



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
November 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 Wardens 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 guided Caius through his first weeks in role. Imogen Salmon started as a full time Wildlife Warden with the team in August this year.

Apr – Jul 2022 – 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 a 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.

Image 1. Groyne 9 feather flag, Dawlish Warren.



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.

Jul – Oct 2022 – Update from both Wardens

1.10 Since July, the number of protected birds on the Exe estuary has been increasing. Subsequently focus has shifted to the Estuary and Dawlish Warren.

1.11 During the last week of July (25th-31st), Caius attended Heath Week with Julie Owens (DLD). We ran an information hub from a different site on the Pebblebed Heaths each day and there were activities running throughout the week including Waggy Walks, Plant ID sessions and talks from local archaeologists.

Image 2. Heath week. Caius (left) with Edric Hopkinson of Devon Wildlife Trust (right).



1.12 We have been carrying out regular monitoring of formal and informal car parking on the heaths to gather data on which areas of the heathland receive higher visitor pressure. This has involved recording the number of cars parked at 50 sites across the heaths. Results of this monitoring will be reported when collated and analysed.

1.13 The Landing Zone at Dawlish Warren closed on the 5th of September and the Teignbridge Rangers changed the signage to reflect this. This area of the beach has been very popular this summer with many boats landing. Public response has been good with only one boat landing the following weekend despite warm and sunny weather. We have monitored the beach from the patrol boat and spoken to a couple of groups landing in the last couple of months.

Image 3. Landing Zone signage (summer), Dawlish Warren



1.14 We have received a replacement gazebo and telescope and have been using these at the Exmouth wildlife refuge with more gazebo pop-ups planned at other sites.

Image 4. Imogen with replacement gazebo and telescope at the Imperial Recreation Ground, Exmouth.



1.15 The habitat mitigation team attended the Exe Estuary Stakeholder forum on the 6th of September, with Naomi Harnett and Caius presenting. We gave a short presentation including showcasing data from the Exe wildlife refuges final monitoring report and a brief outline of why the estuary is attractive to overwintering birds.

1.16 From the 15th of September the Wildlife Refuge at the Exmouth Duckpond has become active. We have had a strong presence on site. Particularly focused around the high tide, using the gazebo and telescope to engage with dog walkers and water sports users.

1.17 On 3rd October we were joined by ITV Westcountry news. We took them out on the patrol boat and demonstrated how we have been using it to communicate our messaging with people in the Estuary.

Image 5. Imogen being interviewed by ITV Westcountry News.



1.18 Imogen Salmon joined the team on the 25th of August as a Wildlife Warden, she is settling in well and the rest of this report is from her.

1.19 Since starting in post I have met with site managers (Phil Chambers, Dawlish Warren and Kim Strawbridge, Pebblebed Heaths), becoming familiarised with the local habitats, wildlife and types of disturbances.

1.20 I have completed two waterbird ID training sessions and a counting birds session with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). These have already proved useful for my role in community engagement and for future vantage point counts when monitoring the exe refuges.

1.21 In effort to divert dog walkers to other sites, Caius and I have been recording walks away from the protected sites. We have been recording these walks using a phone app which saves the route and presents it in a video which mixes aerial footage of the area from satellite imagery and photos which we take during the walks. These are then uploaded to the SEDHRP website, YouTube channel and promoted through our social media channels.

1.22 The team had a site visit to the SWE Ridgetop SANGS with ranger Matt Gare from TDC Rangers on 5th October. We discussed different ways in which we can work together to promote the site and will look to forward plan some events and share social media posts when appropriate.

1.23 I completed my sea survival and VHF radio training on 10th/11th October.

2. Devon Loves Dogs (DLD).

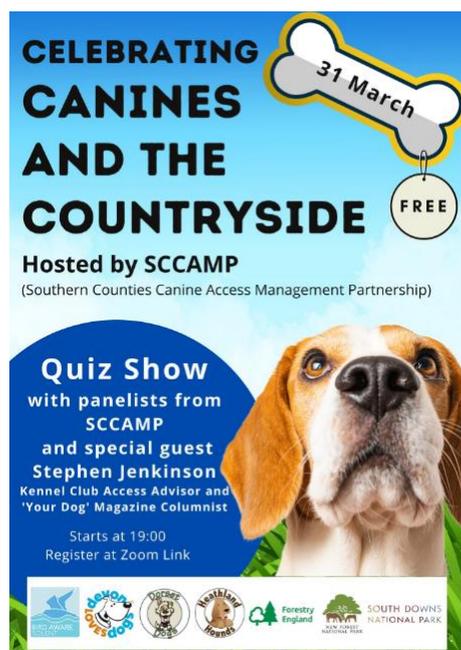
Apr – Jul 2022

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 Seaspots Southwest and RYA Powerboat Level 2 with the Harbour Authority.

2.3 I have continued to work with the Southern Counties Canine Access Management Partnership (SCCAMP) 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.

Image 6. SCCAMP quiz promotion.



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 2nd 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.

Jul – Oct

2.13 During most of this quarter I have continued splitting my time between Wildlife Warden and Devon Loves Dogs (DLD). This report focuses mostly on DLD.

2.14 At the beginning of July the DLD gazebo and "how to pick up the poo" game returned to Devon County Show, as ever this was a really busy event with lots of interactions and I'd like to thank Caius, Neil and Anne for assisting on the stand with me.

Image 7. DLD stand at Devon County Show.



2.15 Over the summer I also continued attending events supporting the EDDC Environmental Health team with their dog roadshows and the TDC Green Spaces team with their summer park events. Some of these were reduced due to the heatwave, as dog owners were urged to keep their pets indoors during the hottest parts of the day. It's always great to be able to work alongside other teams, to provide a range of information to the public and to share news and best practise.

Image 8. Summer event with TDC Green Spaces team, Newton Abbot.



2.16 Heath Week at the end of July is always a highlight and Caius and I were able to move from site to site with the Heath Week Cabin. Kim and I ran a Waggy Walk from Four Firs car park at the beginning of the week.

Image 9. Waggy Walk on the Pebblebed Heaths.



2.17 At the end of the week we ran a special Waggy Walk at Mutters Moor to celebrate the 5th birthday of Devon Loves Dogs. We welcomed a big group of walkers, some regulars and some new, Kim led a great walk with a stop off at the DLD gazebo for birthday cake for dogs and humans. We were also joined by Deb Bridges, a local author who has recently published Dog Walks for East and Mid Devon. DLD members have been involved with the book as official walk testers and some of our member's photos were included in the final copy. The winners were presented with their prizes by Deb during the birthday celebrations. A big thank you to Caius, Kim and Gary for all their help with the birthday celebrations.

2.18 During August we welcomed Imo to the team and it's been a pleasure getting to know her and I'm looking forward to working together this winter.

2.19 We enjoyed a lovely Waggy Walk around Cranbrook Country Park with the Education Ranger, Tara Jones. Two Waggy Walks had to be cancelled, one at Dawlish Countryside Park due to the heatwave and one on the heaths as it fell during the official period of mourning for the Queen. A full range of autumn walks are available to book on the website.

Image 10. Waggy Walk at Cranbrook Country Park.



2.20 I also attended a fun run at Decoy Park, Newton Abbot in September, a lovely event organised by Bales Buddies, a local charity who provide autism therapy support dogs.

2.21 Behind the scenes I've attended the Exe Forum and have been asked to provide a presentation to the Devon Countryside Access Forum. I am also working on an update of the Four Paws Code leaflet, writing the autumn newsletter, updating the website and considering how we ensure that the DLD website can continue and develop in the future.

2.22 Memberships are continuing to increase and we now have 971 members.

2.23 Finally, Maisie (my dog) and I were very excited to be invited to visit the new EDDC greenspace near Broadclyst. A small group of us were lucky to have a guided tour from Simon Bates, EDDC Green Infrastructure Project Manager. I have no doubt that this site will be very well used and loved by dog walkers in the near future and I'm looking forward to being involved in the development of the site. Maisie gave it her doggy seal of approval too!

Habitat Mitigation team

**South East Devon
Habitat Regulations
Executive Committee**

Natural England comment

We welcome Caius and Imogen to the team.

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 in May.

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

Promotion of alternative walk locations to using the protected sites is welcomed.