

Devon Local Access Forum - November
UPDATE ON OPEN ACCESS – Naomi Archer, Access Land Officer

Signing Sites

The intention is to sign each site over a reasonable time period. However, sites with particular management issues will need to be dealt with first, for example those with nesting curlews.

Currently signs are put up on the second visit to each site following agreement and discussion with the landowner. To date 30 sites have been visited, including the larger areas and twenty of these sites have been signed. All sizeable sites should be signed before spring 2006.

Decisions on signing isolated and small parcels of land that do not connect to roads and public rights of way is a different issue and will need to be explored further. There are 58 sites currently considered too small to sign which offer no prospect of a reasonable walk.

Signs

It has been decided that a small text sign explaining that the land is Access Land and when dogs must be kept on leads is more suitable for the most obvious access points. These new signs have been ordered. The Access Land symbol will be used at secondary access points.

Restrictions on access

Devon Birds are carrying out survey work and decisions will be made when this is completed. (first phase will be March - May 2006), They will be making recommendations based on their observations of bird and human behaviour, etc. Actual closures are not anticipated but people may be directed away from the most sensitive areas. However, if the Devon Birds survey results in clear recommendations for closures, then Devon County Council would press for this.

Infrastructure changes

Most of the sites are currently accessible through existing gates or are unfenced. New furniture to date includes fourteen gates at Gittisham Hill, one at Fernworthy Down (giving access off a cycle path) and wooden posts at Chimney Down to prevent vehicular access.

Countryside Agency

It remains difficult to contact the Open Access Centre by telephone and the website is not always convenient.