



Devon Countryside Access Forum

NEWSLETTER
July 2015

Top Story

Opening of the coast path at Strete



Drone picture of the new stretch of path by Richard Baughton

Landowners, local residents, Parish Councillors and representatives of Devon County Council, Natural England and other organisations were amongst those present at the opening of the new stretch of coast path at Strete, near Dartmouth. The opening was organised by the South West Coast Path Association to celebrate the culmination of the project and to announce its new website. The path was opened by broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby. First mooted decades ago, walkers can now avoid walking on a busy and narrow stretch of road following negotiations with landowners.

Funding was provided by Natural England and Devon County Council, with a contribution from Strete Parish Council.

Jonathan Dimbleby said:

“I was very pleased to accept the invitation from the South West Coast Path Association to open this new and important section of the Coast Path. As a local resident I enjoy regular walks on the South Devon coastline which has everything, from sandy beaches and secluded coves to rockpools and dramatic cliffs.

“Walking the South West Coast Path is the best way to experience this natural beauty and it’s vitally important that this access is maintained.

“This new section at Strete represents the fantastic work of the South West Coast Path National Trail Partnership to secure the best possible route as part of its 630-mile National Trail.”

Vice Chairman of the South West Coast Path Association, Ken Carter said:

“The problem of fixing the gap at Strete to make a route safe for walkers, which didn’t impact on the privacy of the houses whose grounds it would run across, was complex. It is of great credit to all partners involved in the project that a solution has been found and the work to re-route the Coast Path is complete.”

“Thousands of people visit the South West every year to walk the South West Coast Path, which is the longest and most popular National Trail and is worth £436m to the regional economy. We look forward to people enjoying this new section at Strete for the first time and being inspired to support our work in future.”

The South West Coast Path Association is continuing to seek improvements to the South West Coast Path through fundraising activities including business sponsorship and events. Full report on the opening is on <http://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/newsapp/article/169/> and the new website is www.southwestcoastpath.org



© South West Coast Path Association

National News

Cycling and Walking Strategy



Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department of Transport), responded to a recent written question in Parliament to state that he has instructed officials in the DfT to begin work on the Cycling and Walking Strategy; a duty laid down in the Infrastructure Act 2015. Secondary legislation will be laid down soon to commence the relevant section of the Act.

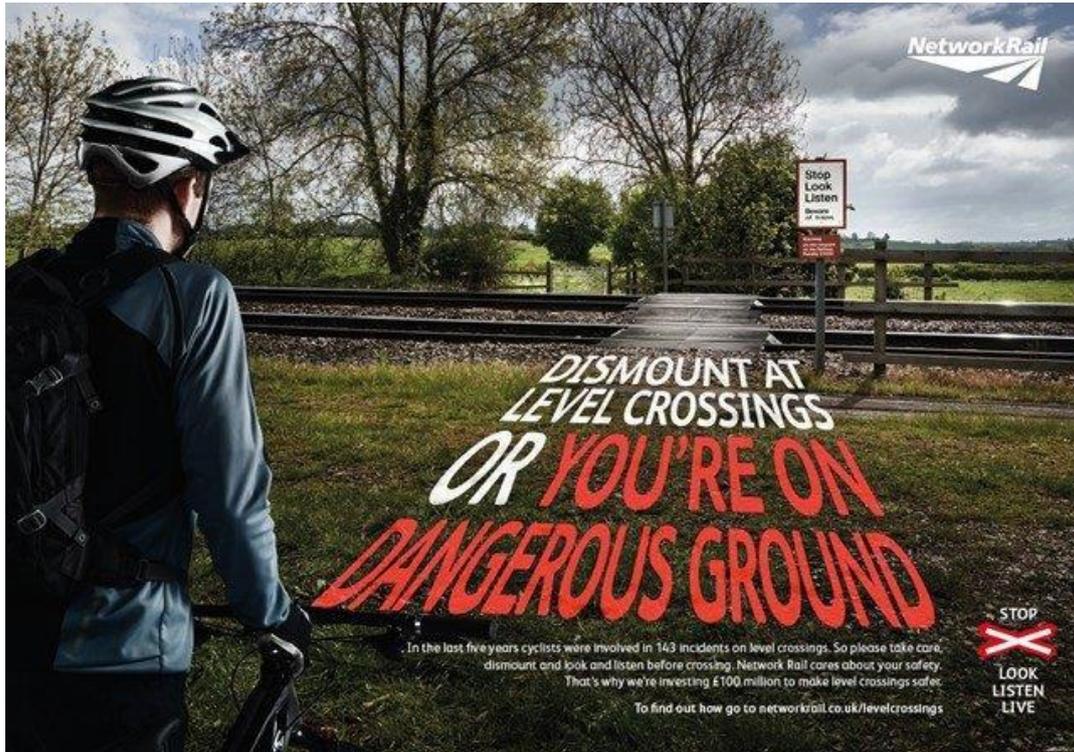
Ramblers – Big Pathwatch



The Ramblers launched its Big Pathwatch project on 13 July. Volunteers are being asked to survey the rights of network across a grid square and use an app to build up a comprehensive picture of the condition of the network. A nationwide analysis will be produced later in the year. www.ramblers.org.uk/BigPathwatch

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Network Rail



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Network Rail has launched a campaign to educate the public on the dangers of using level crossings. There are over 6,000 level crossings in Britain, some bisecting public rights of way. Whereas some have barriers or warning lights, others are more basic.

Since April 2010 Sustrans reports there have been five deaths of cyclists and 139 near misses and Sustrans is therefore supporting the new campaign.

The first part of the campaign focusses on cyclists but will, in time, cover other users and land managers.

The campaign reminds cyclists:

- *“to dismount at footpaths crossings. Footpath crossings weren't designed with cyclists in mind and some have found that their bike wheels can get stuck when crossing the railway. By walking across, you can more easily stop, look and listen for trains, and the risk to cyclists and their bikes is reduced.*
- *That amber warning lights at road level crossings means ‘stop – a train is coming’.*”

“The campaign will be delivered locally by Network Rail’s 100 level crossings managers, who will aim to speak to cycling groups and clubs across the country as well as leisure cyclists.” Additional safety messages will be included such as use of headphones and awareness of train timetabling.

See [Network Rail campaign](#)

England Natural Environment Indicators

Defra has just published natural environment indicators for England. As well as covering aspects concerned with biodiversity and habitats there are sections on public engagement

with the natural environment and ease of access to woodland, green space and the countryside.

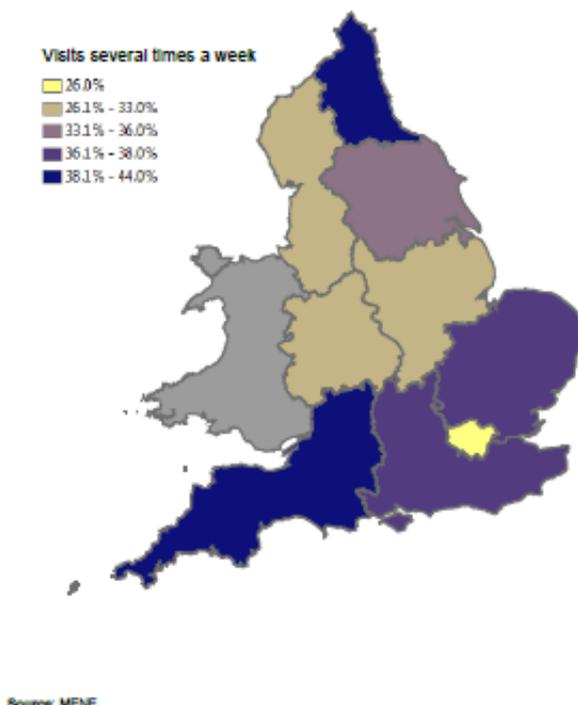
The section on public engagement is supported by results from the MENE surveys (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment). Data includes the following:

- “Between March 2013 and February 2014 just over a third (34 per cent) of the adult population stated that, on average, they had visited the natural environment several times a week or more over the previous year. There has been very little change in the frequency of visits to the outdoors over the five year period.”

Devon’s residents compare well compared to the national picture for activity in the outdoors but slightly less well on access to woodland. 12.5 -15.00% of Devon’s population live within 500m of a wood of 2 hectares, the second lowest range out of five. However, 61.61-68.8 live within 4km of an accessible woodland covering more than 20 hectares, the middle range out of five. The maps can be seen in the full report:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/england-natural-environment-indicators>

Figure 10.2: Proportion of the population visiting the outdoors several times or more a week in the last 12 months, England, 2013-14



Tourism – Backing the Tourism Sector



A Five Point Plan for tourism produced by the Department for Culture Media and Sport includes recommendations to spread the benefits of tourism beyond London. Currently 54% of money spent by international visitors is in London. Tourism is very important to Devon and the landscape, beaches, moors and recreational trails are significant attractions. The plan proposals are very welcome and include more effective coordination of tourism; supporting growth in

skills and employment, reducing regulation to proportionate levels, promoting transport infrastructure and marketing and improving welcome and service standards
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446167/Tourism - A Five Point Plan.pdf

The National Trust

The National Trust has produced a report spelling out what the nation needs from the National Trust in the 21st century. The National Trust sees long term maintenance as being one of the three key challenges. “People love and enjoy local green space and heritage on a daily basis. Local and national government has protected many of those everyday places, but we are entering a new era where public funding is much reduced. The future care and access to the local places we rely on is uncertain. The need for new, innovative ways to look after local, everyday historic and beautiful places is a challenge that charities, government, business and communities need to address together.”

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1349129524981&ssbinary=true>

The National Trust has produced a separate report entitled Coast – Looking after our ever-changing shores. One of the key aspirations in that document is to “help people enjoy and care about the coast.” “Helping people enjoy more of the seaside means providing more access and well-maintained or new facilities, and stimulating interpretation as well as space for relaxation and adventure. We want to spread this message and strengthen relationships through volunteering opportunities and strong community engagement.”

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1349130853498&ssbinary=true>

Devon News

Grand Western Canal

Friends of the Grand Western Canal have generously provided a new repair boat for rangers at the Grand Western Canal Country Park. The manoeuvrable boat will allow maintenance work to be carried out more easily as well as allowing a speedy response to any emergencies that might arise.

A38 crossing

The multi-use bridge over the A38 was opened in early July. It links Bovey Tracey to Stover Country Park and Newton Abbot and was funded through the Granite and Gears project to improve cycling on and around Dartmoor. The bridge will allow walkers, cyclists and horse riders to cross the busy road safely.



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Network Rail – Dawlish resilience

Following a written question, Claire Perry MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Transport), stated that “Network Rail is carrying out a further study to look at the long term resilience of the rail route through Dawlish. The study is due to be fully complete in April 2016 with an options assessment report available in November 2015.”

“The Peninsula Rail Task Force has also been asked to look at alternative routes including that via Okehampton and is due to report its findings in June 2016. The Task Force provided progress of their work at the Peninsula Rail Task Force South West reception held on Wednesday 15 July.”

It will be interesting to see how the report comments on accommodating the Granite Way and other parts of the National Cycle Network, currently using the former railway lines.

And finally



If the summer sun, or rain, brings out the poet in you, the National Trust is providing the opportunity to finish off a poem about the coast. Dr John Cooper Clarke has written the first verses of a coastal poem to celebrate all that's special about the sea.

The National Trust is encouraging people to “read the first part of the poem and be inspired to share your own coastal words, pictures, social media posts or even sounds that will contribute to the finished poem to be revealed in the autumn.”

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1355902040273/>

Nation's Ode to the Coast

Dr John Cooper Clarke

A big fat sky and a thousand shrieks
The tide arrives and the timber creaks
A world away from the working week
Ou est la vie nautique?
That's where the sea comes in...

Dishevelled shells and shovelled sands,
Architecture all unplanned
A spade n bucket wonderland
A golden space, a Frisbee and
The kids and dogs can run and run
And not run in to anyone
Way out! Real gone!
That's where the sea comes in

Impervious to human speech, idle time and tidal reach
Some memories you can't impeach
That's where the sea comes in
A nice cuppa splosh and a round of toast
A cursory glance at the morning post
A pointless walk along the coast
That's what floats my boat the most
That's where the sea comes in....
That's where the sea comes in