

DEVON LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Fourth public meeting to be held in the Fortescue Room
County Hall, Exeter on
TUESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 10.00 a.m.

AGENDA

1. **ATTENDANCE**
2. **MINUTES of the meeting held on July 11 2003**
3. **MATTERS ARISING:**
 - 3.1 Letterhead and webpage (3.1)
 - 3.2 [Feedback by members from other meetings](#) (3.2) (attached)
 - 3.3 Presentation pack (3.5)
 - 3.4 Devon LAF budget (3.7)
 - 3.5 Draft Access maps (7)
 - 3.6 Work Plan (8)
4. **CORRESPONDENCE**
 - 4.1 Dartmoor National Park
 - 4.2 Ordnance Survey (attached)
 - 4.3 [DEFRA Consultation](#) (Regulations relating to the Removal or Relaxation of General Restrictions on Access Land under Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) (Response attached)
 - 4.4 [Countryside Agency consultation](#) (Open Access Symbol. Proposed Guidelines for use) (Response attached)
5. **Report on progress on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan**
6. [Working Groups](#) (attached)
7. **Dates, venues and topics for meetings in 2004**

Coffee
8. **PRESENTATION by Roland Pyle, Local Transport Plan Officer, DCC**
9. **DISCUSSION - Issues affecting access to the countryside for cyclists and those with limited mobility will be discussed with representatives from those user groups**
10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Meeting is scheduled to finish at 1.30 p.m.

Notice of public questions should be submitted in writing to the Devon Local Access Forum Secretary three days before a meeting of the Devon LAF. However, at the Chairman's discretion, members of the public may be able to speak during meetings to make points relating to matters raised during debate.

Hilary Winter
Devon Local Access Forum Secretary

DEVON LAF MEMBERS OUT AND ABOUT

Terry Faull visited the Ruby Country rural regeneration project, based in the Holsworthy/Hatherleigh area and funded by the local authorities, the Devon Wildlife Trust and the Leader Project. The project encompasses environmental and cultural aspects of the area and includes developing a series of Trails using existing rights of way, forestry and farm trails for walking, cycling and riding. This will include multi-user trails and access for less able user groups. More details about the Ruby Country Initiative on www.the.rubycountry.com

John Skinner was one of a number of speakers at a Women's Institute/Townswomen's Guild event hosted by Clinton Devon Estates to discuss the CroW Act. He has been invited to speak about CRoW to the Okehampton Area Committee of Parish Councils in November.

He attended a useful Conference at Sheffield organised by Ramblers' Central Office for ramblers on Local Access Forums. This was attended by over 60 people and included sessions on Rights of Way Improvement Plans, closures and restrictions and working with other recreational users on forums. John found this helpful and it was clear forums are developing differently across England.

DEFRA Consultation Paper on Regulations relating to the Removal or Relaxation of General Restrictions on Access Land under Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

The Devon LAF members considered this Consultation Paper. Unfortunately, due to the short time-period for consultation it was not possible to debate the implications of the options in a full meeting and this response is compiled from the individual replies of members.

There was some support for Options 1 and 2 (one member for each Option) but the majority of responses received favoured Option 3 (five members).

Option 1 provides for the simplest, most informal and least bureaucratic option but there might be a lack of clarity about when and what restrictions had been relaxed, without adequate signing and information. This might lead to misunderstandings between users and landowners. There is no duty under Option 1 to inform the public.

Option 2 provides for a defined notification process but lacks the additional benefit of providing information to the public.

The role of the Devon LAF is to promote access and, as part of this process, the public should be provided with full information. It was felt by the majority of respondents that Option 3 maximised this and, in addition, made better provision for changes in access restrictions to be made in the future.

Those members favouring Option 3 took the view that the public should know why and when any access conditions are amended and this Option allows for a standardised system. If Option 3 is the favoured and adopted option it is vital that the accompanying regulations are brief, unambiguous and clear and simple for both landowners and the relevant authority to follow. The accompanying forms should similarly be short and easy to complete. If the system is too complicated it may discourage landowners from applying to relax or remove restrictions. The way in which the public is informed of changes is a key issue.

I trust these comments will receive consideration.

R O Harvey
Chairman
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28/01/04
Devon LAF/4

COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY
Open Access Symbol

Proposed Guidelines for use

The Devon Local Access Forum welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed access symbols. It recognises that signing of new access land is important in increasing awareness of access opportunities available to members of the public and that those signs should be identifiable and easy to understand.

Whilst welcoming additional signing, members of the Devon LAF were anxious that the signs should be clear but not be too intrusive in the landscape. The selected colour should be sufficiently bright but not lurid. Members were divided on which of the three colour alternatives would be most appropriate.

Members of the forum would have preferred to have been consulted on a range of design options for the proposed sign and not just on a limited number of colour choices. The open access symbol design did not have much support.

The Devon LAF has two other major concerns. The first relates to the expense of producing the signs and how this will be financed. Will the responsibility lie with the Countryside Agency or with the relevant highway authority? Secondly, it is important that the logo design receives full publicity so that the public is clear about the new rights and responsibilities conveyed by the sign.

R O Harvey
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6 October 2003

Devon LAF Working Groups

Recommendation: That the Devon LAF set up a small number of Working Groups to address specific issues. A couple of examples are given below but there may be other Working Groups that need to be established to further the LAF's work, either on a permanent or short-term basis.

Working Group 1

To meet as and when required to look at a Devon LAF response to any consultation papers put out by government departments, quangos or Devon County Council. At present, consultations frequently fall between meetings and there is not the opportunity to debate any proposals.

The formation of a Working Group would allow some discussion and proper analysis of the issues before a reply was sent to the appropriate organisation.

The Working Group would report back to a later Devon LAF meeting.

The Working Group would ideally have five members, representing both access users and land managers. Other Devon LAF members would have the option to attend if the subject was of particular interest to them. All LAF members would be circulated with the proposed response prior to the deadline date for a consultation and prior to the formal LAF response being sent.

Working Group 2

Within the context of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan a system needs to be devised to establish which rights of way should have priority in terms of funding. The Devon LAF has been asked to look at and suggest a points scoring system whereby the relative merits of different possible routes can be assessed. This would enable the merits of one scheme to be judged against another or the matrix could be used to assess different alternative routes for a new scheme. This would involve looking at the impact of the route, what would be the benefits, cost implications, time-scale and other relevant aspects.

A Working Group, consisting of five or six members, could meet during the period November to January and report back to the main meeting in February. The Working Group would be given appropriate guidance and a briefing paper detailing other scoring matrixes that currently exist.