



SOUTH EAST DEVON
HABITAT REGULATIONS
PARTNERSHIP

South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

South East Devon Wildlife Communications Key Performance Indicators

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October 2021

Legal comment/advice:

There is no direct legal comment to be made at this time, each and any individual issue will need to be considered as it arises.

Finance comment/advice:

Any financial implications are set out in the report.

Public Document:	Yes
Exemption:	None
Review date for release	None

Recommendations

It is proposed that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the results of the communications report for the period February 2021 – July 2021.
2. Receives further reports on communications Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) every 12 months, beginning April 2022.

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Low. This report provides the results of the communications report for February 2021 – July 2021.

1. Summary

1.1 South East Devon Wildlife (SEDW) is the public facing brand for the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership.

1.2 Key performance indicators (KPIs) have been identified and will enable evaluation as measures of success.

1.3 Six agreed KPIs reflect the business plan objectives:

1. Website page views
 2. Website time spent on site
 3. Website average number of pages/session
 4. Website referrals
 5. Website top referral channel
 6. Number of people signing up to newsletters
- In addition, social media engagement is being monitored:
7. Social media engagement – facebook, twitter, instagram

1.4 Collecting this data on a monthly basis means officers are able to monitor and evaluate it to understand how project delivery, stakeholder engagement and communications efforts are impacting on our overall goals.

1.5 As previously stated, a communications officer role is providing only 1 day per week support, which limits direct delivery. Engagement and communications is delivered by the Habitat Mitigation Officers (HMOs) as part of their work in the limited time available while performing a range of duties. During the busy summer and autumn months HMOs are spending more time on site engaging directly with visitors, which means less time spent on communications including social media and writing articles for partners' newsletters. With international travel limited in

2021, it is expected that there will be a significant increase in visitor pressure from staycationing and UK based holidays.

1.6 Communications does not have a dedicated, full-time resource with which to plan, monitor and report in detail. To aid understanding on available communication resource and priorities, the Communications Officer has kept a timesheet for June which highlights how time is spent. It helps to inform the best use of the 0.2 FTE communications officer resource, regards frequency of reporting. The timesheet illustrates that there is already an 'overspend' in time, of more than 2 hours or more per week.

1.7 Communications officer time can be most effectively spent providing communications support, planning and delivery for major projects. Preparing this report has provided an opportunity to review key data, which demonstrates very little change over either a 3 or 6 month period. Taking into account the required communications activities and resource available, it is recommended that reporting takes place on an annual basis (beginning April 2022) to allow the Committee to provide a strategic overview and direction.

1.8 Appendix 1 has been updated to show statistics for June and July. June shows a peak in numbers of page views for the website, but July has tailed off significantly as HMOs focus their time on-site with face to face engagements. The peak in June can be attributed to external campaigns: Volunteer week where we showed images of volunteers (1 – 7 June); Environment day / Ocean day (8 June); and a feature in the Wild East Devon newsletter (4581 subscribers) on 18 June.

2. Setting benchmarks for the new website

2.1 In the report to HREC in March 2021, Appendix 1 illustrated statistics from similar conservation/nature websites to show whether they would be helpful in setting benchmarks for the new website. The data was not useful because insufficient detail meant comparison of like with like was not possible. In addition, targets are not being set on the other websites, which means there are no comparable points of reference with which to set meaningful targets. It is not proposed to repeat this exercise as it has no value.

2.2 Appendix 1 shows figures for the KPIs over the period from February 2021 – July 2021. Average figures for this period are:

Page views: 294

Average number of page/sessions: 1.76

Total users / referrals: 89

Top referral channel: 71 (organic search)

Top web content: 74 (home page)

Appendix 2 shows detailed KPIs in chart form.

2.3 The KPI figures presented in Appendix 1 are lower than those reported at the last Committee for June 2020 – March 2021. From 12th April 2021 the lifting of national restrictions means HMOs have returned on site with many positive responses from members of the public. Using the gazebo, HMOs are experiencing

an increase in pro-active, positive approaches from visitors. The investment in the gazebo is improving opportunities for the HMOs to engage with visitors to encourage positive behaviour change.

2.4 The web KPIs collected from June 2020 until the new website goes live, will be reviewed as benchmarks for objectives for the new website.

3. Current website

3.1 Appendices 1 and 2 show the highest number of page views was experienced in June 2021 at 375 from the highest number of visitors at 179 in the same month. The top referral was from organic search at 92 in April. The longest time spent on site was in March 2021 at 1 min 44 secs and the highest average number of pages per session was also in March at 1.96.

3.2 The spike in April's organic search statistics cannot be evidenced with data. There may be a correlation with the HMOs return to face to face interactions on site with the branded gazebo. However, this does not explain why May's statistics are lower, when a full month of pop ups took place, as opposed to around 3 weeks during April. Pop ups are proving to be a very valuable way of educating visitors. For example, 87 interactions were recorded on 29th July at Uphams car park on the Pebblebed Heaths.

3.3 The spike in June's page views can be linked to an article in the e-zine (Rural Neighbourhood Monthly Gazette) produced by the Police which was sent to Teignbridge residents in that month.

3.4 Qualitative observations from HMOs outline that the new highly visible and branded gazebo is engaging many more people in conversation. Visitors pro-actively approach HMOs at the gazebo; they are inquisitive to find out more; the nature of conversations are more positive. It appears to be the case that visitors are sometimes more receptive to messages when conversations are initiated by them, rather than being approached by an HMO.

3.5 It's interesting to note that subscribers to the quarterly newsletter has increased from 375 in March (spring edition) to 681 in July (summer edition). This is likely to be supported by face to face conversations where visitors are encouraged to sign up to the newsletter via the website.

3.6 Although these are possible conclusions, there is no hard evidence to support them. They are suppositions based on the information available. To be able to scientifically evaluate behaviour change, professional research with specific metrics would need to be undertaken.

4. Social media

4.1 Social media statistics are being monitored and evaluated by officers on a monthly basis to respond to successes and plan future areas of priority.

4.2 Facebook does not provide an engagement rate but for comparison purposes it has been calculated using total impressions for a post, divided by engaged users. This indicator has been provided because it is deemed to provide insight

into the type of content which generates a response from users and it will be able to inform decisions about future content.

4.3 As outlined in the report presented in April to HREC, these statistics show that the engagement rate is much higher on facebook than on twitter. As before, this helps us to ensure and plan appropriate/timely content for facebook, particularly to target particular users through facebook groups, by location or interest.

4.4 As before, videos garner higher engagement than photos, which is no surprise as social media algorithms prioritise video content. Video content already features as a priority by the HMOs.

4.5 The highest engagement rate (at 29%) with a facebook video post took place in March, when return of a staff member was announced. A video post showing asparagus growing wild at Dawlish Warren generated huge levels of interest but it wasn't the highest engagement rate. Asparagus enjoyed 636 engagements out of 6059 people reached thanks to linking with Wild flower hour and Teignbridge Leisure. Facebook followers continued to grow from 315 to 356.

4.6 We will continue to work with partners and tag influencers to increase engagement and reach new users.

4.7 On Instagram we monitor and evaluate insights on a monthly basis. From February to July 2021, followers have increased to 361 from 396. The use of relevant hashtags enables us to connect with many new instagram users. For example, 70% of responses to the video post of Chiffchaff calling at Bystock were from non-followers.

4.8 The highest engagement rate on twitter was recorded at 12.8% in June 2021, which was a 'bring your pet to work day' post. Twitter followers have increased from 651 to 738.

5. Lessons learned and future plans

5.1 Lessons learned 5.2 – 5.5 below have not changed since the April report to committee.

5.2 Social media: Engagement rate is much higher on Facebook than on twitter. Understanding this will help us to ensure and plan content for Facebook, particularly to target particular users with relevant content through Facebook groups, by location or interest. HMOs will continue to produce video content.

5.3 We will monitor and evaluate Instagram insights on a monthly basis. We will monitor social media followers on a monthly basis for each social media channel to identify trends, as followers are a good representation of engagement. We are using a social media scheduling tool (Orlo) to measure impact of social media campaigns according to season/theme. We will use hashtags to reach and attract new followers.

5.4 Capacity dependent (especially limited during the busy summer months and forthcoming Wildlife Refuge season), we are forward planning social media and newsletters to ensure milestones, key dates and comprehensive links to the website are included. Newsletter content successes and growth in subscriber numbers will be reviewed after each edition. This will enable us to identify top links, to learn from and build on that.

5.5 We encourage sign up to the newsletter: face to face at pop-ups and patrols; to website visitors; through social media, via a pin to the top of social media pages; and through links through partner newsletters. A newsletter archive will be available on the new website.

5.6 We will look for publicity opportunities and continue to provide content for networks and partners to reach new readers and drive web traffic. We keep a record of all publicity activities regularly as they happen.

5.7 We will aim to deliver pop ups for face to face engagement three times a week across the protected sites to educate visitors and to encourage sign up to our newsletter.

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Natural England comment:

We agree with annual reporting of communication KPI's. Comparing annual rather than monthly changes should give a better idea of trends in engagement. The increase in newsletter subscribers is welcomed.