



SOUTH EAST DEVON
HABITAT REGULATIONS
PARTNERSHIP

South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

Habitat mitigation team updates.

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Growth, Development & Prosperity,
East Devon District Council
April 2022*



Exeter
City Council



Legal comment/advice

There is no direct comment to be made in relation to this report, each and any individual issue will need to be considered as it arises.

Finance comment/advice:

There are no direct financial implications 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 updates provided by the Wildlife Warden and Devon Loves Dogs project co-ordinator.**
- 2. Receives a further update at the next meeting of the Executive.**

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Low.

The purpose of this report is to provide a regular update from the habitat mitigation delivery team. This enables the Executive Committee to maintain a good understanding of the initiatives, partnership working and day to day activities of public-facing staff. Continued and effective delivery of the Strategy and the development this enables remains of very high importance to all partners.

1 Wildlife Warden (previously Habitat Mitigation Officers (HMOs))

1.1 Trudi Righton started as a full time Wildlife Warden with the team in February this year. As both previous post holders are no longer currently in post, Julie Owen from Devon Loves Dogs has been guiding Trudi through her first weeks in role. The remainder of this section is an update from Trudi.

1.2 Since joining the team on 7th February, I worked through a staff induction programme, which included sorting out kit and uniform, meeting internal staff and undertaking mandatory in-house East Devon training.

1.3 Over the past six weeks, accompanied by Julie, I've also been visiting and getting to know the protected sites, meeting partners and stakeholders, including the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, RSPB, the rangers at Dawlish Warren and Devon Wildlife Trust.

1.4 I've attended several meetings, including some evening ones: Exe Estuary Management Partnership forum and the National Coastwatch Institute "Get Together" in Exmouth. At the latter, I met (in person) many of the wonderful Coastwatch volunteers, and learnt about water safety via the RNLI's 'floattolive' campaign.

1.5 Julie and I have engaged with the public by undertaking several pop-up gazebo events on site, including on the Pebblebed Heaths and at Dawlish Warren. I hope to add an interactive element to our gazebo visual displays, which will encourage site visitors to engage with our messages in a fun and educational way.

1.6 I've received training on, and have started to post on social media (Twitter and Facebook).

1.7 I accompanied Julie on a "Waggy Walk" with members of Devon Loves Dogs. It was also lovely to attend a tree-planting afternoon in the Clyst Valley, where I joined a volunteer group creating a mixed hedge for wildlife as part of the EDDC "Routes for Roots" project.

2. Devon Loves Dogs (DLD).

2.1 Since my last update at the end of the year, changes in the wider mitigation team have had a big effect on the running of DLD with the loss of two experienced staff. During January I returned to part time hours and other than one Waggy Walk, I mostly spent my time catching up on admin for the project.

2.2 Since 7th February my working hours have increased to full time so that I can work alongside the new Wildlife Warden, Trudi until the second Warden starts at the end of March. Together we have had site visits with Kim Strawbridge (site manager for the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust), Phil Chambers (Senior Ranger, Dawlish Warren), Natalie Holt (site manager, RSPB Exe reserves) and Edrik Hopkinson (site manager, Devon Wildlife Trust), and I found all of these visits to be most beneficial. We are looking forward to more visits with the remaining site managers soon.

2.3 My programme of Waggy Walks has been continuing, I have run 4 walks so far this year at Four Firs, Uphams, Core Copse and Mutters Moor on the Pebblebed Heaths. I am in the process of arranging walks for the coming months at Dawlish Countryside Park as part of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, Lower Halsdon Farm with the National Trust and a continued plan of monthly walks on the Pebblebed Heaths and with Forestry England. Take up has been very good and my next walk is fully booked with a waiting list.

2.4 I am excited to be receiving invites to external events again. Last weekend saw the return of the gazebo and poo game at Bicton Lambing Day, the sun shone and thousands of people turned up to enjoy the event. I already have bookings for Turn of the Tide in Dawlish and Dawlish Dog Festival to be held at Dawlish Countryside Park in October. We also have a booking for Devon County Show, this year starting on 30th June.

2.5 Membership is continuing to increase with a total of 881 members, an increase of 41 since the beginning of the year. I'm pleased with this figure as my time spent on DLD has been reduced whilst covering the Wildlife Warden role.

2.6 I have been involved with a number of other events, including running an online presentation and workshop at the nationwide Countryside Management Association's (CMA) annual conference. I'm also planning on being part of the EDDC summer campaign for responsible dog owners, due to start in May 2022.

2.7 In September 2021, several members of our team, joined by Kim Strawbridge and a selection of our dogs, took part in filming for an episode of BBC's "Escape to the Country". Our scheme was covered in some detail, the programme aired in February and we've had lots of positive comments and interactions about it on social media and in person on Waggy Walks. We also recruited some new members through it.

2.7 I have also formed links with a local author who is writing a series of books of dog walks, the first covering Teignbridge and Dartmoor, the second covering East and Mid Devon. The author joined us on a Waggy Walk, met some of my members and has offered a discount on books for DLD members and the opportunity for my members to contribute photos to the new book, with the opportunity to win books and other prizes.

2.8 Finally, the SCCAMP (Southern Counties Canine Access Management Partnership) group is going from strength to strength and we are currently joining together to promote Canines in the Countryside, a whole week of walks, activities and social media content culminating in a joint online zoom quiz with Kennel Club Access Advisor and "Your Dog" magazine columnist Stephen Jenkinson. It's a great opportunity for us to highlight the fact that our messages are also relevant in many other areas of the country.

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Natural England comment:

Natural England have reviewed the report and have no comment to make.