelines include “Protect rural lanes and tracks and their associated hedges and flower-rich hedge-banks, resisting unsympathetic highways measures and intrusive signage” (page 9 of the DCA Combined document) and “Protect rural lanes and tracks and their associated hedgebanks, resisting unnecessary signage, lighting and other insensitive highways measures” (page 84 of the DCA Combined document). ‘Protect the natural qualities of rural lanes and tracks’ would be sufficient wording for these statements.

The Devon Countryside Access 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*  
*Vice Chair: Chris Cole*