

## Who are the members?

	Expertise	Interests
<b>Alison Clish-Green</b>	Borough Councillor	Teaching, environment, conservation, walking
<b>Terry Faull</b> (Chairman 2009/10)	General interests	Landscape history, countryside interpretation, walking, environmental/community
<b>Tim Felton</b> (Vice-Chairman 2009/10)	General interests	Barrister, lecturer in law, horse-riding, walking, running
<b>Peter Grainger</b>	Access user	Cycling, walking, health, disabled access and environmentally friendly travel
<b>Bob Harvey</b> (Co-Chairman 2009/10)	Landowner	Landscape conservation, woodland regeneration, dog walking
<b>Robin Head</b>	Landowner	Farming, farm tourism
<b>Patrick Healy</b>	Wheelchair user	Multi-use, access for all, disabled access
<b>Tom Holway</b>	Access user	Walking, parish paths and rights of way, motor sport and vehicular access
<b>John Hunt</b>	Land management	Forestry, walking, photography
<b>Christine Ingram</b>	Access user	Horse-riding, multi-use, tourism, cycling, dog walking
<b>Dr Justin Robbins</b>	Access user	Health, dog walking, leisurely cycling, canoeing, access rights
<b>Julie Rudge</b>	Access user	Walking, riding, cycling, art, the coastline, researching lost ways
<b>Philip Sanders</b>	County Councillor	Chairman of the Public Rights of Way Committee
<b>John Skinner</b>	Access user	Walking, cycling, CRoW access issues, rights of way
<b>Sarah Slade</b>	Landowner	Rural surveyor, farming, horse-riding, walking

Further details on members' interests and involvements can be seen on:-

[www.devon.gov.uk/devon\\_countryside\\_access\\_forum](http://www.devon.gov.uk/devon_countryside_access_forum)



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Thorndon Cross opening.  
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## Funding Bids

The Forum was pleased to support two successful funding bids:

1. Trumper buggy provision at key access sites, submitted by Living Options to Natural England's Access to Nature Fund.
2. Business and tourism activity in the area around Holsworthy, submitted by the Ruby Country Partnership Ltd to the Greater Dartmoor Local Enterprise Action Fund and Leader 4 Torridge and North Devon Local Action Group. This will complement Devon County Council's investment in equestrian route development in the area.

## Liaison and Networking

- The Chairman and three members were present at the opening of Phase 1 of the strategic bridleway at Thorndon Cross.
- The Chairman attended meetings of SW Local Access Forum Chairmen.
- The Chairman gave evidence at the local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 Panel Hearing.
- The Co-Chairman arranged some networking meetings with neighbouring LAF Chairmen.
- Members supported the Public Rights of Way team at local agricultural shows.
- Members attended Parish Paths Partnership (P3) workshops.
- The Forum was represented at:
  - A Commons Day, organised by DCC, to explain the Commons Act 2006

- A Higher Level Stewardship meeting with DCC and Natural England
- A Natural England day on its coastal access implementation proposals
- Local Development Framework meetings

The Forum attempts to measure its effectiveness, a challenging task as outcomes from submissions to consultations may not be known for a long time.



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## Contact Details



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The DCAF is funded by Devon County Council and operates within a yearly budget of £5,150 plus a part-time officer. Devon County Council receives funding for this from the annual central government block grant.

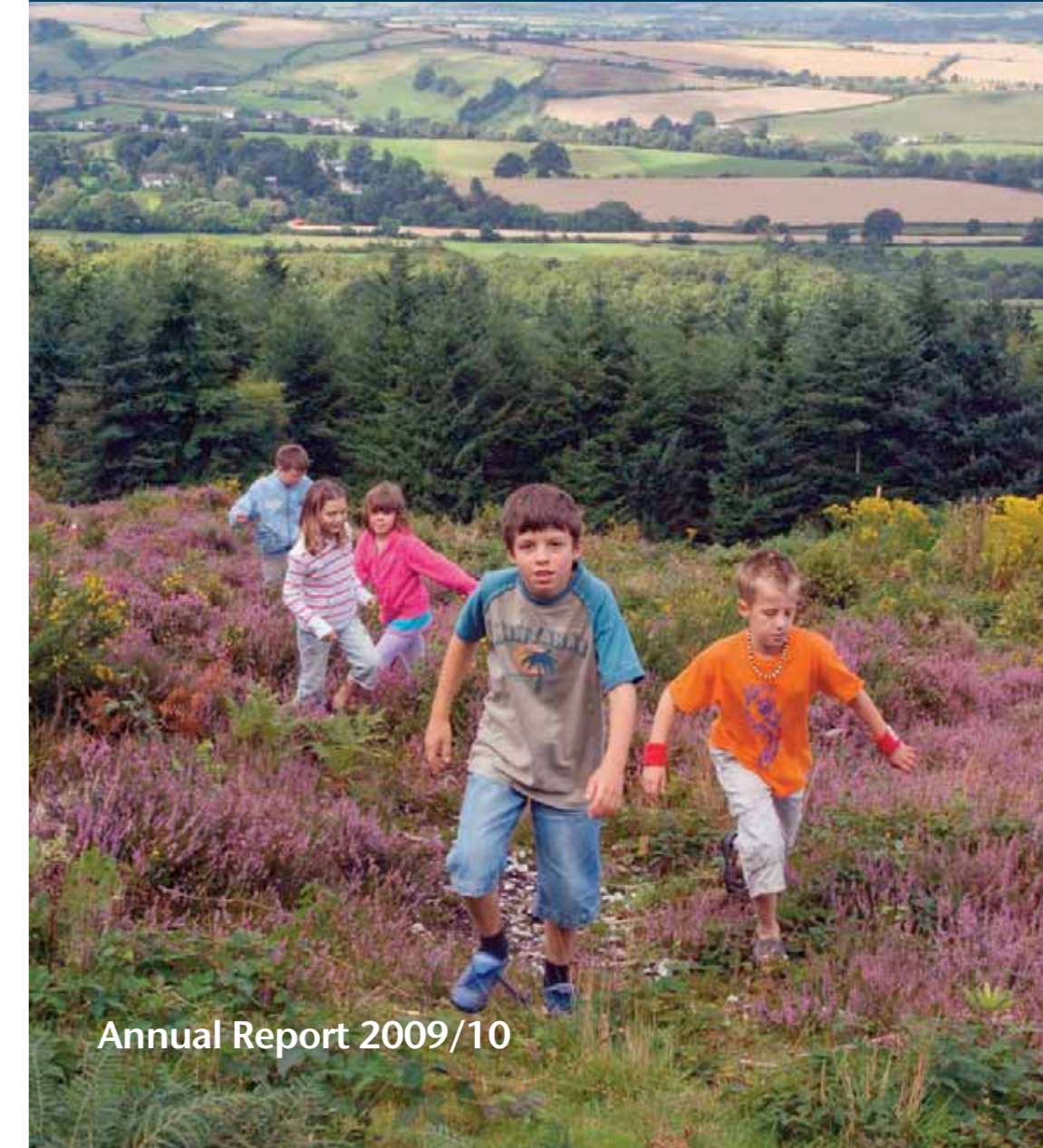
Front cover photograph © Forestry Commission



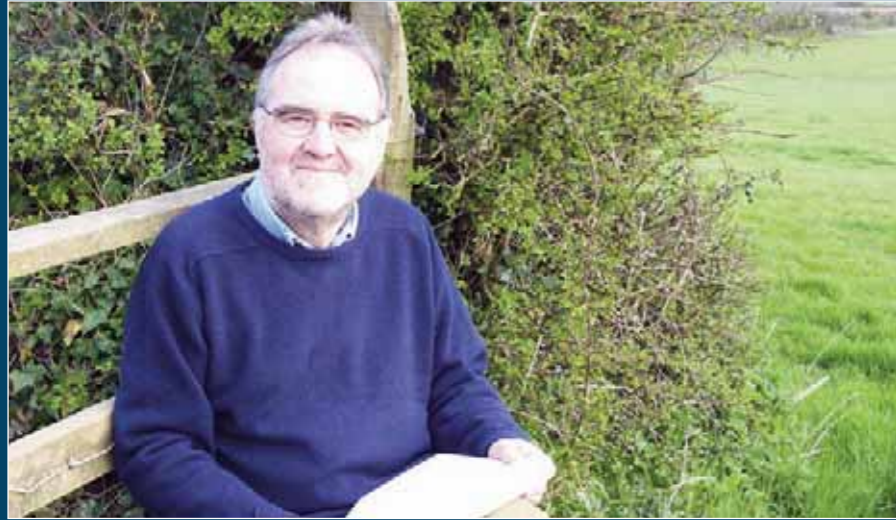
DCAF agenda papers, minutes and responses to consultations can be viewed on:-  
[www.devon.gov.uk/devon\\_countryside\\_access\\_forum](http://www.devon.gov.uk/devon_countryside_access_forum)

Please contact the Forum Officer if you require paper copies or information in a different language or format.

Members of the public are welcomed at DCAF meetings and may send in questions, provided these reach the Forum Officer three days before a meeting.



Annual Report 2009/10



The Forum's statutory role is to provide independent advice about improving public access to the countryside for enjoyment and recreation. This year there has been much to celebrate as new initiatives across Devon have increased ways of enjoying the open air. Walking Festivals have been held in several parts of the County, major investment is being made in cycle routes, motorised wheel chairs for access to key countryside sites are being provided under the Countryside Mobility (SW) Project and there are plans to improve the bridleway network. There is growing awareness of the value of walking and access to green spaces in promoting good health. Everywhere there are opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to explore and enjoy the countryside and coast using the rights of way network and other trails. The Forum has been able to encourage, support and advise on these and many other matters.

The core of our work is to provide constructive advice to central and local government bodies. During the year, the Forum has commented on a number of local authority strategic plans and on proposals from statutory agencies which will affect the future of the coast, the public woodland estate and the wider landscape in Devon. We have tried to balance the interests of good land management with the reasonable demand for increased access to the countryside.

Achieving this balance is often not an easy task. Farmers and land owners now mostly understand that, in return for public financial support, they have to accept an interest in their work and an expectation of better access. Countryside users need to appreciate the reasonable demands and restrictions needed in a working landscape. These tensions were especially evident in our consideration of government proposals for a coastal access path; the Forum broadly welcomed this but with some reservations about practical implementation on the ground.

Change is a constant. This year a new County Council was elected and while there is every expectation that it will wish to build on Devon's excellent rights of way work, the Forum has been alert to the need to provide advice to enable this to continue. Other agencies including Natural England and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are under pressure and we continue to support their work to maintain quality countryside access.

My sincere thanks to all members of the Forum, to the officers of the County Council and especially to our Forum Officer for all the commitment and hard work shown throughout this year.

**Terry Faull**  
Chairman 2009/10

## What is the Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF)?

The Forum is an independent statutory body under sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, with the responsibility to advise on ways of improving public access to land for open-air recreation and enjoyment. Its members are appointed by Devon County Council.

During the year the Secretary of State removed water access as part of the Forum's statutory remit but the Forum may continue to give informal advice in this area. The legislation requires the Forum to give advice to the following organisations which must have regard to any relevant recommendations:

- Devon County Council
- District and borough councils
- The Secretary of State for any Government department
- Natural England
- The Forestry Commission
- English Heritage
- Sport England
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conservation Boards
- Parish and town councils

The Forum aims to influence the policy decision-making processes of those organisations, taking into account the broad range and balance of local and wider interests. The Forum may occasionally get involved in local access issues where these are seen to have wider implications or could inform the development of good practice.

## How is the Devon Countryside Access Forum structured?

The Forum has a membership of fifteen, representing a reasonable balance of interests between those who manage land and those who use it for recreation. Other more general interests such as law, tourism and health are also represented. Members are volunteers, receiving standard travel expenses.

In April 2009, Devon County Council reappointed Cllr Alison Clish-Green, Patrick Healy, Robin Head and Julie Rudge for a further three-year term. New member John Hunt was appointed. Terry Faull was elected Chairman and Tim Felton Vice-Chairman with Bob Harvey as Co-Chairman. Following the County Council elections Cllr Philip Sanders replaced Cllr Joe Tucker as a member in his role as Chairman of the Public Rights of Way Committee.



South West Coast Path  
© Tom Hynes

## What has the Forum achieved in 2009/10?

### Consultations

During the year the Forum responded to a number of consultations, the most significant being:-

### National

- **Consultation on proposals to amend the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for coastal land, Defra**  
Following the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Forum responded to potential CROW Act 2000 amendments. The focus was predominantly on the interpretation of spreading room around the trail, requirements for dog control and the definitions of gardens and cultivated land.
- **Study of the Public Forest Estate, Forestry Commission**  
The Forum emphasised the importance of Forestry Commission land for safe off-road access and recreation and the significant opportunities it had to deliver health benefits. Particular points were raised about the suitability of forestry land for easy access

trails for those with limited mobility; the potential to work with adjoining landowners to maximise access benefits; and the need to develop fair charging policies, preferably free for all informal recreational use by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

- **Coastal Access Scheme implementation, Natural England**  
The Forum will be involved in the implementation process for coastal access. Whilst Devon is fortunate in having a coast path there are some gaps in the route and formal designation of spreading room either side of the trail and along estuaries will also be part of the process.

The Forum advised it would be helpful to know how the coastal route and spreading room would be depicted on Ordnance Survey maps. Concern was expressed about differing messages on dog control and land management issues associated with keeping bulls. The Forum suggested an independent mediation process as one of the stages. The Forum questioned the interpretation of 'significant loss of income' in assessing the impact on land managers and the possible need for compensation.

### South West

- **Draft Sustrans SW Regional Plan**  
The Forum acknowledged the contribution made by Sustrans to cycle route development in the County. The Forum made a number of recommendations, including the need to incorporate multi-use as an aspiration in the plan and to ensure clearer identification of the consultation process for route development.

### Devon

- **Local Development Framework strategies**  
The Forum commented on a number of Local Development Framework strategies using its position statement. These focussed on the need to incorporate and link rights of way and green infrastructure in new housing developments.



Cyclists on the Tarka Trail



© Forestry Commission

- **Draft Strategy for the Management and Promotion of the Recreational Route Network in Devon, Devon County Council**  
The Forum welcomed the strategy's proposals. The Forum suggested that it needed to include greater consultation with landowners and more opportunities for horse-riders. It also advised on how routes might be promoted and identified the need for guidance on the management of dogs on routes across farm land.
- **Public Rights of Way Guidance Note, Devon County Council**  
The Forum commented on the contents of a Guidance Note designed to encourage parishes to identify and seek funding for rights of way improvements.
- **North Devon District Council**  
In response to a proposed Dog Fouling Order covering open land, the Forum recognised the importance of the problem but drew attention to the difficulties of enforcement; the need for education, particularly with regard to tourists; the impact on land managers' dogs and lack of a consistent approach across districts.

## Public Meetings

During 2009/10 the Forum held three public meetings and a number of working groups. Due to timing constraints, some responses to consultations were agreed for ratification at the next public meeting.

## Training

Members had a fascinating tour round the Devon Record Office with the Principal Archivist. They viewed a range of historical documents used by Definitive Map Review staff to research claims. Techniques used to conserve old documents were explained.

Members visited the Neroche Project, a scheme covering 35km of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the borders of Devon and Somerset, which has received substantial funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The group was accompanied by James Maben, Neroche Project Officer, who discussed an easy access trail; bridleway surfacing; a multi-use trail and the interpretation, conservation and access improvements associated with a Scheduled Ancient Monument. John Presgrave also spoke to the Forum about Project Phoenix, a complementary scheme to link bridleway development and horse riding routes in the area. Forum members were encouraged by the work achieved by the Neroche Project which has lessons which could be developed elsewhere.



DCAF members at the Neroche Project

## Presentations at Meetings

### October 2009

Graham Cornish, Project Manager with DCC, gave a presentation on developing the cycle network in Devon, a long term commitment of the Council. Pictures clearly illustrated some of the engineering challenges involved, particularly on viaducts or bridges. Members raised points about the type of surfacing on cycle routes and consultation processes and reinforced previous advice on the need to ensure that Rights of Way Improvement Plan policies on multi-use (shared use with horse-riders) were implemented.

### February 2010

Emily Stallworthy, Green Infrastructure (GI) Officer DCC, spoke about progress on Devon County Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy, the importance of GI to health and well-being and the need to incorporate it in planning policies.

*At all meetings the Public Rights of Way Officers brief members on the Public Rights of Way Action Plan and Rights of Way Improvement Plan projects.*