

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of South and East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee held at East Devon District Council Council Chamber, Blackdown House on 3 November 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.04 pm and ended at 3.34 pm

102 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

103 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 May 2022

Minutes of the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee meeting held on 17 May 2022 were agreed by the committee.

104 Declarations of interest

Cllr Martin Wrigley: personal interest – his property overlooks the estuary, and he is a member and Treasurer of Cockwood Boat Club.

Cllr Geoff Jung – Affects non-registerable interest: Member of Woodbury Parish Council, the area of which includes part of the Pebblebed heath (minute 104).

105 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

106 Confidential/exempt items

None.

107 Visitor Access Improvement Works update

Kim Strawbridge, Site Manager of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust gave the committee a presentation that covered the visitor access improvements.

The improvements included a car parking strategy to safeguard the SPA protected bird species and SAC heathland habitats from the adverse impacts and disturbance caused by people. The committee were reminded of the individual elements of the strategy:

- “gathering” visitors towards car parks
- Retaining and developing the formal car parks that are as close as possible to the points of entry
- Maintaining the current number of car parking spaces
- Establishing nodes as the starting point for promoted trails
- Development of cost effective design and build standards, and maintenance of surrounding vegetation to give confidence to car park users
- Enabling a flexible approach to visitor management.

The committee were shown images of the sites map, and photographs of visitor areas and signage.

Comments from the committee included:

- Appreciation for a clear and detailed presentation
- Query on additional signage on the site to aid visitors to find their way back out of the site; in response, the rationale for signage was explained to balance the need for directing visitors with keeping a minimal impact on the aesthetic of the area. Visitors were encouraged to use a map and viewpoints to navigate the site;
- Hedge planting and ditches were being enhanced to project the site from unwanted vehicle access;
- Data on usage of the designated car park areas would be provided in update reports to the committee at future meetings when available.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee notes the update on the visitor access improvement works.

108 **Ridgetop Park SANGS update**

The committee received a presentation from Estelle Skinner, Green Infrastructure Officer of Teignbridge District Council; and Sian Avon, Senior Ranger, in respect of the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) at Ridgetop Park, Matford.

The committee were shown maps of the layout of the park, and detail on the car and cycle parking for access to the site at Trood Lane. Photographs were shown of the various stages of development of the site, including top soil removal to support the creation of wildflower drifts; and the new seating and interpretation area designed and installed by the TDC greenspaces team.

The phases of development were explained to the committee. Questions included:

- Appreciation for the extensive work by the teams to deliver the SANGS;
- Commendation for the work in delivering such a diverse habitat in the area, including the creation of the new hill, the choice of sustainable materials for signs and gates;
- Clear positive partnership work to deliver the project to date
- Committee would welcome a second visit to the site to appreciate the changes first-hand.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee notes the update on the Ridgetop Park SANGS.

109 **Clarification regarding the recommendations in the 2022-23 Annual Business Plan**

Comments from the committee included:

- Clarification on the stakeholders who would be consulted on the Personal Aircraft Code – in response, a number of organisations were being identified by the officer working group to cover as wide a range as possible, including drone users. There was an expectation that, through consulting those groups, other niche groups would be identified, and the code promoted to them;
- The individual councils had their own work streams relating to drone policies for flying over authority owned land;
- Government guidance on this area was still awaited, and would be taken into account once known;
- The rationale for option one was agreed as the best option to undertake.

The clarification on the car park expenditure, taken in conjunction with the presentation on works under minute 107, was accepted by the Committee.

Cllr Wrigley, raised the outstanding element of resolution 3 of minute 94 of the previous meeting held on 17 May 2022 in regard to the Dawlish Warren BMP. He considered the best approach was for the committee to provide input into the current work of the Environment Agency in revising the Dawlish Warren BMP, because of the significant impact that would have on the areas. He was concerned that waiting until the EA had made a final decision was too late, leaving the only option to mitigate against the impact of their decision.

The Chair and Cllr Sutton fully understood the level of concern, but the remit of the committee did not provide them with any opportunity to comment at this stage, until the EA had provided their full findings from their review. The Principal Projects Manager confirmed that officers were in dialogue with the EA, but could not prepare a report to bring to the committee until the review findings were made available to them, and analysis was made to determine what mitigation was required. This would then be brought to the committee to agree adjustments to the measures in the Annual Business Plan. At that time, there was not sufficient information to report to the committee. The committee role relates to habitat mitigation, not commenting on the work that the EA is planning to undertake.

Each authority in their own right had the opportunity to engage with the EA to voice their concerns. The Chair briefly outlined discussion already ongoing in relation to Exmouth, Lympstone and Exton in that regard.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee

1. agree to option 1, cost estimate £1,534 for promotion of the Exe Water User's Code by means of focused consultation with specific stakeholders and affected groups;
2. approve funding for Phase 3 of the Pebblebed Heaths visitor access improvements at an estimated cost of £175,859.

110 **Clyst Meadows update**

Simon Bates, Green Infrastructure Project Manager at EDDC, gave a presentation on Clyst Meadows, situated west of Cranbrook and north of Exeter Airport.

The committee were updated on the plans of the emerging layout for the site. The timeframe was outlined as:

- Spring 2023 planning permission for change of use and construction of a 10 space car park; complete the land transfer for in-perpetuity management; and public engagement programme;
- Summer 2023 ecology and hydrology surveys; planning permission for habitat enhancement, access infrastructure;
- Autumn 2023 construction
- Spring 2024 Site fully open.

Questions from the committee included:

- Welcoming the development of the site;
- Welcomed the diversity of the site;
- Appreciation of the work undertaken to get the site underway.

RESOLVED by the Executive Committee that the update on Clyst Meadows be noted.

111 **Habitat mitigation team update**

The team updates were outlined in a report to the committee, covering:

- Two full time wildlife wardens now in post
- Detail on their interactions for the periods April to July 2022; and July to October 2022, such as running information hubs at the Pebblebed Heaths; attending the Exe Estuary Stakeholder forum; talking to news crews on the patrol boat;
- Devon Loves Dogs update for April – July 2022 and July – October 2022; including Health Week, Waggy Walks, and running a stand at the Devon County Show.

The committee welcomed the useful updates, and commended the scale and success of the Devon Loves Dogs initiative.

RESOLVED by the Executive Committee that the updates provided by the Wildlife Wardens and Devon Loves Dogs project co-ordinator are noted; and received a further update at the next meeting of the Executive.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

G Jung (Chair) (EDDC)
R Sutton (ECC)
M Wrigley (TDC)

Officers in attendance:

Simon Bates, Green Infrastructure Project Manager
Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Naomi Harnett, Enterprise Zone Programme Manager
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Sian Avon, Senior Ranger
Hannah Bosence, Countryside and Greenspace Officer (South West), Land Trust
Dale Cooper, Principal Projects Manager
Estelle Skinner, Green Infrastructure Officer
Alison Slade, Natural England
Estelle Skinner, Green Infrastructure Manager TDC

Chair

Date: