

**Photo 1.** Exe Estuary Trail wooden boardwalk



**Photo 2.** Exe Estuary Trail with DCC officer Kirstie Pritchard



**Photo 3.** Orcombe Point Exmouth at the Geo needle with SW Coast path officer Alex..



## Exe Estuary Trail problems for physically disabled people.

The BIGGEST PROBLEM ON THE EXE trail are the lack of wheelchair accessible toilets, including the many pubs and cafés along the EXE ESTUARY trail. There may be grants available. There are virtually no accessible toilets on the Dawlish side..

Gates need to be 1.5 m wide to give good clearance for mobility scooters. Chicanes need to be widely spaced to allow scooters through.

Just look at the PARA OLYMPICS to see how many disabled people remain active.

By 2030, one in five people in the UK (21.8%) will be aged 65 or over, 6.8% will be aged 75+. Increasing numbers of these people will be using mobility scooters as well as physically disabled people.

**DCC Officer Kirstie Pritchard and Jay Boyle from the Exe Estuary Partnership walked with several groups of mobility scooter and power chair users along the Exe Estuary in 2021. They devised three accessible routes:**

- Bowling Green Marsh and Topsham
- Exmouth to Lympstone and back along the Exe Estuary Trail
- Exmouth including the marina and seafront

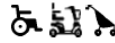
The whole of these routes, using the Exe Estuary Trail and adjoining paths and pavements, are accessible for wheelchairs, small mobility scooters (4mph), power chairs and larger mobility scooters (8mph). They are also suitable for families and pushchairs.



## Exe Estuary Management Partnership

For people, for wildlife, for the future

### Easy Access Guide - routes around the estuary Exe Estuary Trail: Bowling Green Marsh and Topsham



Route length  
Grading of route /  
Accessible  
wheelchair and  
mobility scooter  
suitability.

3.1 miles / 5km (approx.) – detour to viewpoint approximately 300m  
The whole of this route, using the Exe Estuary Trail and adjoining paths, is accessible for wheelchairs, small mobility scooters (4mph), power chairs and larger mobility scooters (8mph). It is also suitable for families and pushchairs. Users can choose to do the whole route or part of the route.

Site description

The Exe Estuary trail runs from Exmouth to Exeter Quay and then on to Dawlish Warren. The whole Exe Estuary Trail is wheelchair and mobility scooter accessible on tarmac paths, pavements and wooden boardwalk. Bowling Green Marsh is a freshwater nature reserve owned by Exeter City Council and managed by the RSPB. Along the route you will pass the Lookout hide, an ideal spot to watch birds up close, including spring and autumn migrating birds, and winter flocks of waders, ducks and geese feeding and resting. The route also takes you through the historic port and shipbuilding centre of Topsham with its distinctive 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch-style merchant houses and attractive museum.

The Exe Estuary is an internationally important site for wildlife. Please take care not to disturb the birds and other wildlife as this can impact on their health and survival. Keep to the trails and please keep dogs on a lead. Find out more at <https://www.exe-estuary.org/>.

Route description

This route joins a section of the Exe Estuary Trail through Bowling Green Marsh, a nature reserve managed by the RSPB and passes the bird hide and viewpoint. It then takes you along quiet lanes to Topsham, an historic port on the River Exe, before re-joining the Exe Estuary Trail. The Trail is a shared cycling and pedestrian route and parts of the route are on narrow pavements or quiet roads so please be aware of traffic. The route also includes some wooden boardwalk and passes along the historic 'Goat Walk' a very narrow section immediately adjacent to the estuary.

\*Please note, some scooter users have experienced difficulty with the Goat Walk. This is a very narrow path with a 1-2m drop down to the beach on one side which has no rail (see section 7). In places the path has benches on one side which further narrows the path. Users may feel more secure with an able bodied walker to accompany them and walk on the outside of the path.

Toilets

There are toilets, including wheelchair accessible toilets, at Darts Farm Shop and on Topsham Quay (radar key required for accessible toilet at Topsham Quay)

Parking

Parking is available at Darts Farm (EX3 0QH / 01392 878200), along with shops, café and toilets ([shop.dartfarm.co.uk](http://shop.dartfarm.co.uk)). Alternative parking is also to be found at Holman Way (EX3 0EN) and Topsham Quay (EX3 0JB), both of which are free to blue badge holders.

Refreshments

There are food shops, a café and restaurant at Darts Farm as well as a number of pubs, shops, cafes and restaurants within Topsham itself.

Public transport

Rail links to Topsham Station:  
[nationalrail.co.uk/stations\\_destinations/top.aspx](http://nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/top.aspx)  
There are buses\* from Exeter, Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton (Route 57 & 58). Find travel information at [traveldevon.info](http://traveldevon.info).  
\*Larger mobility scooters may have difficulty with space on buses.

Scooter and other facilities

Countryside Mobility South West have helped set up a number of locations (60+) where you can hire a 'Tramper' (all terrain class 3 mobility scooter), including at the near by Powderham Castle for example: [countrysidemobility.org/locations/powderham-castle](http://countrysidemobility.org/locations/powderham-castle)  
Exeter Community Transport Association also have a Tramper for hire and will also hire scooters depending on the area it is to be used in: [exetercta.co.uk](http://exetercta.co.uk)

Route Map



Route description



1. Starting at Darts Farm Car Park, exit by the main entrance and turn right onto Topsham Road. Cross the road at the crossing and turn almost immediately left onto the path sign posted to the Exe Estuary Trail. The turning here is quite sharp and with the cycle barriers in place turning onto the path can be awkward (but achievable) for larger trampers. Please be aware this is a shared path with cyclists and walkers.



2. This path leads to the start of the Exe Estuary Trail. At one point it does get very narrow and passes close to several houses (and almost feels like you are passing through a garden). Scooters and trampers are able to get through. Follow signs to the Exe Estuary Trail.



3. When the path meets the Exe Estuary Trail turn right onto the Trail and across the bridge. At this point the trail is over a wooden boardwalk. Some scooter users have reported that the sensation of driving over the boardwalk can be unpleasant as it is uneven and creates a rumbling sensation, however most of our access group did not find this a problem. Follow the Exe Estuary Trail to where it meets Bowling Green Marsh Road.



4. Along the boardwalk there are numerous places to stop and view the birdlife through holes in the fence panelling. These viewpoints are placed at various heights so that wheelchair users and smaller children as well as standing adults can view comfortably.



5. Where the Exe Estuary Trail meets Bowling Green Road turn left onto Bowling Green Road. Please note this road is open to traffic so take additional care along this section. There are some tight bends with a wall on one side of the road which reduce visibility in some sections. Follow this road to the where it ends at a slip way and the start of the Goat Walk.



6. Along Bowling Green Road is the RSPB Lookout hide and sensory garden which is wheelchair accessible. Further along the road through a gate off to the left there is a gravelled track to the viewpoint over the Exe Estuary. While the gravelled track to the viewpoint is accessible with a scooter, access to the viewpoint itself is up steps.

At this point if you do not wish to use the Goat Walk section of the route you should turn back. Topsham can be accessed by turning right and completing steps 9-11 in reverse.



7. Bowling Green Road ends at a slipway onto the beach, along the road there are some very narrow sections with a high wall on one side which reduces visibility for any traffic. Please use caution in these narrow sections.



This Easy Access Guide was created by the Environment Group at Devon County Council on behalf of the Exe Estuary Management Partnership: [ExeEstuaryManagementPartnership-WhatIsIt.exe-estuary.org](http://ExeEstuaryManagementPartnership-WhatIsIt.exe-estuary.org). We are grateful to support from members of the Devon Wheelchair Access Group who advised on the assessments of these routes for wheelchair and mobility scooter users. Information is correct at the time of publication (Sept 2021) but please contact the Exe Estuary Partnership if you find any information to be out of date.



The owner of the Pump and Pedal pub on the Granite way near Okehampton built a brand new wheelchair accessible toilet its great. They also built a ramp instead of steps into the pub garden making it accessible for bikes, prams and mobility scooters. It is now a destination pub for mobility scooters. Could we have more pubs like this along the Exe Estuary?

Scooters are versatile and can go off road. Modern mobility scooters have long ranges 20 to 20 miles and superb off road capability. Power chairs are joystick operated, popular with stroke patients but have less range.

**Photo 4.** Scooter fording 30cm of water



**Photo 5.** Scooters climbing Haytor on Dartmoor



**Photo 6.** Chicane barriers stop scooters



***Every barrier excludes someone – avoid them and use your budget more positively (Open Country)***

Disabled Ramblers UK have a four page policy statement on;  
**Man Made Barriers & Least Restrictive Access.**

## **Useful websites**

Disabled Ramblers UK  
<http://disabledramblers.co.uk/>

Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF)  
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/prow/devon-countryside-access-forum/>

Countryside Mobility SW. (Some 60 sites across SW)  
<https://www.countrysidemobility.org/>

Open Country  
Helping People with Disabilities to Access and Enjoy the Countryside.  
<http://www.opencountry.org.uk/>

Paul Narromore's website has local Exeter scooter walks.  
<http://www.wheelchairoffroad.org/#home>