



Devon Countryside Access Forum

NEWSLETTER November & December 2019

Top Story

Beat the winter blues



It may be cold and muddy outside, especially after a particularly wet autumn, but Forestry England is encouraging people not to stop going outside when it gets darker. Forestry England and experts from the Royal College of Psychiatrists say that engaging with nature in the winter can really help alleviate the winter blues. Research has also claimed that one in three people in the UK suffer from seasonal affective disorder and low mood during the winter months.

One in five respondents to a public survey in 2019 said they never visited forest areas between October 2018 and March 2019.

Psychiatrist, Dr Alan Kellas who is the lead for Green Care on the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Sustainability Committee said:

“Spending time outdoors in nature, including in woodlands and forests, can really improve mental health. Our senses are engaged differently, our attention changes, we naturally become more mindful, our mood settles if aroused or anxious, or lifts if low or depressed, our imagination can be sparked and we can gain a different perspective on our lives, projects and problems.”

Ellen Devine, Wellbeing Projects Manager at Forestry England, said:

“From the colours of autumn to the crisp frost of a winter’s morning, the forest is full of magical moments. While it can be tempting to retreat at this time of year, it’s so important to keep going outside and keep exploring. Even a short visit to the woods can work wonders for how we feel.”

More on <https://www.forestryengland.uk/news/dont-stop-going-outside-when-it-gets-dark>

National

Natural England

Natural England has just started publishing a regular newsletter which gives a round-up of its activities. The Summer and Autumn editions include some aspects related to the naturally healthy agenda.

- MENE
An article in 'Scientific Reports', by researchers at the University of Exeter Medical School, looked at the MENE data - Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey. This concluded that people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are "significantly more likely to report good health and higher psychological wellbeing". The researchers found that "it didn't matter what they did, whether that was physical exercise or just sitting on a bench."
- Accessible Green Infrastructure
The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan includes ambitions for developments to include accessible green spaces, and for the environment to influence health and well-being. Natural England is drawing up a National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards which will be trialled over coming months to refine the guidance and benchmarks in preparation for a full launch late in 2020. The Framework will include "10 Principles of Good GI for GI planning and delivery, whatever the scale or context."

For more information see the Summer newsletter [here](#) and the Autumn newsletter [here](#)

Sustrans



Sustrans, the cycling and walking charity, has brought out its manifesto for the UK Government, setting out aspirations for improved sustainable transport. Sustrans 'asks' are as follows and the full document provides additional information on each of these:-

[Sustrans Manifesto for UK Government](#)

Provide sustained long-term investment in walking and cycling, to support an updated Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, and the National Cycle Network:

- **Ask 1:** 5% of the transport budget to be spent on walking and cycling in 2020/21, rising to 10% by 2024/25.
- **Ask 2:** £72 million investment per year in the National Cycle Network from UK Government, to contribute towards the £5 billion annual economic benefit in England by 2040.

Commit to a 20-minute neighbourhood planning principle for all cities and towns. This is designed so all people living in cities and towns are within a 20-minute walk from their everyday services and needs:

- **Ask 3:** Update the National Planning Policy Framework to incorporate 20-minute neighbourhoods as a central principle.

- **Ask 4:** Help local authorities unlock sites for 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- **Ask 5:** Develop new Planning Practice Guidance on walking and cycling.
- **Ask 6:** Introduce a Transforming Places Fund to support 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Transform the journey to school to help children travel safely and independently by foot, scooter or cycle:

- **Ask 7:** Roll-out School Zones to reduce motor traffic in local neighbourhoods around schools.
- **Ask 8:** Make it easier for local authorities outside London to run School Streets.
- **Ask 9:** Provide on-road cycle training for all school children.

Ensure places are accessible for everyone:

- **Ask 10:** Implement and enforce inclusive and accessible design guidance for walking and cycling.
- **Ask 11:** Implement a 20mph default speed limit in all built-up areas to make everyone's journey safer.
- **Ask 12:** Implement an England-wide ban on pavement parking.
- **Ask 13:** Deliver programmes to diversify and increase participation in walking and cycling.
- **Ask 14:** Subsidies to land owners who increase access for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Greenways:

- **Ask 15:** Establish a UK-wide Greenways Taskforce and Greenways Citizen's Assembly so that communities can develop a vision for, and put in place, a Greenways Programme.

Forestry England

In a similar vein to the lead article, new research commissioned by the Forestry Commission, has found that more than two-thirds of people (68%) in the UK “think they spend too much time inside between October and March” and of those 79% “regretted it”. Spending time in the forests has proven wellbeing benefits and has also been shown to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. See more [here](#)

Ellen Devine, Wellbeing Project Manager at the Forestry Commission, made a number of comments including the following “A lot of people can feel despondent about climate change, how wildlife is faring and other environmental issues. Spending more time outdoors, connecting with and appreciating the natural world can be a starting point for change. It can re-ignite people's motivations to stand up and be counted, get active in their community and find ways to make a positive difference.”

The Forestry Commission has been marking its centenary in 2019 with a programme of activity to inspire people to connect with forests and woodlands. For more information visit www.forestryengland.uk/100 and see the press release [here](#)

One of the new activities is the launch of waymarked running trails in 18 forests, for both beginners and regular runners. 200 km of new waymarked trails have been created, supported by Sport England National Lottery funding. One of the new routes is at Haldon where a 5 km route has been put in with a mixture of surfaces and gradients. More information on www.forestryengland.uk/running

Benefits of the National Parks worldwide

Economists have put a figure of £5 trillion a year on the mental health benefits of the world's national parks, let alone the additional environmental benefits.

For more see [here](#)

Benefits of volunteering

The Centre for Health Promotion Research at Leeds Beckett University undertook a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis for the Wildlife Trusts to assess the benefits of its volunteering and community involvement programmes. Their conclusions, which have wider applicability to volunteering in the outdoors, demonstrate the importance of engaging with nature to prevent or offset health problems. The research found:

“A return of £8.50 for every £1 invested in Wildlife Trusts volunteering programmes strengthens the argument for a community-based approach to health, and investment in green exercise and volunteering programmes. This will deliver improved health and wellbeing at a population scale, reducing the current burden on the National Health Service.”

“A return of £6.88 for every £1 invested in programmes that are designed to improve mental, physical and social wellbeing is also significant. It strengthens the argument for ‘nature on prescription’ to be standard practice for GPs and NHS mental health providers, supported by specifically allocated NHS funding.”

For full details on the methodology and findings see [here](#)

Devon

Hawkchurch – keeping access open for all



The latest Parish Paths Partnership newsletter has a feature article on Hawkchurch in East Devon and it's useful to include information on all that has been happening there, under the watchful eye of Roz Fox, P3 Co-ordinator for the parish.

Hawkchurch is fortunate in having many footpaths and bridleways and one of the targets was to make routes more accessible to people.

During the year, significant works have been undertaken in liaison with landowners and Devon County Council framework contractors.

On Footpath 12, three stiles have been replaced by kissing gates, a sleeper bridge was refurbished, trees were cut and cleared, and minor drainage works were undertaken to reduce surface mud.



On Footpath 16, a bridge undercut by severe bank erosion, was replaced.

A further bridge on the Devon/ Somerset border was replaced following negotiation with landowners and a large bridleway bridge was erected. Putting this in was a challenge and had to wait for suitable weather and ground conditions.

The hard work of Roz and all P3 Coordinators is much appreciated. Being on the ground all the time, they can identify and secure improvements to the public rights of way network in their parishes so that these are available for people to enjoy.

For enthusiasts of long-distance paths, Hawkchurch benefits from easy access to several of these. The Monarchs Way runs through the village (a 615 mile route from Worcester to Brighton – the escape route used by King Charles 11 in 1651 after defeat at the Battle of Worcester), and the Liberty Trail (28 miles from Ham Hill in Somerset to Lyme Regis following the 1685 protestant Monmouth rebellion route) and the Wessex Ridgeway (a 62 mile route – 58 miles multi-use – which runs from Tollard Royal to Lyme Regis) both run along the eastern edge of the parish.

Living Options

Living Options, Devon, is looking to develop its network of people living with a disability or long-term health condition. If you, or someone you know, might be interested contact Living Options via their Freephone number 0300 303 3691 / 07856 426940 or email time2talk@livingoptions.org They are also seeking Volunteer Coordinators across Devon to feedback on local issues and barriers and join in with a quarterly meeting.

Tour of Britain

The Tour of Britain is returning to Devon on Monday, 7 September 2020 when the County will host Stage 2.

And finally....

Devon County Council will be making appointments to the Devon Countryside Access Forum in March 2020. If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in applying contact devoncaf@devon.gov.uk or look on the website for details and an application form www.devon.gov.uk/dcaf The closing date is February 21st.

