



# Devon Countryside Access Forum

## NEWSLETTER August 2015

### Top Story

#### England Coast Path



Above: The Undercliff in East Devon. Photographer - Rachel Papworth

Left: Hartland area. Photographer - Lorraine Berry.

Natural England has confirmed its timetable for completion of the England Coast Path. In Devon, the stretches from Kingswear to Lyme Regis and the Exmoor section from Minehead to Combe Martin are estimated to start in 2015-2016, with the remainder of the South West Coast Path in stages between 2015 and 2017.

Although the South West Coast Path is already in place, the legal England coast path process will still take place. This will provide the opportunity to look at spreading room either side of the coast path, securing any gaps in the route and identifying areas where automatic roll-back (associated with coastal erosion) might be required. The Devon Countryside Access Forum has a statutory involvement in the initial consultation and has the opportunity to make representations on the final report.

Sophy Allen, Senior Adviser with Natural England, will be giving a presentation at the next DCAF meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October to outline the project and the Forum's role.

### National

#### MENE (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment)

Figures for March to May 2015 have just been published. Visits were up 14% on the same period last year, to 880.8 million visits, the highest recorded number of visits for this period since MENE commenced. 47% of the population visited the natural environment. Visits to the countryside recorded a 24% increase over the same period last year. There are small variations in the type of activity recorded but dog walking continues to hit the top spot. In

Devon between March 2013 and February 2014 road cycling accounted for 4%, running 3%, horse riding 2% and off-road cycling and mountain biking 1%. Dog walking in Devon accounted for 51% of visit activity and walking without a dog 27%.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/452934/mene-march-may-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/452934/mene-march-may-2015.pdf)

### **Gates on Public Rights of Way**

Natural England is about to trial a range of bridleway gates at Askham Bryan College in Yorkshire. The aims of the trial are to test a number of gates to find out which, if any, meet the needs of land managers while being sympathetic to the needs of all potential users of the gate. The findings from the trial may also be used to inform the British Standards Committee for BS 5709: gaps, gates and stiles, and by future gate manufacturers to improve their designs. Horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians of varying abilities and users of mobility vehicles will be testing the gates.

The trial follows work done by the British Horse Society in 2011 when a number of gates were assessed for ease of equestrian use.

### **New Growth Programme**

Farming Minister, George Eustice, has announced the new Growth Programme of £24 million, part of the Rural Development Programme, which will be targeted at initiatives bringing benefit to rural communities. Tourism and business projects are amongst the opportunities that can be supported. The initial tranche of £6.3 million will be offered in 9 Local Enterprise Partnership areas, with individual grants available. Further rounds will be available shortly covering the remaining LEP areas. (Local Enterprise Partnerships are partnerships between local authorities and businesses across England and Devon is part of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/growth-programme-grants-for-the-rural-economy>

## **Devon**

### **Exe Estuary**



© Tim Pestridge

Devon County Council News Centre reports that the Council has been awarded the Royal Town Planning Institute South West Award for Planning Excellence 2015 for its work on the Exe Estuary Trail. The judges were impressed with the Exe Estuary case study in “promoting walking and cycling within a sensitive environment.” The collaborative nature

of the project and long term commitment to its success were commended. Councillor Stuart Hughes, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Highway Management, said: "The Exe Estuary Trail has become one of our county's flagship cycle routes which is growing in popularity all of the time. This award from the RTPI is a marvellous achievement, but it is deserved recognition of the incredible amount of work that has gone into this scheme over the past 10 years. It has created an extremely beneficial link which is encouraging more people to cycle to work, school or in their leisure time."

Between 2011 and 2014 there has been a 42% increase in usage of the route with cycle counters now recording annual trips of 257,189.

### Dog Fouling in Torridge



Torridge District Council has teamed up with the Devon & Cornwall Police, and their Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) to crack down on irresponsible dog owners and dog fouling. The Police will help in issuing fixed penalty notices (up to £75) to offenders.

Torridge's Lead Member for the Environment, Councillor Alan Whittle said "I welcome this new initiative. With Torridge District Council and Devon & Cornwall Police working closer together this will increase the number of enforcement officers who can prevent, detect and enforce current national and local legislation. It is a great example of multi-agency working as part of the Torridge District Council's transformation programme.

Through the development of a new, larger multi-agency team we can better protect the parks and public open spaces, making Torridge a cleaner and safer place to live and visit."

Inspector Brock, Devon & Cornwall Police said "This commitment across our agencies to tackle the issue of dog-fouling is evidence of the co-operation which exists in the delivery of public service for the people of Torridge. A larger number of 'eyes on the ground' able to deal with this thoughtless behaviour will assist in the reduction of the problem and is only one of the many examples of where TDC and Police staff are working together."

### Homeyards, Shaldon



Homeyards Botanical Gardens, in Shaldon, has received £317,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and £40,000 from Viridor Credits Environmental Company through the Landfill Communities Fund. The funding will help to ensure the gardens, and their historic environment, are a key focus of the village in the future. The funding will allow path improvements and better access for those with disabilities plus more educational activities including events, walks, talks and volunteering days. The project will be managed by Teignbridge District Council together with the long-established Friends group.

Gareth Williams, Funded Projects Manager for Viridor Credits Environmental Company said: "The Homeyards project provided Viridor Credits and the Devon steering group a rare opportunity to contribute significantly to a project that both preserves the heritage of the gardens while allowing the public to access and learn about their fascinating history. We at Viridor Credits look forward to the completion of this exciting project."

Homeyards was created originally as a private garden during the 1920s and 30s for Maria Laetitia Kempe Homeyard whose husband William had invented and manufactured a cough syrup called Liqufruta. The gardens include an informal terraced arboretum with sea views, a castle, pond, grotto and Italianate garden. On her death in 1944 it passed to Teignmouth Urban District Council and subsequently Teignbridge District Council.

### **Teign Estuary Trail**

Devon County Council News Centre reports that sections of the Teign Estuary Trail are expected to be included in a funding bid later this year to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. If successful, it is hoped to obtain Growth Deal funding for the Dawlish to Teignmouth and Kingsteignton to Passage House sections of the trail. Feasibility work is continuing on the routes and options.

<https://www.devonnewscentre.info/funding-bid-expected-for-sections-of-teign-estuary-trail/#shash.po4G92Dq.dpuf>

### **Sherford**

Building work is to begin on the first phase of 580 houses at the Sherford new town development in the South Hams, just outside Plymouth.

### ***And finally...***

#### **Starry skies**



With shorter days looming look out for starry skies. Two local nature reserves in East Devon, Knapps Copse and Trinity Hill, have been awarded Dark Sky Discovery Site status. Their designation as great places to watch the night sky is due to good sightlines, lack of light pollution and, importantly, good public access.

Councillor Iain Chubb, portfolio holder for the environment at East Devon District Council, said: 'This is a fantastic

recognition for two of our slightly more remote sites, and what this really shows is that there are many reasons to visit the East Devon countryside – local nature reserves like Knapp Copse and Trinity Hill aren't just great spots for a walk with the family, or to see some wildlife, they are also places to take in the most breathtaking view of all – the night sky.'

<http://www.darkskydiscovery.org.uk/dark-sky-discovery-sites/map.htm>