



SOUTH EAST DEVON
HABITAT REGULATIONS
PARTNERSHIP

South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

2022-23 Annual Business Plan – Annual Report

*Neil Harris & Naomi Harnett
Growth, Development & Prosperity,
East Devon District Council
April 2023*



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:

The financial implications are 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 progress made in delivering the 2022/23 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.

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Medium.

This report is an update on the progress made in delivery of ongoing mitigation measures set out in previous annual business plans and ongoing measures established in the Plan. It is important that progress continues to be made, or this would put the delivery of the partner Authorities' Local Plans at risk due to the continued legal duties under the Habitat Regulations.

1. Summary/Overview.

1.1 The 2022/23 annual business plan (ABP) was approved at a virtual meeting of the Executive Committee on 17th May 2022.

1.2 The measures had been debated and endorsed by the Officer Working Group. The plan outlined the delivery of ongoing measures established in previous ABPs as well as a range of additional measures. In total, the plan released funding for projects estimated at £358,853.

1.3 Projects included the continued funding of keystone mitigation measures such as the Delivery Manager, Wildlife Wardens (previously "Habitat Mitigation Officers" and Project Officer (Devon Loves Dogs) (DLD).

1.4 New measures approved as part of the plan included the third (and final) phase of visitor access improvements on the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths¹. Measures at Dawlish Warren included baseline monitoring of petalwort, baseline monitoring of visitor impacts on vegetation and improvements/repairs to fencing along the front and at the distal end of the Warren.

1.5 New measures for the Exe estuary² included updates and reprints of the Exe Estuary Management Partnership (EEMP) leaflets and development of a Personal Aircraft code of conduct.

¹ Approved at Executive meeting on 3rd November.

² See (2).

1.6 Tables 1 & 2 report the status of mitigation measures identified in the 2022/23 ABP.

Table 1. 2022/23 Annual Business Plan – ongoing mitigation measures.

Site	Measure	Status
Cross Site	Delivery Manager	Completed (ongoing)
Cross Site	Two Wildlife Wardens	Completed (ongoing) ³
Cross Site	Warden vehicle	Completed (ongoing)
Cross Site	Dog project	Completed (ongoing)
Exe Estuary	Patrol boat	Completed (ongoing)
Pebblebed Heaths	Dog bins	Completed (ongoing)
SANGS	Dawlish Countryside Park	Completed (ongoing)
SANGS	South West Exeter	Phase 1 complete, open to the public (ongoing) ⁴

Table 2. 2022/23 Annual Business Plan - “new” mitigation measures.

Site	Measure	Status
Dawlish Warren	Petalwort monitoring.	In progress. ⁵
Dawlish Warren	Spur fencing in Bight.	Complete
Dawlish Warren	Botanical monitoring.	In progress. ⁶
Exe Estuary	Updates/reprints of EEMP leaflets.	In progress. ⁷
Exe Estuary	Personal aircraft code of conduct.	In progress. ⁸
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor access improvements – phase 3 works	In progress ⁹

³ Staff changes throughout 22/23.

⁴ First car park opened 1 March 2023.

⁵ Botanist visited site March/April 2023, report due spring/summer 2023..

⁶ Consultant ecologists to survey the site in Spring/Summer 2023.

⁷ Approval of this measure in November meant that the Exe Estuary officer work schedule for 22/23 was fully committed. This measure is therefore included as part of operations for their 23/24 business plan.

⁸ (See 7).

⁹ Planning application submitted, works expected summer/autumn 2023.

1.5 Tables 3 & 4 reflect the status of mitigation measures from all previous annual business plans.

Table 3. Initiated/completed/in progress mitigation approved by Executive.

Site	Measure	Status
All	Visitor counts & surveys	Completed ¹⁰
All	Website redesign & monitoring dashboard	Completed ¹¹
Exe Estuary	Wildlife refuge monitoring	Completed. ¹²
Exe Estuary	Codes of Conduct	Completed
Exe Estuary	Procurement, installation, maintenance of buoy markers.	Completed
Exe Estuary	Update signs at public slipways (1)	Completed
Dawlish Warren	Vegetation monitoring	Ongoing ¹³
Dawlish Warren	Regular newsletter	On hold ¹⁴
Dawlish Warren/Exe	Reed screening between Bight & Golf Course	On hold ¹⁵
Dawlish Warren	Visitor Management Plan	In progress (ongoing)
Dawlish Warren	Petalwort monitoring	Ongoing ¹⁶
Dawlish Warren	Changes to car parking management	On hold (ongoing)
Dawlish Warren	Carry out audit of information boards	Completed
Dawlish Warren	BBQ info at local retailers	Completed
Dawlish Warren	Regular Warren Newsletter	Completed (ongoing)
Dawlish Warren	Monitoring of vegetation change	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor access improvements – phase 1 works	Completed ¹⁷
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor access improvements – phase 2 works	Completed ¹⁸
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor Access Improvements (advisory report)	Completed

¹⁰ Reported to HREC April 2022.

¹¹ Site launched April 2022.

¹² Overarching review report approved by HREC October 2021. Monitoring by wardens to continue.

¹³ Next survey report due Spring/Summer 2023.

¹⁴ Ranger team report limited capacity for compiling regular Newsletters.

¹⁵ This may come to pass in c.5 years with planned EA works on the golf course.

¹⁶ 2023 Survey complete, report due Spring/Summer 2023.

¹⁷ Phase 1 works completed April 2022.

¹⁸ Phase 2 works completed February 2023.

Pebblebed Heaths	Interpretation and signage	Completed ¹⁹
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor Access Improvements (public consultation)	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Maps highlighting sensitive areas	Completed ²⁰
Pebblebed Heaths	Codes of conduct	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Boardwalks/ Path surfacing	Initiated (ongoing) ²¹
Pebblebed Heaths	Educational work with schools	Completed (ongoing)

Table 4 – mitigation measures carried over from previous business plans

Site	Measure	Status
Dawlish Warren	Removal of Dog Control Order	On hold ²²
Dawlish Warren	Changes to car parking management	On hold
Dawlish Warren	Byelaw preventing fires and barbeques in buffer zone	Under investigation ²³
Dawlish Warren	Monitoring of accretion and erosion	On hold ²⁴

2. Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager.

2.1 The Delivery Manager continues in post, working to organise and implement the approved Annual Business Plans, report progress to the Executive Committee, co-ordinate delivery of the Strategy, liaise with the Officer Working Group and undertake ongoing review of the Strategy.

2.2 Progress is marked by the management of public-facing staff, recruitment and training of new staff, project management of Pebblebed Heaths visitor access improvements and procurement of contracts relating to this work. Procurement of materials and fiscal management/planning.

¹⁹ Phase 1 and 2 signage/interpretation installed, Phase 3 signage to be installed at same time as Phase 3 works (Summer/Autumn 2023).

²⁰ Incorporated into interpretation/signage design and promoted routes work.

²¹ Further expenditure recommended as part of 2023-24 Annual Business Plan.

²² District-wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) regarding dogs enacted by TDC in April 2019. This measure postponed until the effect of the PSPO is known.

²³ Remains a watching brief with TDC Resorts, Rangers and Legal departments. No recent incidents reported.

²⁴ This is still being undertaken by the Environment Agency (EA) as part of the Beach Management Scheme. Recommend reviewing this measure after EA scheme review complete.

2.3 There has been an above-average amount of time spent investing in staff resources during the past year, due to turnover in the team. This inevitably means that it is more challenging to build and develop our approach as a significant amount of time is spent inducting and training new staff.

2.4 Additionally, there have been lengthy periods of time where only one wildlife warden has been in post. This has required either the Delivery Manager and/or Devon Loves Dogs coordinator to join them on patrols at least 1 day/week. This helps to maintain a site presence and fulfil our health and safety risk assessments. However, it also impacts upon time available for other work streams.

2.3 Ongoing work streams included the implementation of visitor access improvements on the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths (phases 2 and 3) and associated interpretation and signage installation. The final phase in the scheme is due to complete in summer/autumn 2023. Regular and ongoing updates to the South East Devon Wildlife²⁵ website will continue, as required.

2.3 Ongoing input and advice regarding experience of mitigation delivery is being fed into the updated mitigation strategy draft as part of respective Local Plan reviews. This involves stakeholder liaison and participation in meetings with officers across the region.

2.4 The Environment Agency (EA) funded a report into the potential for a habitat creation and petalwort translocation project through a Cornwall based consultancy. A translocation trial is now being funded by Natural England and work took place in March 2023. The funding does not cover monitoring of the success/failure of this translocation and therefore it is logical to suggest that unspent mitigation funds for petalwort translocation could be used for this purpose as part of next year's Annual Business Plan (2024-25).

2.5 Appendix A provides visual examples of the completed Phase 2 visitor access improvements on the heaths and associated interpretation and signage. In liaison with Teignbridge site staff at Dawlish Warren and the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, we have also developed a friendly "No BBQ" banner to display onsite for Spring/Summer this year.

2.5 An update from the habitat mitigation team is reported separately.

Naomi Harnett
Growth Development and Prosperity
East Devon District Council,
April 2023

²⁵ www.southeastdevonwildlife.org.uk

Natural England comment:

Natural England have reviewed the report and have no comment.