



**Devon Countryside Access Forum
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East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust
Rolle Estate Office
Bicton Arena
East Budleigh
Budleigh Salterton
Devon EX9 7BL

21 November 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

**National Lottery Heritage Fund bid
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust**

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is aware of the significant importance of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths to recreational access in East Devon and the contribution it makes to supporting health and wellbeing. This was demonstrated particularly during COVID-19 when visitor numbers to the Heaths increased markedly. The Pebblebed Heaths is an important area of access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Clinton Devon Estates has given additional permission for horse riders and cyclists to use the heaths. It therefore represents one of few areas in Devon which can be enjoyed by a range of access users and is a key area for dog walking too.

The growth of population to the east of Exeter and in particular the new town of Cranbrook provides an opportunity to engage with new audiences. The town is expected to house 20,000 people by 2027 and East Devon as a whole has seen population growth of 13.8% between 2011-2021. Whilst there are a number of green space areas and SANGS sites (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) in the vicinity, these do not offer the space and interest afforded by the Pebblebed Heaths and it is inevitable that more people will seek to visit. This will put additional pressure on the Pebblebed Heaths and a programme of education and engagement with the nearby population is critical to ensure the benefits of health and wellbeing and, importantly, to increase understanding

so that the internationally recognised biodiversity status of the site as a National Nature Reserve is appreciated and valued.

In its responses to consultations over the past few years the Devon Countryside Access Forum has highlighted issues around responsible dog ownership and the key role of education in addressing this, as well as increasing awareness of the Countryside Code so that users of the countryside are able to respect it and enjoy their experience.

Additional resources for a Community Engagement Ranger would enable the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust to build on its existing and excellent work with the community and expand its engagement and education work. The Devon Countryside Access Forum is aware from published research that many groups are under-represented in using the countryside including those from ethnic minority groups, people with special needs, young people and people living in deprived communities. This project will assist the Pebblebed Heaths to take further positive and proactive work to reach these groups and build up its programme of activities as well as creating opportunities for more volunteer engagement. This will benefit the health and wellbeing of the local community as well as helping to protect and nurture the Heaths as a National Nature Reserve.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum supports the application made by the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust for grant funding.

Yours faithfully



Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of Devon Countryside Access Forum.

Chair: Sarah Slade.

Vice Chair: Chris Cole

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, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Secretary of State for any Government Department.

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.