

## **Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 – Panel Hearings**

### **Devon Local Access Forum - Bob Harvey, Hilary Winter & Terry Faull**

#### **Introduction**

- Devon's greatest asset is its countryside and therefore access to it.
- The Devon Local Access Forum was established by Devon County Council as a statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is an independent advisory body and its function is to advise the appointing authority and other bodies on open-air recreation and enjoyment.
- The Local Access Forum has a balanced membership of;
  - access users
  - landowners/managers
  - those with other relevant interests
- Its advice takes account of:
  - needs of land management
  - the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area
  - Statutory Guidance
- The main roles of the Devon Local Access Forum are;
  - implementation of new Open Access land ("mountain, moor, heath and down")
  - advising on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan through commenting on opportunities for access and assisting the highway authority in setting priorities
  - advising on a wide range of access issues
- Work requires 'lateral thinking' (Alun Michael MP, Minister for Rural Affairs and Local Environmental Quality)
- Rights of Way are a fundamental strength of Devon's tourism network

#### **Key Issues Concerns**

- Encourage walking and cycling as a way of promoting health. Health links very important.
- 27% growth of cars and vans between 1991-2001. 80% of all countryside trips by car.
- Increasing longevity of pensioners.
- More people would take part if more provision.
- Many parishes don't have ROW for riding and cycling
- Need to develop profitable, less intensive farming systems which can accommodate access needs of residents and visitors
- Fresh look needed at ROW – what are they for – for example, used to be path to school, then path to work, now only path for leisure. Does its route need adjusting?
- More people are coming for weekends and short stay breaks. There are changing habits amongst visitors to and within Devon.
- Quality of life in Devon has something to do with ROW network – why people move here – The countryside, natural and historic environment.

- Leisure journeys and work journeys are different, but both need proper consideration.
- Remember rights of way are part of the Highway network.
- Access users include walkers, cyclists and horse-riders and increasingly those with limited mobility. Access use has an economic benefit.
- Walkers, horse-riders and cyclists all face hazardous crossings, for example where the bridleway crosses the busy A386 at Skitt Lane.
  - Need safe crossings
  - Circular walks
- Speed and size of vehicles are dangerous and reduce enjoyment.
- DCC missed opportunities by opening a cycle track and not assessing whether it would be appropriate for horse-riders too.

### **Recommendations**

1. Establish a number of quiet lanes schemes especially adjacent to well used Rights of Way and at strategic places on main routes such as the Tarka Trail, Two Moors Way and the Ruby Trails.
2. Ensure that consultation procedures are put in place so that when new highways are planned or major improvements carried out, that the implications for ROW are adequately considered especially ways of improving linkages, integration and design.
3. Ensure that needs of specialised highway users are considered and, where appropriate, funding for multi-use highways is provided.
4. Establish a continuing programme to ensure that the status of unclassified highways such as byways, white roads and unrecorded routes is clarified and mapped.
5. Integrate the LTP and ROWIP and ensure that there is an adequate funding stream to implement the ROWIP and to take advantage of the opportunities which would arise from such an holistic approach to transport planning and policy.