

4.3 The Wider Context

This section provides objectives, policies and actions which will help to deliver wider benefits relating to the environment, tourism and economic development, health and agriculture, much of which will involve partnership work.

4.3A Environment

Objective

To ensure that the management of public rights of way and access respects Devon's environment

In the consultation on the draft RoWIP the environment was raised as a key issue. The county's distinctive appearance and character is made up of a complex interplay between its urban areas, rural settlements, countryside, wildlife habitats, geological and historical environment. In order to protect this environment now and in the future it is important to ensure that people appreciate and understand it. The rights of way network forms an important part of the overall landscape, is an historic asset in its own right and can be used to raise environmental awareness. The potential negative effects of recreation should not be over-stated in comparison to other land uses such as forestry, mineral workings and agriculture.

Devon's environment has an importance that extends beyond its local area. Almost half of the area of the county has some form of designation from international and European statutory designations to national, local and other non-statutory designations. Map 5 shows the location of some of these designated areas. More information about designations can be found in Appendix 3D at www.devon.gov.uk/rowip. The Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016 Policy CO1 requires that "the distinctive qualities and features of Devon's landscape...should be sustained and enhanced" and that "policies and proposals within each part of Devon should be informed by and sympathetic to its landscape character and quality". While much of the county has been designated to reflect its high quality and diverse landscape and character, the scale and quality of much of the remaining undesignated landscape makes it important that we should also consider the effect of any proposal on all areas within Devon.

Policies and Actions









Environmentally sensitive management

- E1A** The objectives of the County Council's Role and Action Programmes for Biodiversity, Coast, Historic Environment and Landscape will be considered when managing public rights of way and access.
- E1B** Opportunities will be sought to improve the environment and appreciation of it through works and promotional information, for example, seeking to improve the landscape corridor along national and regional routes.
- E1C** The diversion or creation of public rights of way which afford links to appropriate environmental, geological or historical sites will be supported, in consultation with relevant bodies and with due regard to the relevant legislation.
- E1D** The diversion of public rights of way will be considered where there is evidence that they adversely affect or may adversely affect very sensitive environmental, geological or historical sites, in consultation with relevant bodies and in the light of relevant legislation and protective policies.



Map 5. Location of designated areas in Devon



- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
|  | National Park |  | Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site |
|  | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |  | Braunton Burrows Biosphere Reserve |
|  | Coastal Preservation Area |  | County Boundary |
|  | Area of Great Landscape Value |  | District Boundary |

Designated land

E2 The integrity, conservation objectives and sustainable use of all Designated Land (International, National and Local Designations including other non-statutory environmental designations) will be promoted in partnership with the relevant land managers in the light of relevant legislation and protective policies.

"In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty- Section 85 of the CRoW Act".

Protected species

- E3** Proposals which are likely to have an adverse effect on protected species will only be permitted in accordance with the relevant legislation, where there are no practical alternatives and if measures have been taken to:
- i. facilitate the survival of individual members of the species;
 - ii. reduce disturbance to a minimum; and
 - iii. provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of population in a local context.

Culture and heritage

- E4** Account will be taken of cultural and heritage features when managing the public rights of way network.

Climate change

- E5** An assessment will be made of the likely impacts of climate change on public rights of way in the short, medium and long term, in particular where they are adjacent to water courses and the coast.

4.3B Tourism and Economic Development

Objective

To ensure that public rights of way and access add to the economic benefits of Devon's tourism

Tourism plays a major role in the economy of the county. The Devon County Council Tourism Role and Action Programme (RAP) Tourism: Everybody's Business makes the point that the coast, countryside and National Park areas of Devon are a major tourism and recreational resource. One of the main ways in which people can access this resource is through the public rights of way network. Tourism is a key sector of Devon's economy and helps to support 13 percent of Devon's workforce, equating to 47,000 jobs (full-time equivalent including Plymouth and Torbay). Appendix 3E at www.devon.gov.uk/rowip contains further information on Devon's tourism and economy. Headline figures for Devon in 2003 include an estimated:

- 30.3 million staying nights, representing nearly a third of nights spent in the South West by tourists, with an associated spend of £1,343 million[†];
- 19.3 million day trips with an associated spend of £524 million[†];
- £64 million annual visitor spend attributable to the South West Coast Path, and a further £60 million from Devon's residents and their visitors or relatives^{††}; and
- 23 percent of South West farmers that have diversified into tourism. This was highlighted during the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001.

Many opportunities for improvements are identified through the Tourism RAP which tie in with the RoWIP. The County Council will seek to deliver these where possible and appropriate, seeking additional funding as required.

In particular, Devon has a network of strategic recreational walking routes which are widely promoted because of the recreational experience they provide and the economic benefits they bring through visitor use. The network includes part of the South West Coast Path National Trail and also a further fifteen named regional routes (as shown on Map 1 on page 9). The Coast Path is also promoted as the "Walk through Time" along the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site.

Policies and Actions

Tourism information

TED1 Up-to-date information from the tourism industry and our partners will be sought and used to understand the needs and desires of Devon's tourists with respect to countryside access.

Tourism development

TED2A The objectives of the County Council's Role and Action Programme for Tourism will be considered when managing public rights of way and access.

TED2B Green Tourism such as walking, horse-riding and cycling will be promoted by working with tourism providers.

TED2C Opportunities to enhance and promote access in areas of little or no current tourism will be encouraged, and existing opportunities to extend Devon's attractiveness to tourists will be developed. Schemes which have added benefit of providing local access for Devon's residents will be particularly supported.

TED2D Opportunities will be sought to enhance and develop the recreational route networks for walking, riding and cycling.



[†] South West Region Research Group Value of Tourism 2003

^{††} South West Tourism and Tourism Associates (University of Exeter)



Discover Devon's Walking and Cycling booklets

Looking west from the South West Coast Path at Stoke Point, South Hams
© Countryside Agency/Andrew Besley



- TED2E** The development of access and car-free links to/from existing visitor attractions will be supported and developers of new attractions will be encouraged to consider such access from the outset of their business development.
- TED2F** Links to and from popular destinations and national and regional routes will be improved by working with public transport providers, including ferry operators.

Visitor understanding

- TED3A** The provision of information for visitors regarding their rights and responsibilities will be encouraged, making use of Tourist Information Centres and other suitable outlets.
- TED3B** The provision of information in alternative languages and formats (in addition to that which would be provided in response to an individual request) will be considered where supported by an identified tourist profile, working in partnership with South West Tourism.
- TED3C** Appropriate information and advice concerning public rights of way and access will be made available for local tourist providers.
- TED3D** Consideration will be given to the provision of information and interpretation, paying particular attention to the recreational walking, riding and cycling route networks. Business or visitor payback scheme sponsorship will be sought to assist with such work.

4.3C Health



Objective

To ensure that public rights of way and access help to deliver health benefits

Only 37 percent of men and 24 percent of women currently meet the Chief Medical Officer's minimum recommendation for activity in adults and are sufficiently active to benefit their health. Rights of way provide a free resource which can form part of planned or incidental exercise. Whilst known to exist, it is difficult to measure directly the positive effects on both physical and mental health which can accrue from access to the countryside. However, it has long been recognised that outdoor recreation can have a positive effect on well-being and in reducing stress. The term recreation itself arises from the Latin to restore.

The Government recommends that people take an average 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 times a week. Walking at a reasonable pace is one way to exercise and obtain health benefits. A review by Cheshire County Council established that there are potential health benefits associated with encouraging more people to use public rights of way for walking, cycling and horse riding. Devon County Council is already working to raise awareness of more sustainable travel for health and environmental benefits (for example, encouraging people to walk and cycle rather than using a car) through TravelWise.

The Department of Health's White Paper "Choosing Health" suggests that action will be taken across Government on helping children and young people to lead healthy lifestyles, and promoting healthy and active life amongst older people. In a county where the average age of the population is rising there are clear benefits to encouraging exercise and finding ways for people to continue to keep fit as they get older. In addition, studies have found that two thirds of walkers, riders and cyclists had been involved in their chosen activity since before they were 17 years of age and so it is also important that provision is made for young participants.

A summary of physical activity in England and the full Chief Medical Officer's recommendations can be found in Appendix 3F at www.devon.gov.uk/rowip.



Enjoying a healthy and refreshing walk at Sidmouth, East Devon

Policies and Actions**Encouraging exercise**

- H1A** The County Council will seek to ensure that public rights of way and access contribute to the Department of Health's Choosing Health and Choosing Exercise programmes.
- H1B** The use of routes in and around communities will be promoted and initiatives such as Walking the Way to Health will be supported to encourage people to walk, ride and cycle as part of their daily life.
- H1C** Initiatives that lead to sustainable and healthy changes in travel choice from the car to walking and cycling will be encouraged and supported in partnership with TravelWise and the Primary Care Trusts.

Social inclusion

- H2A** Initiatives will be supported that increase participation in physical activity for underrepresented groups, for example, the Forestry Commission's Haldon Forest Park initiative.
- H2B** Best practice guidance arising from the Countryside Agency's Diversity Review will be considered and opportunities will be investigated to implement the findings as appropriate to Devon.

4.3D Agriculture



Objective

To encourage a positive attitude and understanding between both users and landowners

From 2005 a new structure for agricultural support has been introduced which has a bearing on public rights of way and access:

The **Single Payment Scheme (SPS)** replaces most existing crop and livestock payments. The SPS breaks the link between production and support. Instead, land managers will have to keep their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) and comply with a number of specific legal requirements. Meeting these requirements is described in the Common Agricultural Policy legislation as cross compliance. GAEC8 is a cross compliance measure relating to public rights of way and simply reinforces existing legislation under the Highways Act 1980.

Environmental Stewardship is a new agri-environment scheme which provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management of their land. A primary objective of the scheme is to promote public access and understanding of the countryside. Environmental Stewardship has three elements:

Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) is a whole farm scheme open to all farmers and land managers who farm their land conventionally. Acceptance will be guaranteed provided that the scheme requirements are met.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is a whole farm scheme similar to the ELS, open to farmers who manage all or part of their land organically.

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), which will be combined with ELS or OELS options, aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas.

Environmental Stewardship agreements require land managers to maintain existing public rights of way and abide by the relevant legislation. HLS includes management options for improving access in return for one-off or annual payments. For further information see <http://www.defra.gov.uk>



Agricultural landscape in East Devon

74 percent of Devon is under agricultural production. This means that most public rights of way cross farmed land. Devon is a county of relatively small mixed farms and routes therefore cross land which may sometimes be under crops and at other times have livestock present. Part of the role of the RoWIP is to encourage a positive attitude and understanding among both users and landowners, with each being aware of their responsibilities towards the other. The County Council appreciates, and does not underestimate, the important part played by landowners and farmers in rights of way improvements and provision of additional access.

The County Council owns 94 farms (the County Farms Estate) which it lets out to tenants, though this number will reduce through restructuring of the Estate. The 10 year Estate Management Strategy and Plan 2002 - 2012 includes objectives directly relevant to the RoWIP, for example:

- to advise, support and assist individual tenants or collective groups of tenants to pursue new agricultural, economic, educational, environmental and diversification initiatives;
- to promote best practice and provide demonstration farms for diversification ventures, agri-environment schemes, community benefit and public access; and
- to take a lead role and a holistic approach to the development of sustainable community developments with the overall aim of delivering multiple public benefits.

In July 2003 the County Farms Estate Committee agreed to develop opportunities for improving public access, making best use of the its rural estate. As a direct result, two new bridleways (at Slade Farm, Ilfracombe and Higher Weaver Farm, Cullompton) and a new footpath (at Lomans Farm, Broadhempston) have been created on County Farms land (Case Study at Appendix 3G at www.devon.gov.uk/rowip). The review of the Estate continues as a pilot project for implementing the RoWIP and to set an example of improvements which could be made on agricultural land across the county.

Policies and Actions

Improve information regarding rights and responsibilities

AG1 Liaison will continue with landowners and their representatives, such as the National Farmers Union and the Country Land and Business Association, to ensure best practice, the sharing of information and practical management advice.

Contingency planning

AG2 Contingency procedures will continue to be reviewed in liaison with all relevant organisations, ensuring that all partners are aware of their roles.

County Farms Estate

AG3A Opportunities to improve access on County Farm Estate land will be identified and assessed.

AG3B County Farm Estate initiatives will be used as a blue-print for taking forward access improvements with other large landowners (for example, district councils, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency).

Cross compliance

AG4 Appropriate use of the cross compliance measures in the county in relation to the Single Payment Scheme and Environmental Stewardship will be promoted by working with DEFRA and landowners.

4.3E Partnerships

Objective

To improve public rights of way and access through partnerships

The County Council is working to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Devon with various partner organisations. Working with partners enables:

- better co-ordination (for example, of projects for the benefit of local communities and access);
- sharing of best practice;
- sharing of both financial and human resources;
- responsiveness to the needs and concerns of local communities;
- delivery of projects in ways that suit the people who depend on them; and
- better understanding of the needs of future generations.

Key partners include:

- Local Access Forums
- Natural England (currently English Nature and the Countryside Agency)
- National Park Authorities
- AONB Services
- District Councils and Unitary Authorities
- Parish Paths Partnership (P3)
- National Trust
- User and Landowner Groups
- Sustrans

Further details of these partnerships can be found in Appendix 3H at www.devon.gov.uk/rowip.

Policies and Actions

Local Access Forums

- P1** The Local Access Forums, as statutory advisors to the highway authority, will continue to have a role in setting priorities for implementing plans and commenting on opportunities for strategic access to the countryside.

Innovation and Best Value

- P2A** Existing partnerships will continue to be reviewed and new partnerships built to ensure best value.

- P2B** Further partnership working with key partners will be encouraged.

Volunteer opportunities

- P3A** The Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme will continue to be supported and new parishes will be encouraged to join.

- P3B** Opportunities will be sought for individuals and organisations to become involved in access work at a local level (providing appropriate health and safety and insurance requirements are met).



Greener Travel

- P4A** Investigation and promotion of opportunities to develop links between public rights of way and public transport, including the carriage of bicycles to allow wider access, will continue. The integration of information relating to this will be sought through initiatives such as DevonBus and Car Free Days Out (part of Discover Devon Naturally).
- P4B** Promotion of safe local options for green travel will be sought in partnership with TravelWise and the Primary Care Trusts.

Facilities

- P4** Opportunities will be sought to enable the use of existing private facilities by the public and encourage public/private partnerships, for example, the use of public house facilities in return for a small payment or purchase of goods, as already successfully developed in some places in Devon.

Education

- P5** The educational value of public rights of way and access will be developed in liaison with education partners.

Police liaison

- P6A** Links will continue to be developed with the Police, supporting them with advice and information relating to public rights of way and access.
- P6B** Data supplied in relation to reported crime and accident statistics will be used to help identify problem areas and solutions in liaison with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships on particular issues.

Millers Crossing on the Exeter Green Circle, a 12 mile walking route around Exeter, developed through a partnership between Devon County Council, Exeter City Council, SUSTRANS and the New Opportunities Fund

