



## News release

02 February 2010

### **Campaigners optimistic as Vixen Tor landowner objects**

The decision over public access at Vixen Tor – a Dartmoor landmark cherished by walkers and climbers – is waiting in the wings, as an objection by the landowner against a recommendation supported by the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and the Ramblers to designate public rights of way has now been passed to the Planning Inspectorate.

Guy Keating, BMC Access & Conservation Officer said: “We believe there is a really good case for these footpaths warranting public rights of way designation and we will continue to work towards achieving this goal. Given the landowner’s demonstrated position over public access to the Tor, the appeal doesn’t come as any great surprise.”

Eugene Suggett, Ramblers Senior Policy Officer, said: The Ramblers are delighted that Devon County Council found enough evidence to justify making an order to grant our application to put Vixen Tor on the Map. It was always likely the landowner would object, and the orders would go to a planning inspector. Should this result in a public inquiry, the Ramblers will be there, fighting the legal battle for walkers’ rights.

The area around Vixen Tor was provisionally mapped as Open Access land under the CRoW Act (2000), but the landowner contested this and won her appeal during a public inquiry in 2005. Since then various parties (including the BMC, the Ramblers and the Dartmoor National Park Authority) have tried to negotiate an access agreement with the owner – all to no avail – and access to the crag has been banned ever since.

In recent years, the Ramblers and the BMC campaigned for the footpaths leading to the Tor to be designated as public rights of way. There is antiquarian evidence which suggests the ways were regarded as public historically, as well as user evidence which suggest that the public have used the ways as of right without interruption for upwards of 20 years.

Devon County Council (DCC) considered the evidence and in March 2009 recommended the Definitive Map should be modified so as to designate the ways as public.

It is likely the case will be heard at a public inquiry in Autumn 2010. Walkers and climbers who submitted an evidence form in 2007 may be asked by DCC to attend

177-179 Burton Road  
Manchester M20 2BB  
[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

Tel: 0161 445 6111  
Fax: 0161 445 4500  
e-mail: [office@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:office@thebmc.co.uk)

the public inquiry and give evidence. The BMC and the Ramblers will continue to push for a dedicated public right of way to the Tor.

**-Ends-**

#### **Notes to editors**

- For further information please contact Tina Gardner (Press & PR Officer, BMC) on [tina@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:tina@thebmc.co.uk) / 0161 438 3337 or Ruth Somerville (Media Officer, Ramblers) on [ruth.somerville@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:ruth.somerville@ramblers.org.uk) / 020 7339 8532.
- **The British Mountaineering Council (BMC)** is the national representative body for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers in England and Wales and is recognised as such by government. The BMC is committed to promoting the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers and good practice in all activities related to these pursuits.
- Access & Conservation is one of the BMC's most important areas of work, affecting every climber, hill walker and mountaineer in the country. Much of the work is unseen - the results simply being the continued freedom to walk and climb in wild and unspoilt places.
- **The Ramblers** is at the heart of walking in Britain. Everyone walks, so the Ramblers is for everyone.
- It is Britain's walking charity. It works to make it easy for everyone to walk, whether in countryside, cities, hills, coasts and on or off the beaten track.
- It is a grass roots network of over 12,000 volunteers who work tirelessly for a walking Britain. For 74 years it has helped build and protect Britain's 150,000 mile long path network, it runs over 28,000 walks a year, and campaigns for better walking routes and more walking opportunities
- It is celebrating 75 years at the heart of walking this year