



SOUTH EAST DEVON
HABITAT REGULATIONS
PARTNERSHIP

South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

South East Devon Habitat Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Performance

Fergus Pate

Principal Delivery Officer
Teignbridge District Council
October 2021



Exeter
City Council



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:

The financial implications are set out in the report. The request of £2000 for webpage creation can be met within existing resources.

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

Recommendations

It is proposed that the Executive Committee:

1. Supports preparation of monitoring webpages for the 2014 South East Devon Habitat Mitigation Strategy and 2016 East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan.
2. Delegates authority to the Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager to oversee development of the webpages.
3. Approves a budget of up to £2,000 to create the webpages.

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Low. This report proposes the creation of webpages that will increase access to information about performance of the South East Devon Habitat Mitigation Partnership.

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the meeting of 29 April 2021, it was resolved that the committee should receive a report setting out a framework for reporting and monitoring key measures of success for the 2014 South East Devon Habitat Mitigation Strategy and 2016 Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan.
- 1.2 This report sets out proposals to create a new monitoring module on the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership website that is dedicated to reporting progress with each of the elements noted in the Mitigation Monitoring Plans.
- 1.3 Undertaking this work does not feature on existing business plans and will involve additional resource requirements. There will be a one-off cost of up to £2,000, plus additional officer time spent populating the webpages as monitoring updates become available.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Mitigation Strategy and Visitor Management Plan, together, include 66 mitigation measures, many of which the Partnership has already implemented or is in the process of doing so.
- 2.2 Monitoring of the strategies is essential in providing an early warning system and helping to hone future business plans. It is necessary to ensure that

approaches are working and to help determine whether further adjustments are required.

- 2.3 However, there are interdependencies between mitigation projects and it is often not possible to distinguish the exact impact of each measure that is being implemented. For that reason, both of the adopted strategies included monitoring frameworks setting out the overall monitoring that should be undertaken and the approximate frequency of each element.
- 2.4 For the [South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy](#), the monitoring framework is set out at chapter 12.
- 2.5 In the case of the [Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan](#), the monitoring plan is at chapter 10.
- 2.6 Please note that the monitoring framework was slightly updated in July 2017 with the frequency of visitor monitoring (numbers, activities, behaviours, etc.) extended from 5 years to 10 years.
- 2.7 It is important to remember that the Partnership is in the process of implementing 80 year strategies and the nature conservation benefits of our work are not always immediately discernible, particularly because there are often other factors at play. For example, weather patterns from one year to the next may have a bearing on visitor numbers but trends are more likely to emerge over a longer timescale. Similarly, species population trends and habitat condition are not solely driven by recreational activity. Variation in bird numbers year to year may be affected by a range of different factors, including adult survival, breeding success, as well as food availability, water quality and climatic impacts.
- 2.8 An array of monitoring information is already available and associated reports are produced on a regular basis. However, they are often extensive documents. The proposed approach will mean that all of the up to date information is available in one location, with headline information summarised in more of a dashboard format.

3. Recommended approach

- 3.1 Members are asked to approve preparation of a new monitoring module for the Partnership's website that will serve the following purpose:
 - a) Address each of the monitoring framework elements of the two strategies.
 - b) Explain what information is being monitored, and why.
 - c) Summarise the key findings of monitoring reports and provide a high level commentary on notable results.
 - d) Succinctly present statistical information and trend data, where relevant.
 - e) Offer direct links to further information on specific topics that can be found in our evolving suite of monitoring reports.

- 3.2 Appendix A offers an illustrative example of the proposed approach. It is set over four tiers:

Tier 1: Overview of the South East Devon Habitat Mitigation Partnership area and the locations that are being monitored.

Tier 2: For each location, headline information about what our monitoring reports show. This can be broken down by year / monitoring period where relevant.

Tier 3: Further graphs and statistical data that has been used to inform the headline information.

Tier 4: Links through to individual monitoring reports (in full) and specific locations within the reports where the headline information, graphs and statistical data can be found.

Alternative option considered

- 3.3 In coming to the recommendation, consideration was given to producing a website module that was entirely focussed on presenting data and statistics from our monitoring reports. There was potential to create something that automatically drew information from raw data and presented it in easy to digest charts.
- 3.4 However, much of the monitoring involved in our strategies extends beyond computing statistics and it is often inadequate to present numerical information unless it is accompanied by some level of textual interpretation.

4. Resource implications

- 4.1 Initial estimates indicate that the cost of expert external support in producing the new webpages will be around £1,250. Thereafter, it will be necessary to rely upon unfunded support from an internal graphic designer from Teignbridge who will deliver the required graphics for each monitoring measure and whenever updates to monitoring results are available, assist Habitat Mitigation Partnership officers in editing the pages themselves. All of this work will entail an additional pressure on existing staff resources that doesn't currently exist.
- 4.2 Because work to assemble the webpages is at a relatively early stage, it is considered prudent to approve a budget of up to £2,000 for external support. Officers will work to minimise the costs.
- 4.3 There is sufficient headroom in existing budgets to meet these costs.

5. Timescales

- 5.1 Work is already underway to update the existing website and the proposed additions will sit neatly within that overall programme. It is anticipated that the monitoring information will be available to view online from early 2022

and the committee is asked to delegate authority to the Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager who will oversee the process thereafter.

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Natural England comment:

Has there been public interest in accessing monitoring data from the partnership website? Natural England would find a page with links to publications, such as the monitoring reports, useful but we are unsure there would be great interest from the public in the detail of the monitoring.

The Exe Estuary Partnership and Pebblebed Heaths websites already have links to relevant publications, there is no need to duplicate these. How much officer time would be needed to create and then update monitoring webpages? How would this help manage recreational pressure on the protected sites?