

# Accessibility and Recreation

Throughout this document 'Devon' refers to the administrative area of Devon County Council and 'Torbay' refers to the administrative area of Torbay Council. Italic hyperlinks will open the interactive Devon County Council Environment Viewer.

## Economic Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing

Large areas of open space and woodland within reasonable distance from where people live, offer opportunities to explore and experience the natural environment.



The Exe Estuary Trail provides off-road opportunities for running, walking and cycling

Evidence indicates that contact with the natural environment may offer considerable benefit to health and have a positive effect on communities, including improved mental health and wellbeing, reduced health inequalities, increased levels of physical activity and improved levels of social cohesion<sup>i</sup>. Indeed, the health benefits of living with a view of green space are worth up to £300 per person in the UK per year<sup>ii</sup>.

People living in deprived urban areas view green space as a key service, alongside housing, health, education and policing – one of the essentials in making a neighbourhood liveable<sup>iii</sup>. Green space provides a mix of functions that underpin the whole economy. These include recreation, sustainable transport, education, wildlife habitat, flood risk management, local food production, energy production and other ecosystem services, such as the regulation of air and water quality.

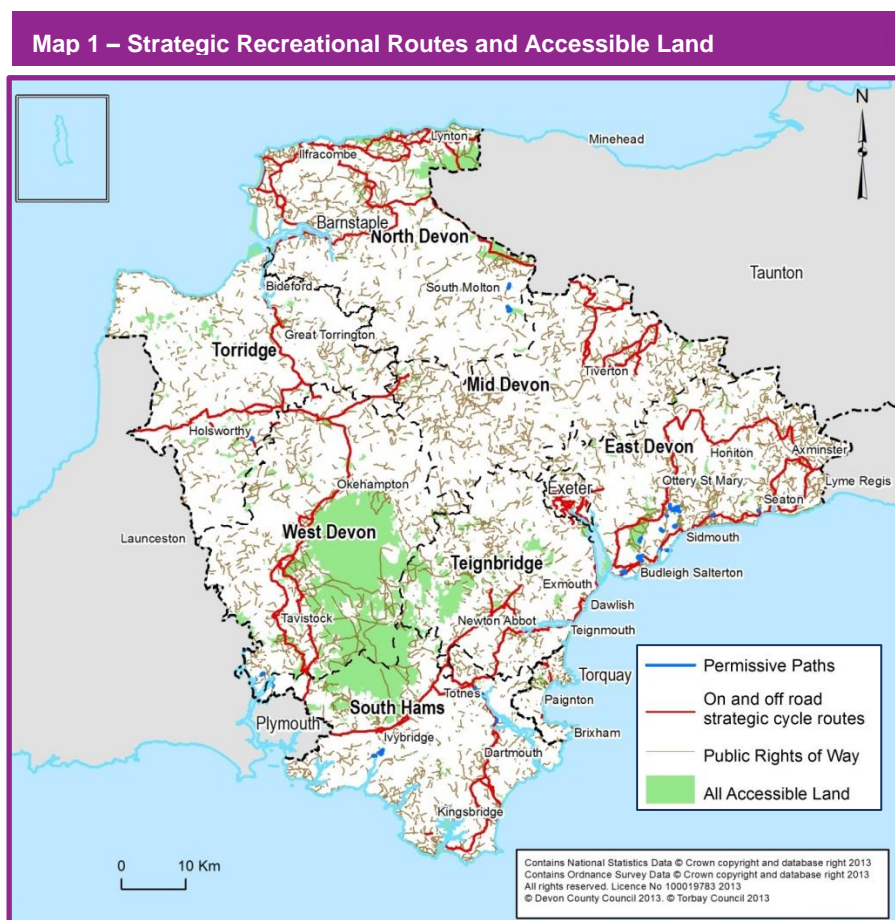
Few studies have determined the economic value of green space but the Merseyside Forest project estimated that every £1 invested will generate £2.30 over 50 years in increased GVA (tourism, forestry products and improvements in health<sup>iv</sup>). The importance of the Public Rights of Way Network (PRoW) to the local economy is demonstrated by the £500.2m direct spend by users of the South West Coast Path during 2015 which was a 7% increase from 2014<sup>v</sup> and by the closure of the PRoW network during the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2001 which is estimated to have cost Devon's economy more than £400 million<sup>vi</sup>. Green space will become increasingly important for local adaptation to climate change. There is a clear benefit of tree planting for carbon sequestration (a study in North Yorkshire identified £2.8m economic value over 100 years for 85ha of woodland) and potential for trees to reduce energy use during summer and winter and alleviate the effects of extreme weather such as heat waves and flooding events<sup>vii</sup>.

## Public Rights of Way & Cycle Routes

The [PRoW network](#) provides access to the countryside and opportunities to undertake a range of recreational activities that can contribute to improving general health.

The PRoW network in Devon extends over approximately 4,990km, plus 563km of Unclassified County Roads and 844km of on- and off-road cycle routes<sup>viii</sup>. The PRoW network in Torbay consists of a further 73km<sup>ix</sup>. The strategic recreational routes and accessible land are shown on Map 1. The extensive cycle network within Devon and Torbay can be viewed in detail on the Sustrans [website](#).

Devon County Council has a target of keeping 90% of public rights of way in an ‘easy to use’ condition. Table 1 shows that since 2009 the proportion of rights of way classified as ‘easy to use’ in Devon has increased year on year.



Devon and Torbay also benefit from the South West Coast Path. The path is the longest of the thirteen national trails in England and Wales with a length of 630 miles and is recognised as one of the region’s principal tourist attractions. The north Devon section is 90 miles and the south Devon section is 115. There are a further 22 long distance walking routes, these are described in Table 2.

**Table 1 - Ease of Use of PRoW<sup>x</sup>**

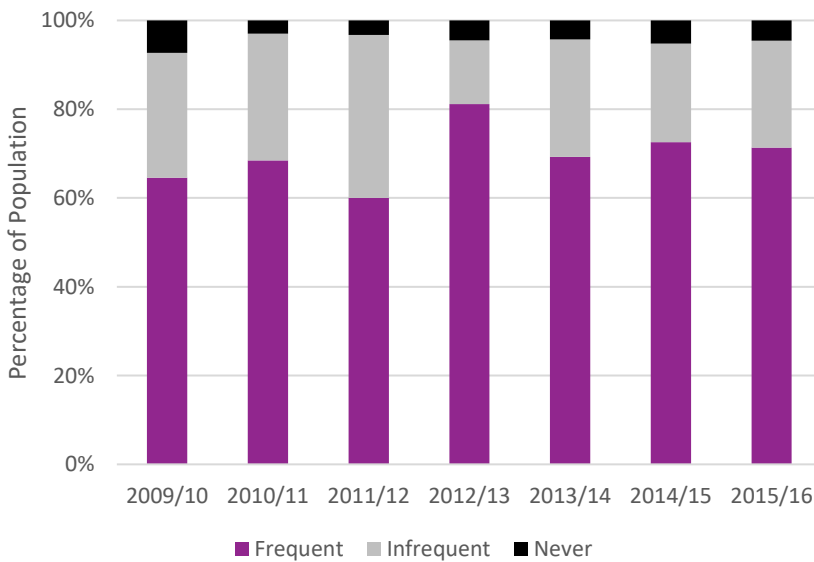
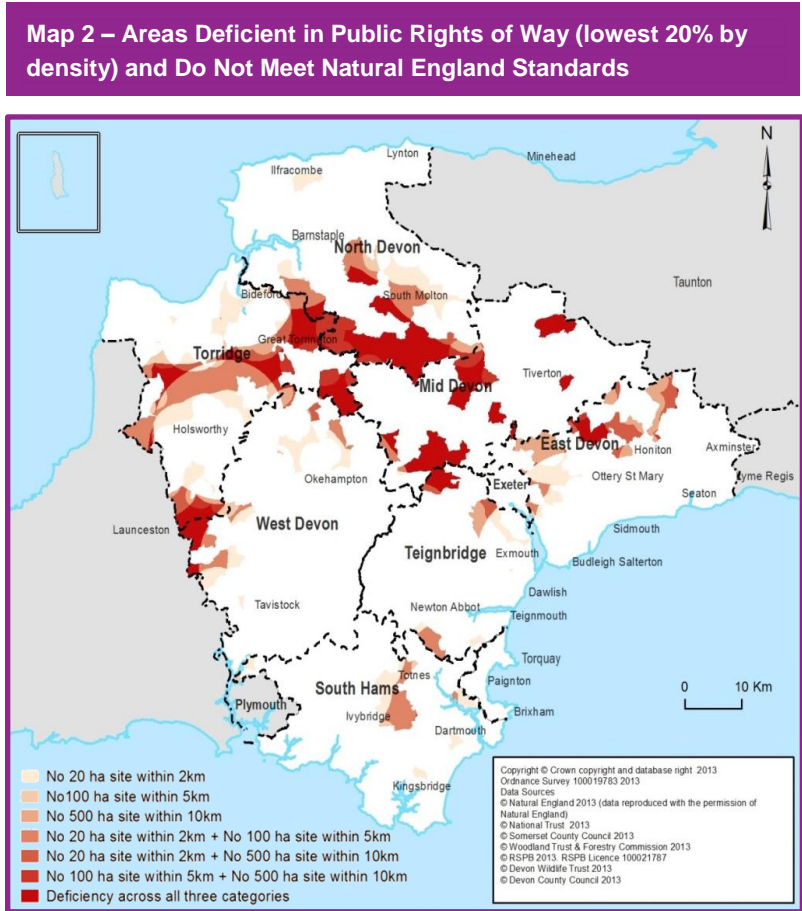
2014	94%
2011	96%
2009	95%

**Table 2 – Long Distance Walking Routes in Devon and Torbay**

<b>Tarka Trail</b>	Inspired by Henry Williamson’s much-loved novel ‘Tarka the Otter’, this 180 miles/290km recreational route, in a figure of eight, follows Tarka’s journeys through the northern part of the county.
<b>Two Moors Way</b>	Running for just over 100 miles/160km between Ivybridge in the south and Lynmouth in the north, this path links the two National Parks of Dartmoor and Exmoor.
<b>Erme-Plym Trail</b>	This 15 mile/24km path takes in the pleasing environment of the Erme Valley south of Ivybridge
<b>Devon Coast to Coast</b>	Take the opportunity of dipping your boots in the English Channel and the Bristol Channel in one walk – they are a just a mere 117 miles/184km apart at either end.
<b>Greenway Walk</b>	The Greenway Walk is a 6 mile trail following green lanes through the countryside of the South Devon area towards the Dart estuary and back through the village of Galmpton.
<b>John Musgrave Heritage Trail</b>	The 35 miles/56km trail links the Dart Valley Trail, Torbay Totnes Trail, Greenway Walk and the South West Coast Path to create a continuous route through South Devon.
<b>West Devon Way</b>	This path covers the 36 miles/58km between the market town of Okehampton, situated in the very heart of Devon and the historic city of Plymouth.
<b>Two Castles Trail</b>	A route of 24 miles/38km linking the medieval castles of Okehampton and Launceston.
<b>Tamar Valley Discovery Trail</b>	This route takes in some 30 miles/48km of the valley of the Tamar, the historic border between Saxon Devon and Celtic Cornwall.
<b>Plymouth Cross-City Link</b>	This is a 7 mile/11km link across the northern part of the city of Plymouth between the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail at Tamerton Foliot and the West Devon Way at Marsh Mills.
<b>West Devon Triangle</b>	The West Devon Way, Two Castles Trail and Tamar Valley Discovery Trail all link together to form a triangle of walks through West Devon.
<b>Templer Way</b>	This 18 mile/29km trail links Haytor on Dartmoor with the sea at Teignmouth.
<b>East Devon Way</b>	This 38 mile/60km path takes you from Exmouth in the west to Uplyme near the Dorset border.
<b>Devonshire Heartland Way</b>	Runs for 43 miles/60km through the heart of Devon, linking the ExeValley in the east, with Okehampton in the west.
<b>Ruby Trails</b>	A network of circular walks named after the local Ruby Red cattle. They give the opportunity to see a quiet and remote corner of Devon while helping the local economy.
<b>Exe Valley Way</b>	Almost 45 miles/72km end to end, this trail runs through beautiful Devon countryside between the Exe Estuary and the heights of Exmoor.
<b>Taw-Teign Link</b>	Stretching for 6 miles/10km along the north-eastern edge of Dartmoor, this route provides a short link between the Tarka Trail and the Two Moors Way.
<b>Grand Western Canal</b>	16 mile/26km towpath alongside this historic waterway near Tiverton.
<b>Little Dart Ridge and Valley Walk</b>	One of the shorter trails, this route, not currently waymarked, forms an 11 mile/18km link between the Tarka Trail and the Two Moors Way in north Devon.
<b>Dart Valley Trail</b>	16 miles/26km in total, made up of an estuary circuit, covering about 4 miles/6km on either side of the lower river valley, plus an additional 8 mile/13km path up the valley to the ancient borough of Totnes.

## Green Space Access and Participation

Analysis of accessible green space shows that although large areas of Devon and Torbay benefit from public access, some areas are deficient when compared against Natural England standards<sup>xi</sup>. Map 2 shows the areas in Devon that are deficient in PRow (identified as the parishes with the lowest quintile of PRow density) and do not meet the Natural England targets for the distance between homes and accessible natural greenspace of various sizes (20ha within 2km of home, 100ha within 5km of home and 500ha within 10km of home). Large areas in North Devon, Torrridge and Mid Devon experience the greatest levels of deficiency throughout Devon and Torbay.



**Figure 1 – Percentage of Devon’s population that has visited the natural environment in the past 12 months. Frequent = at least once per week. Data for Torbay is unavailable.**

The population of Devon participates with the natural environment (defined as the green open spaces in and around towns and cities, as well as the wider countryside and coastline) more often than the population of England; 71% of Devon’s population have visited the natural environment frequently in the past 12 months (at least once a week) (Figure 1<sup>xii</sup>), compared to 58% in England<sup>xiii</sup>. A trend is difficult to identify due to the variability between years’ results. About 10% of England’s population never visit the natural environment, compared with about 5% in Devon.

<sup>i</sup> Public Health Devon (2014), *Review of the Literature Concerning the Benefits to Health of Engagement with the Natural Environment – Draft*. Public Health Devon

<sup>ii</sup> National Ecosystem Assessment (2011) *Understanding nature's value to society – Synthesis of Key Findings*. UK NEA. Available at: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/Resources/tabid/82/Default.aspx> (Accessed: 12/06/2013)

<sup>iii</sup> CABE (2010) *Community Green: Using Local Spaces to Tackle Inequality and Improve Health*. CABE. Available from: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/Publications-resources/CABE-publications/Community-Green/>

<sup>iv</sup> Forestry Commission (2012) *Economic Benefits of Greenspace*. Forestry Commission. Available at: [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCRP021.pdf/\\$file/FCRP021.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCRP021.pdf/$file/FCRP021.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> South West Research Company (2014) *South West Coast Path Monitoring & Evaluation Framework: Year 2 Key Findings Summary*. [http://www.southwestcoastpath.com/media/uploads/swcp\\_year\\_2\\_analysis\\_summary\\_-\\_key\\_findings\\_final.pdf](http://www.southwestcoastpath.com/media/uploads/swcp_year_2_analysis_summary_-_key_findings_final.pdf)

New: South West Research Company (2016) *South West Coast Path Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: Year 5 Key Findings Summary*. [https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/media/uploads/swcp\\_year\\_5\\_analysis\\_summary\\_-\\_key\\_findings.pdf](https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/media/uploads/swcp_year_5_analysis_summary_-_key_findings.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> *Data supplied by Devon County Council.*

<sup>vii</sup> Forestry Commission (2012) *Economic Benefits of Greenspace*. Forestry Commission. Available at: [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCRP021.pdf/\\$file/FCRP021.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCRP021.pdf/$file/FCRP021.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Devon County Council (2011) *Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy (Consultation Draft)*. Devon County Council. Available at: <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/greeninfrastructure/devon-green-infrastructure-strategy.htm> (Accessed: 12/05/2013).

<sup>ix</sup> Data supplied by Torbay Council PRow team.

<sup>x</sup> *Data supplied by Devon County Council's PRow Team and Committee Report* at [http://www.devon.gov.uk/cma\\_report.htm?cmadoc=report\\_hcw1537.html](http://www.devon.gov.uk/cma_report.htm?cmadoc=report_hcw1537.html).

<sup>xi</sup> *Data supplied by Devon County Council's PRow Team and Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt)*. Natural England. Available at: [http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east\\_of\\_england/ourwork/gi/accessiblenaturalgreenspacestandardangst.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/gi/accessiblenaturalgreenspacestandardangst.aspx) (Accessed: 02/05/2013).

<sup>xii</sup> Natural England (2017) *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment 2015-2016 Raw Data*. Natural England. Available at: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/evidence/mene.aspx>

<sup>xiii</sup> Natural England (2017) *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: Headline Report from the 2015-2016 Survey*. Natural England. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/614353/mene-headline-report-2015-16.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614353/mene-headline-report-2015-16.pdf)