



SOUTH EAST DEVON  
HABITAT REGULATIONS  
PARTNERSHIP

# South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

*Habitat mitigation team updates.*

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East Devon District Council  
July 2022*



**Exeter**  
City Council



Legal comment/advice

There are no legal implications arising.

Finance comment/advice:

There are no direct financial implications set out in the report.

<b>Public Document:</b>	Yes
<b>Exemption:</b>	None
<b>Review date for release</b>	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 Caius Constable started as a full time Wildlife Warden with the team in April this year. As both previous post holders are no longer currently in post, Julie Owen from Devon Loves Dogs has been guiding Caius through his first weeks in role. The remainder of this section is an update from Caius.

1.2 Since starting on 28/04/22 I have met with site managers and familiarised myself with the layout and characteristics of each site. I have discussed disturbance issues with site managers to understand how best to approach any issues.

1.3 We have been making regular foot patrols on the Pebblebed Heaths. We have focused on positive engagement with dog owners and reinforced messaging regarding bird breeding season and the importance of keeping dogs on paths and in sight. A few incidences of conflict between dogs and horses have been reported and we have responded to this by making dog owners aware of the likely presence of both recreational horse riders and grazing animals.

1.4 Patrols at Dawlish Warren have generally targeted either particularly low tides or busy weekend days. On days with a low tide we have used the feather flag at groyne 9 to clearly mark the furthest extent to which dogs are permitted. This continues to be a highly useful tool for limiting disturbance towards Warren Point.

1.5 On busier weekend days we have seen a seasonal increase in the use of BBQs on the beach. Signage options have been discussed with the site manager and we will use social media to promote this message. Signage at the defined landing zone has proved effective with only occasional incidence of boats landing outside it.

1.6 Having completed a suite of courses we are making regular use of the patrol boat and a smaller inflatable to carry out patrols on the river. We have organised further training with Exeter Port Authority in order to improve our understanding of the estuary and establish a basis for communication with the Harbour Master with regards to disturbance in the estuary.

1.7 I visited the new Ridgetop Country Park with Sian Avon, Senior Ranger at TDC. It is a fantastic site and I look forward to pointing more people towards it once the car parks have been completed.

1.8 Since recent changes to staffing, I have been working with Julie for the majority of the time. We have been able to use the Devon Loves Dogs gazebo for regular 'pop-up' style engagement. This has been well received by visitors both with, and without, dogs. I have also attended several Waggy Walks, talking to dog owners about the protected wildlife on the sites. Julie and I attended 'Turn the Tide' in early June at Dawlish, a great event attended by hundreds of local people who we were able to engage with.

1.9 The rental electric van has been delivered and has proved to be very useful. Charging and range have not caused any issues and I look forward to receiving a fully branded vehicle in the future as this will improve visibility when we are on site.

## **2. Devon Loves Dogs (DLD).**

2.1 Since my last update, I have remained working as both DLD Coordinator and as a Wildlife Warden, this report mainly details activities for Devon Loves Dogs.

2.2 In April we welcomed Caius to the team and together we undertook all of the necessary training for us to be able to use the Patrol Boat, this included Sea Survival and VHF Radio Operators training with Seasports Southwest and RYA Powerboat Level 2 with the Harbour Authority.

2.3 I have continued to work with SCCAMP (Southern Counties Canine Access Management Partnership) and at the end of March we had a week dedicated to joint working. Despite the geographical distances we were able to utilise our social media platforms to highlight best practise from other areas. This culminated in a joint online quiz event hosted by Dog Countryside Access guru Stephen Jenkinson, with representatives from some of the partner organisations taking part. We all agreed that the style and format of the event was well received and we hope to develop this idea further in the future.

2.4 At the end of April I was interviewed on the BBC Radio Devon Breakfast Show to promote the work of Devon Loves Dogs and explain the summer beach restrictions across our area.

2.5 Over 60 staff from Natural England's Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly area team enjoyed a site visit to Dawlish Warren during May and I was able to explain the work that we do across our protected sites.

2.6 EDDC are running a summer dog roadshow campaign across the districts beaches and I have attended a pop up event in Exmouth with more planned throughout the summer. It was great to meet colleagues from Environmental Health and a great opportunity for increased partnership working.

2.7 In my last report, I mentioned Nikki who filmed with us for Escape to the Country last year. It turns out that Nikki did relocate to Devon and she is now a fully signed up member of Devon Loves Dogs, she's a regular on our Waggy Walks and we filmed a short follow up video for social media with her too.

2.8 TDC have also been busy running a series of Park Events and I have joined the Countryside and Green Spaces Teams with the DLD gazebo at Decoy Country Park and Dawlish Countryside Park, with more dates and locations to follow.

2.9 Caius and I attended the Turn of Tide event on 2<sup>nd</sup> June at Dawlish Lawn as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

2.10 I have run 7 Waggy Walks in total with walks on the Pebblebed Heaths, Dawlish Countryside Park, Orcombe Point (National Trust), Trinity Hill and Stoke Woods (Forestry England). Kim Strawbridge (Site Manager, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust) and I ran a very successful evening walk and walk numbers in general have been very good with many walks fully booked. I'd like to thank all of the people that have given up their time to lead walks; Kim Strawbridge, Jon Steward, Dan Nicholson, Meg Valender and Lucy Buckingham.

2.11 We have continued to be busy with the gazebo with regular pop ups at Dawlish Warren and across the Pebblebed Heaths.

2.12 Memberships are increasing steadily and we now have 922 members.

### **South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee**

Natural England comment:

Thank you to Neil and Julie for explaining the background and varied work of the habitat mitigation delivery team to the local Natural England staff.

We are pleased that a Waggy Walk has taken place in Stoke Woods, convenient for people living on the north side of Exeter.