

Top Story Exe Estuary Trail



© Photos by Roger North

The section of the Exe Estuary Trail between Powderham and Turf Lock has finally been completed at a cost of £1.6m. This included the complex ramped bridge over the main railway line. The whole Exe Estuary Trail, 16 miles in total and mainly off-road, can now be explored on foot or cycle and commands stunning views of the Exe Estuary. The Estuary has a number of significant conservation designations.



For a whistle stop tour of the new section see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdhApfJ5rd0>

National News

Coastal Access

Angela Smith, MP for Penistone and Stocksbridge, asked a Parliamentary question on coastal access on 17 November 2014. Dan Rogerson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for water, forestry, rural affairs and resource management, gave the following response.

"We are committed to completing the coastal path around England by 2020. As announced by the Deputy Prime Minister, extra funding will be made available and we are discussing this with HM Treasury.

To date, Natural England has incurred establishment costs of £137,238 on the three stretches of the coast where the right of access under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 has been implemented. Natural England has estimated further establishment costs of £851,730 on the six stretches where it has submitted coastal access reports to the Secretary of State, but where the right of access has not yet been implemented.

Natural England's staff costs for delivering costs coastal access are included within its overall staff budget. Natural England is also incurring additional costs for publishing and advertising coastal access reports, and for agreements which it has entered with access authorities to provide it with a range of access advice and to carry out preliminary work in relation to the coastal path.

The Department has spent £85,590 in meeting the costs incurred by the Planning Inspectorate in determining a number of objections which have been made to proposals in Natural England's coastal access reports."

In Devon the process of designating spreading room and identifying areas for roll back will still be undertaken but should be a quicker process as the coast path is already in place. As yet, the exact timescale for this is not known.

Community Rights

Under the Government's community rights programme more than 1,500 buildings, assets and green spaces have already been listed and 1,200 neighbourhood plans are underway. For details and an interactive map showing places near to you click on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/milestone-reached-as-community-rights-uses-hit-3000>

Outdoors for All

Natural England has published a range of case studies for 2012-2014 outlining how a variety of projects have increased opportunities to access natural environments by people living in deprived areas; the elderly; those with physical disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health illness; and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. The projects are part of a process of reducing health inequalities and illustrate some exciting and interesting ways of engaging people in outdoor activity.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6538762158866432>

Forestry



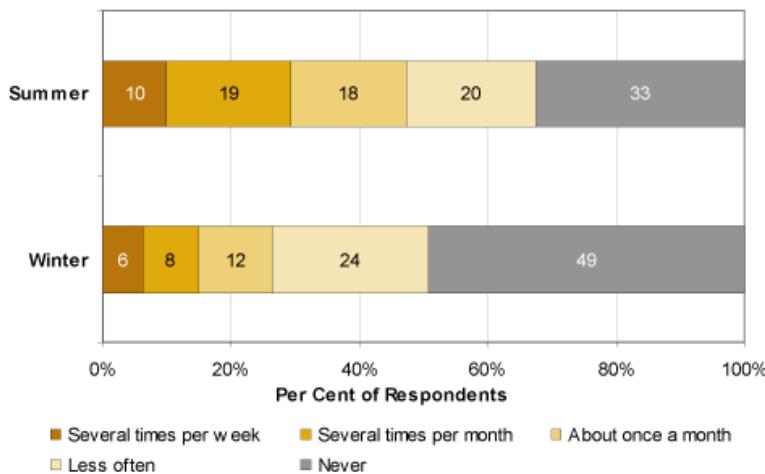
Forestry Statistics 2014, just published by the Forestry Commission, includes some figures from the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. These reveal an estimated 357 million visits to woodland in England in 2012-13, with dog walking the most common activity.

"Around 38% of the England woodland area was estimated to be publicly accessible in 2013." (Woods for People). This excludes woodland

with access just on public rights of way.

The Forestry Commission carries out a Public Opinion of Forestry Survey every two years. The UK survey in 2013 showed that 66% of respondents had visited woodland in the last few years for “walks, picnics or other recreation.” Visits in the summer more common.

Figure 6.1 Frequency of visits to woodlands



Source: UK Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys, 2009 to 2013.

Base: Average visit frequencies from last three UK surveys: 2,000 respondents per survey.

In the 2013 survey, most woodland users were 35–54 (75%) compared with 62% for those aged 16–34 and 60% aged over 55.

The Woodland Trust has recently produced a position statement on access to woodland. Its view is that

- As well as helping improve people’s health and wellbeing, woodland access is fundamental to achieving our aim of inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woodland and trees.
- Everyone should have access to a wood within easy reach of their home.
- Only 15 per cent of people can currently access a wood within walking distance (500m), so we need substantially more accessible woodland.
- The Trust supports the use of incentives and education to bring permissive access to more privately owned woods, rather than a legal right of access to all woods.
- While access is important, it needs to be appropriate, and should not override the need to safeguard ecological value, particularly in sensitive ancient woods.

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2014/08/access-to-woodland/>

Natural England



Natural England has published its Strategic Direction. This covers all their activities in the fields of biodiversity and landscapes. The Strategic Direction sets out Natural England’s vision of how it will “help to bring about a natural environment, on land and at sea, which is healthy, properly functioning and resilient, and recognised as the foundation for sustainable economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing.”

In terms of access and engagement Natural England’s aims are to:

In the medium-term

- “Deliver a new management model for National Trails and work with others to make the most of these national assets for both users and local economies.
- Continue our work to deliver the England Coast Path and demonstrate the social and economic benefits it brings.
- Build the evidence base on how people use the natural environment and the benefits they gain from this.
- Increase public accessibility to our own and the wider public estate.”

In the long-term

- “Ensure that local visions and needs drive investment in access facilities and infrastructure.
- Achieve greater use of access infrastructure by all users and all parts of society.
- Support a step-change in the national understanding of the value of the natural environment for individuals, society and the economy.”

Devon News

Tour of Britain

Results extrapolated from a web based survey indicate that the Friends Life Tour of Britain generated over £6m for the Devon economy. The race attracted 230,000 spectators of whom 14% stayed overnight. The race was broadcast to 139 countries so the attractiveness of the Devon countryside would have been very apparent. Interestingly 61% said the race “inspired them to cycling more often.” Certainly there were a lot more cyclists around the week after the race, some combining a holiday with race viewing.

Cyclists Touring Club

 The Cyclists Touring Club in Devon has a number of clubs with regular activities. The Club has been developing Chevron rides in the County. These are routes which include 50 arrows on the OS 1:50,000 maps and have to be completed in 12 hours. This means a seriously hilly ride as a single arrow is a climb of about 1:7 and two arrows indicates a hill in excess of 1:5. One route is the [Haldon Loop](#), a route of 108 km with 2000 metres of climb. The Devon CTC website includes other useful information on cycling routes and clubs in the County.

<http://www.lkjh.biz/index.php?title=Routes>

Devon County Record Office

Some of the extensive collection of records housed in the Devon Heritage Centre at Sowton, Exeter and the North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple are used to support Definitive Map Review work undertaken by the Public Rights of Way team. The South West Heritage Trust has taken over the management of heritage services in both Devon and Somerset. The Councils will continue to be main funders for the next five years but, as an independent charity, the Trust will be free to apply for and access other sources of money unavailable to Councils. Councillor Roger Croad, Devon County Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Council's heritage services, and a Trustee of the new organisation, said: “We welcome the formation of this new venture, which will for the foreseeable future safeguard the historic and cultural records of Devon, securing them in the county for residents and visitors to see and use.”

Natural Connections



Natural England has secured funding to establish a new Natural Connections Hub in areas of Devon where the project does not exist at the moment. Natural Connections is an outdoor learning experience focussed on schools

and has currently been operating in Plymouth and Torbay, alongside other areas in the SW. Support from the Devon Education for Sustainability Working Group, CPRE Devon, Natural England and the Devon Local Nature Partnership means that the project can be extended to an additional 15 schools over the next two years and look at the connection with improved health too.

Tavistock to Bere Alston railway

A report has been submitted by Devon County Council to the Planning Inspectorate outlining the “environmental surveys that are planned to assess the re-instatement of the

railway between Tavistock and Bere Alston, and the development of a network of multi-use trails.” This is regarded as a nationally significant infrastructure project, requiring an application for Development Consent. Part of the process will be to determine whether an environmental impact assessment is required.



The proposals will improve access to the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Cornwall and

West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site and the trails that have been developed there. The equality statement in the report states: “The trail routes will be designed for use by pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders, and will take into account the needs of all potential users in the design of gradients, site lines and widths. The trails will improve access to the World Heritage Site for those who do not have access to a private vehicle.”

A map of proposed routes forms part of the submission

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/proposed-tavistock-to-bere-alston-railway.pdf>

Scoping report <http://www.devon.gov.uk/tavistock-berea-screening-report.pdf>

Old Sludge Beds Nature Reserve

Delighting in the name of ‘Old Sludge Beds Nature Reserve’, the Devon Wildlife Trust has just received funding for work on the reserve from Renaissance Villages, a property company which has recently developed a site in Exeter. Next to Exeter Canal and the Exe Estuary, the reserve is popular with visitors and the funding will allow boardwalks to be repaired.

And finally....



The next newsletter will be produced at the end of January. In the meantime hope you find time to enjoy Devon's countryside.