

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of South and East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee held at online via Zoom on 29 April 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.20 pm

59 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

60 Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee meeting held on the 17 July 2020 and the 18 November 2020 were discussed.

RESOLVED

1) that the Minutes of the SEDHREC held on 17 July 2020 are confirmed as a true record subject to an amendment to Minute 47 2020 – 21 Annual Business Plan Resolution 1 to read as:

“RESOLVED 1. That the 2020 – 21 Annual Business Plan (Appendix A to the report) be approved and the commitments and actions set out therein, include measures of success for each of the investments outlined in the report”

2) that the Minutes of the SEDHREC held on 18 November 2020 are confirmed as a true record.

61 Declarations of interest

Cllr Martin Wrigley: Minutes 64 to 68: Personal Interest: His house overlooks the estuary, and he is a member and Treasurer of Cockwood Boat Club.

Cllr Geoff Jung: Minutes 64 to 68: Personal Interest: He is a board member of the Pebblebed Heaths NNR Advisory Board and also a member of Woodbury Parish Council, the area of which includes part of the pebblebed heath and marsh.

62 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

63 Confidential/exempt items

There were no matters which officers recommended be dealt with in this way.

64 2020 - 21 Annual Business Plan Annual Report

The Committee were presented with a report by the Service Lead for Growth, Development and Prosperity on the progress in delivery of the 2020/21 Annual Business Plan.

He highlighted in particular his pride in the team for adapting during the pandemic to allow the delivery of the mitigation strategy to continue. The increase in recreational pressures on the sites was highlighted in the comments from Natural England which served to reinforce the importance of the partnership.

Discussion from the Executive Committee included:

- No measures of success were apparent in the report; examples included using analytics of use of the website pages; monitoring the use of the car park before and after the realignment of spaces to see if the changes had the desired effect.
- In response, the Committee were reminded of the existing monitoring framework for the strategy, which had been the subject of discussion at a previous meeting of the Committee in October 2019; future reports to the Committee would also detail wildlife monitoring, following the work by Footprint Ecology, and include detail on aspects such as bird populations.
- All the committee commended the work by the teams in continuing to adapt and deliver through the pandemic, particularly in adapting to the significant increase in visitor numbers.
- Going forward, with expected increase in visitor numbers due to “stay-cations”, consider what work needs to be brought forward to help mitigate the impact of the extra footfall.
- A further report on the impact the pandemic has had on the protected sites, and any learning points from that, would be welcomed by the Committee.
- Feedback from this discussion would go back to the Officer working group.
- Reminder that resources were still an issue to meet expectations going forward.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the progress made in delivering the 2020/21 Annual Business Plan;
2. Notes the status of mitigation measures from previous annual plans, as well as explanations given for measures subject to delay and revised completion dates;
3. Records its thanks to the site based staff for the ongoing dedication and adaptability they have shown in meeting the challenges presented during the coronavirus pandemic
4. Receives a report on the impact of, and the lessons learned from the pandemic on the use of the estuary and protected areas to the Committee before the next scheduled meeting
5. Ask for measures of success that relate to significant investments set out in the plan (for example website and car park improvements) for the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.
6. Would like to see outstanding work not delivered in the 2020/21 Annual Business Plan go forward for inclusion in the 2021/22 Annual Business Plan

65 **Financial Report**

A request was made for further financial breakdown in relation to Paragraph 2 Table 6 of the provided financial report on the measures listed. The detail was not available at the meeting, but the Committee were advised that no overspend had occurred, and an offer was made to provide further detail to Cllr Wrigley.

Cllr Wrigley did not wish to approve the report until he had seen the detail requested.

RESOLVED to defer the item Financial Report until the next scheduled meeting.

66 **South East Devon Wildlife Communications Key Performance Indicators**

The report presented to the Committee set out the KPIs identified around website use, signing up to newsletters, and social media engagement. The revised website would be live later in the year.

Discussion from the Committee included:

- Using correct local photographs rather than stock, before the site went live;
- Clear improvements from the previous version of the website;
- Meaningful benchmarks were key
- Representation would be more effective visually if shown as pie charts for the indicators, rather than tables of figures;
- Presentation of results and development of further benchmarking was resource dependent, as was the frequency of reporting the KPIs to the Committee

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the results of the communications report for the period June 2020 to January 2021;
2. Received a further communications report on the communications Key Performance Indicators and benchmarks to the next meeting, to include a review of the frequency of reports.

67 **2021 - 22 Annual Business Plan and 5 Year Delivery Plan**

The Executive Committee were presented with the proposed 2021-22 Annual Business Plan and 5 Year Delivery Plan, which set out the principles for the projects identified as a priority for delivery during 2021-22 and how those are incorporated into an updated 5 year delivery plan.

Paragraph 3.1 of the report included the measures of success for the proposed spend of £180,837 that covered extensive signage and works to car parks in relation to the Pebblebed Healths. The Committee were asked to comment if they felt those measures were adequate.

Kim Strawbridge updated the committee on the regular checks undertaken by Rangers and Mitigation Wardens in the area, but some resource was required in order to frequently record such data, and therefore this had to be proportionate to the time needed for the other day to day work of the team. She made it clear to the Committee that the hotspots for poor parking were known, and work was actively taking place with Devon County Highways to reach solutions. In the longer term, and with the proposed measures delivered, more data would be available through car counters to monitor numbers, as well as reduce the anti-social parking.

The Committee members would welcome any further working with Officers prior to the delivery of the resolutions below, in order to give feedback, but it was made clear that there would not be any informal meetings of the committee.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee:

- 1a) Approves the 2021-22 Annual Business Plan (Appendix A) and the commitments and actions set out therein;
- 1b) That detail on measures of success for the 2020/21 and from the 2021/22 Annual Business Plans are incorporated in six months time into the Annual Business Plan 2021-22, with a report on progress to the next meeting;
2. Notes the updated 5 Year Delivery Plan also shown in Appendix A;
3. Receives a further report relating to any proposed changes to the mitigation strategy regarding Dawlish Warren and the Exe Estuary in relation to the Dawlish Warren Beach Management Scheme, Timing dependent on initiation of a review by the Environment Agency.

68 **Risk Register Report**

The report set out the categories of risk and the level of classification. The risk register set out the risk to the successful implementation of the Strategy, including:

- Covid-19 pandemic
- Proposed SANGS at Cranbrook do not meet essential criteria
- Habitat Regulations watered down/abolished following exit from EU
- Delays to mitigation measures identified in annual business plans
- HREC decisions not implemented at local level.

A request was made to receive an updated register in six months time; however resource would be an issue to deliver this. The Committee were assured that any exceptional changes to the Risk Register would be reported at the earliest opportunity to the Committee in the meantime.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee:

1. Notes the identification, categorisation and prioritisation of risks as recorded in the accompanying Risk Register, associated with delivery of the South-East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy;
2. Notes the ongoing Severe Risk posed by the Covid-19 pandemic;
3. Notes the control measures in place to mitigate the risks identified
4. Receives an updated Risk Register report in 12 months.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

R Sutton
G Jung
M Wrigley

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Rebecca Heal, Solicitor
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Service Lead - Growth Development and Prosperity
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Kim Strawbridge, Site Manager, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust