



# South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

*2023-24 Annual Business Plan – Annual Report*

*Neil Harris & Naomi Harnett  
Growth, Development & Prosperity,  
East Devon District Council  
October 2024*



**Exeter**  
City Council



Legal comment/advice:

EDDC Legal Services have read this report and have no comment.

*DEM.1-0007/October/RAH*

Finance comment/advice:

Any financial implications are 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 progress made in delivering the 2023/24 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 2023/24 annual business plan (ABP) was approved at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

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 new projects estimated at £36,000.

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

1.4 New measures approved as part of the plan included the redesign and rebuilding of the DLD website, a footbridge crossing point to safeguard southern damselfly habitat, development of educational resources for GCSE/A level students and Nightjar productivity modelling on the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths. At Dawlish Warren, funding for improvements/repairs to fencing along the front and at the distal end was identified.

1.5 Table 1, below, reports the status of ongoing mitigation measures previously approved by the Executive Committee<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Measures approved in previous annual business plans, designed to operate over multiple years (and therefore not requiring annual approval by the Executive).

**Table 1.** Ongoing mitigation measures from previous business plans approved by the Executive Committee.

Site	Measure	Status
Cross Site	Delivery Manager	Completed (ongoing)
Cross Site	Two Wildlife Wardens	Completed (ongoing)
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) <sup>2</sup>

1.6 Table 2, below, reports the status of new mitigation measures approved as part of the 2023/24 annual business plan.

**Table 2.** 2023/24 Annual Business Plan - “new” mitigation measures.

Site	Measure	Status
All	Devon Loves Dogs website rebuild	Completed
Dawlish Warren	Fencing for access management	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Footbridge crossing point (Southern damselfly habitat)	Delayed <sup>3</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Educational resources (GCSE and A level)	Delayed <sup>4</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Nightjar productivity modelling	Near completion <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> First car park opened 1 March 2023.

<sup>3</sup> On hold pending sourcing of contractors to quote for work. Working with site manager to resolve. Completion expected Spring 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Staff changes at the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust resulted in a delay to completion of this work. Completion expected Summer 2025

<sup>5</sup> Modelling work completed, awaiting final report from consultants, winter 2024.

1.7 Table 3, below, shows the status of mitigation measures approved as part of the 2022/23 annual business plan, carried forward for delivery in 2023/24.

**Table 3.** 2022/23 Annual Business Plan - mitigation measures initiated/completed during 2023/24 operational year.

Site	Measure	Status
Exe Estuary	Updates/reprints of EEMP leaflets.	Completed <sup>6</sup>
Exe Estuary	Personal aircraft code of conduct.	In progress <sup>7</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor access improvements – phase 3 works	Completed <sup>8</sup>

1.8 Tables 4 & 5 reflect the status of mitigation measures from all previous annual business plans.

**Table 4.** Initiated/completed/in progress mitigation approved by Executive.

Site	Measure	Status
All	Visitor counts & surveys	Completed <sup>9</sup>
All	Website redesign & monitoring dashboard	Completed <sup>10</sup>
Exe Estuary	Wildlife refuge monitoring	Completed
Exe Estuary	Codes of Conduct	Completed
Exe Estuary	Procurement, installation, maintenance of buoy markers.	Completed (ongoing)
Exe Estuary	Update signs at public slipways (1)	Completed
Dawlish Warren	Vegetation monitoring	Completed (ongoing) <sup>11</sup>
Dawlish Warren	Regular newsletter	On hold <sup>12</sup>
Dawlish Warren/Exe	Reed screening between Bight & Golf Course	On hold <sup>13</sup>
Dawlish Warren	Visitor Management Plan	In progress (ongoing)

<sup>6</sup> Completed during 23/24. Exe Explorer and Exe Wildlife leaflets updated, reprinted and available [online](#)

<sup>7</sup> Initiated during 23/24. Staff changes at the Exe Estuary Management Partnership resulted in a delay to completion of this work. Completion expected winter 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Originally part of 22/23 annual business plan but completed during 23/24.

<sup>9</sup> Reported to HREC April 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Site launched April 2022.

<sup>11</sup> 2023 report presented to the January 2024 meeting of HREC.

<sup>12</sup> Ranger team report no capacity for compiling regular Newsletters.

<sup>13</sup> Projects at the distal end of the Warren have been on hold pending completion of EA Beach Management Scheme review. See separate report "2024/25 Annual Business Plan and 5Yr Delivery Plan".

Dawlish Warren	Petalwort monitoring	Completed (ongoing) <sup>14</sup>
Dawlish Warren	Changes to car parking management	On hold (ongoing)
Dawlish Warren	Carry out audit of information boards	Completed (ongoing)
Dawlish Warren	BBQ info at local retailers	Completed (ongoing) <sup>15</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor access improvements – phase 1 works	Completed <sup>16</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor access improvements – phase 2 works	Completed <sup>17</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor Access Improvements (advisory report)	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Interpretation and signage	Completed <sup>18</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Visitor Access Improvements (public consultation)	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Maps highlighting sensitive areas	Completed <sup>19</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Codes of conduct	Completed
Pebblebed Heaths	Boardwalks/ Path surfacing	Initiated (ongoing) <sup>20</sup>
Pebblebed Heaths	Educational work with schools	Completed (ongoing)

**Table 5 – mitigation measures carried over from previous business plans**

Site	Measure	Status
Dawlish Warren	Removal of Dog Control Order	On hold <sup>21</sup>
Dawlish Warren	Changes to car parking management	On hold
Dawlish Warren	Byelaw preventing fires and barbeques in buffer zone	Under investigation <sup>22</sup>
Dawlish Warren	Monitoring of accretion and erosion	On hold <sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 2023 report presented to the January 2024 meeting of HREC.

<sup>15</sup> “No BBQ’s at Dawlish Warren” public awareness campaign spring/summer 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Phase 1 works completed April 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Phase 2 works completed February 2023.

<sup>18</sup>Phase 3 signage installed summer/autumn 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Incorporated into interpretation/signage design and promoted routes work.

<sup>20</sup> Further expenditure recommended as part of 2023-24 Annual Business Plan.

<sup>21</sup> District-wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) regarding dogs enacted by TDC in April 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Remains a watching brief with TDC Resorts, Rangers and Legal departments. No recent incidents reported for 2-3 years.

<sup>23</sup> This is still being undertaken by the Environment Agency (EA) as part of the Beach Management Scheme.

## **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, line manage the habitat mitigation team, 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, planning and implementation of public awareness campaigns, project management of Pebblebed Heaths visitor access improvements and procurement of contracts relating to this work. Procurement of materials for fencing at Dawlish Warren and fiscal management/planning.

2.3 Over the past year, the Delivery Manager assisted in leading the planning and execution of the Devon Loves Dogs workshop. This involved managing presenters, coordinating venue hire, catering, and attendee logistics. The event attracted over 30 professionals from across Devon and represented a key milestone in the scheme's delivery – now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year.

2.5 Ongoing work streams included the implementation of the final phase of visitor access improvements on the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths and associated interpretation and signage installation. Project work to contribute to updates of the Exe Estuary Management Partnership leaflets (now complete) and personal aircraft code of conduct (near completion) has taken place.

2.6 Input and insights from experience of mitigation delivery are being incorporated into the updated mitigation strategy draft as part of ongoing Local Plan reviews. This process includes stakeholder engagement, meetings with local authority officers across the region, and commissioned work to ensure financial due diligence.

2.7 Communications and habitat mitigation team updates are reported separately.

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October 2024

Natural England comment: Natural England have read the report and have no comment.