

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of South and East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House on 30 October 2025**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 2.50 pm

#### **9 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 July 2025**

Minutes of the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee meeting held on the 24 July 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **10 Declarations of interest**

None.

#### **11 Public speaking**

None.

#### **12 Matters of urgency**

None.

#### **13 Confidential/exempt items**

#### **14 2024-25 Annual Business Plan - Annual report**

The approved plan released funding for new projects estimated at £110,499. Ongoing projects included the continued funding of keystone mitigation measures, such as the Delivery Manager, Wildlife Wardens and Project Officer (DLD).

New measures included:

- Increased resource for Devon Loves Dogs;
- Recruitment of SANG and Infrastructure Projects Co-ordination Officer
- New South East Devon Visitor Survey
- Replacement of Exe Estuary patrol boat. Clarification was sought on the disposal of the existing boat; the Delivery Manager advised that the boat would be retained for four months while the new arrangement was being bedded in, and following the 12 month pilot period, the Executive Committee would be presented with options on sale or re-use of the craft.
- Hedging at Imperial Recreation Ground, Exmouth
- Audit and redesign of information boards at Dawlish Warren
- Monitoring of Petalwort translocation scheme
- Repairs and improvements at the Warren.

The report before the Executive Committee set out the progress on the plan, including;

- The Visitor Survey running until April 2026;
- Awaiting confirmation of insurance cover for new Patrol Boat, following delivered staff training;

- Hedge planting at Imperial Ground, Exmouth on hold due to further works required of the revetment, which requires approval of a grant funding application;
- Installation of new signs at Dawlish Warren expected by the end of 2025;
- Rescheduled survey for the Petalwort translocation monitoring programme, now taking place in November 2025.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the progress made in delivering the 2024/25 annual business plan.
2. Notes the status of mitigation measures from each of the plans, as well as explanations given for measures subject to delay and revised completion dates.

## 15 **Habitat Mitigation Team update**

The extensive report gave the Executive Committee a month by month account of the events and initiatives undertaken by the Wildlife wardens; and work by the Project Officer and Assistant Project Officer of Devon Loves Dogs.

The Executive committee welcomed the breadth of activities undertaken and the continued efforts of both teams.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee note the update.

## 16 **Communications report**

The report set out data from the key performance indicators relating to the South East Devon Wildlife website and social media reach. Digital communications are delivered by the Wildlife Wardens and Project Officer during any stakeholder engagement.

There had been an adoption of a campaigns approach for more targeted messaging, and QR codes for tracking and measurement; an example being the successful social media reach of almost 20K on Boxing Day 2024. An operational review of communications activity across the team takes place bi-monthly.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee note the results of the communications report for the period of September 2024 to August 2025.

## 17 **Finance report**

The report set out the reviewed developer contributions held on account from the previous strategy applied to the funding framework identified in the new Strategy, which allocates Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation measure costs across the following four categories:

- All sites (staffing, operational, project, monitoring and support costs)
- Exe Estuary specific
- East Devon Pebblebed Heaths specific
- Dawlish Warren specific

“All sites” represents 93% of total costs, and sufficient funds were in place to cover those for at least the next five years. The funds on account for the three specific sites were recommended to be first used to reserve the overall costs of the five-year business plan

(plus contingency) for those sites, in addition to the five-year “All sites” costs. Future contributions are then calculated according to the cost categories. The report set out the allocation of existing funds and updated per dwelling cost of the new Strategy, alongside the five year forecast of income/housing delivery for the four categories.

The shift in approach would allow the partnership to shift funds between the “All sites” category and site specific categories if extra investment is needed in one or more areas at a given time.

In response to a question on funding from CIL or s106 money, the committee were assured that once the payments were made by the developer, the funds were committed and therefore could not be clawed back.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the update on the overall financial position including contributions received, expenditure and anticipated contributions (from signed S106 and CIL);
2. Notes the assessment of the partnership’s financial position, apportioning of those funds in line with the updated strategy and identification of the appropriate planning obligation contribution rates across the region;
3. Requests the partner authorities to revise planning obligations for habitat regulations mitigation contributions to match those shown in Table 2 of the report, index-linked on an annual basis.

## 18 **2025-26 Annual Business Plan and 5 Year Delivery Plan**

The report set out the detail of the 2025/26 Annual Business Plan and Five Year Delivery Plan.

The recommendations in the Plan included:

- New post of Team Leader – Wildlife Wardens
- New post of Wildlife Warden
- Additional warden vehicle
- Devon Loves Dogs operations/development
- Wildlife Wardens operations/development
- Production of monitoring strategy
- Redesign and print of campaign banners “No BBQs at the Warren”
- Review of existing education work and production of new materials
- Trial scheme of shared use of patrol boat, as previously agreed by the Executive Committee in July 2025;
- Repair/replace/maintenance of Exe Wildlife Refuge bouys
- Improved signage/banners for Exe Estuary
- Exe monitoring vantage point count
- Visitor centre and gateway interpretation at Dawlish Warren
- Fencing at Dawlish Warren
- Additional dog bins on the Pebblebed Heaths
- Review of dog walking management on the Pebblebed Heaths
- Fire Strategy work for the Pebblebed Heaths
- Monitoring support

The Executive Committee discussed the approach to preventing BBQs and the wider implications of signage and prevention. The use of electric vehicles instead of hybrid was also discussed. Whilst there was a preference for electric, the practicalities for the wardens in reaching hubs for charging, and tax implications for installing EV chargers at home addresses, meant that on balance a hybrid vehicle was a more practical solution.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee:

1. Approves the 2025 – 26 Annual Business Plan (Appendix A in the report) and the commitments and actions set out therein;
2. Notes the updated 5 Year Delivery Plan also shown in Appendix A;
3. Received a further report detailing progress with the 2025 – 26 Annual Business Plan in October 2026.

19 **Risk Register report**

The report set out an update on the status of the risk register and the potential impact specifically of three identified major risks:

- Changes to the Habitats Regulations as identified in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (at the time of the meeting, at the House of Lords)
- Local Government Reorganisation
- Delays to mitigation measures identified in the annual business plan.

Due to the timescales of the legislation for the first two items, the Executive Committee were concerned but not in a position to debate further until more was known from Government. As the outcomes became clearer, the Executive Committee would be kept informed.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the identification, categorisation and prioritisation of risks as recorded in the accompanying Risk Register, associated with the delivery of the South East Devon Wildlife – Joint Habitats Sites Mitigation Strategy;
2. Notes the control measures in place to mitigate the risks identified;
3. Received an updated Risk Register report in 12 months.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

G Jung (Chair) EDDC

R Williams ECC

G Taylor TDC

**Officers in attendance:**

Matthew Diamond, ECC

Neil Harris, Habitat Regulation Delivery Manager

Rebecca Heal, Solicitor

Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Paul Osborne, Green Infrastructure Project Officer

Lucy Dennis, Greenspace Project Delivery Officer

Chair .....

Date: .....