

**Stakeholder Consultation - Forest Management carried out by Forestry  
England (SA-FM/COC-006972 & SA-PEFC-FM-006972)**

**Devon Countryside Access Forum response**

**Name of Forest Management Organisation or Forest**

West District (Devon)

**Contact Details**

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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 the Forestry Commission.

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.

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**Comments**

**Which site do your comments refer to?**

Comments are general with specific examples from Haldon Forest Park.

**Do you have any positive comments about this organisation's forest management? \***

The Devon Countryside Access Forum appreciates the recreational opportunities afforded by Forestry England. The Forum responded to the forest management survey in 2021 and was pleased to receive comments from the auditor. A number of

new matters have been raised to bring to your attention in assessing forest management carried out by Forestry England.

### **Inclusion**

The Forum welcome the support Forestry England provides to schools and other educational establishments to help access and enjoy the nation's forests. It recognises the extraordinary success of venues such as Haldon Forest Park in Devon in providing access to a wide range of facilities and resources to individuals and groups of all ages from the local area and much further afield. It suggests that ways should be found to enable a wider range of users to visit through, for example, links with public transport and concessionary car parking.

### **Health and wellbeing**

The Forum also recognises the benefits to mental and physical health from access to forested areas throughout Devon, with minimal resource provision, for the purposes of quiet recreation.

### **Do you have any negative comments about this organisation's forest management? \***

#### **Maintenance**

At popular and well-used forest sites, for example Haldon Forest Park, cycling, mountain biking and walking routes can become overgrown with vegetation reducing the width available to users. This is evident in high growth seasons and Forestry England may need to review maintenance regimes on narrow paths in particular.

#### **Access use**

At popular sites where there is a large mix of different user groups including cyclists, mountain bikers, horse riders and dog walkers, Forestry England needs to proactively look at how user groups are accommodated to minimise conflict. Issues might include the safe provision of horse box parking, clear marking of routes for different users and reducing areas of risk, for example proximity of horse riding and mountain bike routes, and location of zip wire courses. This has become more apparent as use of such sites has increased markedly.

#### **Communication**

The Forum is aware that sometimes communication is not as effective and timely as it could be. In any woodland, the management of disease in trees such as ash, plus more extreme weather conditions, has meant that woodland management has had to respond far more quickly than previously. There appears to be far more felling on a larger scale. This has meant the closure of footpaths and the disruption of the land and wildlife. This affects the appearance of the forest and can get a negative response from users. Forestry England is recommended to improve communication with users to inform them why the work is being carried out, how long it will take, any

environmental measures in place to offset disruption and future plans for those areas. Communicating policies on replanting for both commercial and environmental reasons would be helpful.

### **Event management**

More specifically on events, the Forum would welcome an update on the Event Zones previously proposed and the extent to which affected groups are being consulted. One member of the Forum with experience in this area suggests that the new on-line system for permission to hold an event or activity on Forestry England land will need time to bed-in. It is suggested that it would be appropriate for Forestry England to provide target times and service standards by which it responds to permission requests as advance notifications of events need to be submitted at least 8 weeks prior to an event taking place.

**Are there any unresolved conflicts between the forest manager and yourself or another individual / organisation? \***

No response.

**Do you have any suggested modifications which you would like to be considered in the next revision of the FSC Standard?**

Please see comments above.

**Are there any individuals or organisations we should consult who we may not have contacted already?**

No response.

***Submitted by Hilary Winter on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum.***

***Chair: Sarah Slade; Vice Chair: Chris Cole***