



SOUTH EAST DEVON  
HABITAT REGULATIONS  
PARTNERSHIP

# South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

*Refreshments at Dawlish Countryside Park*

Fergus Pate, Principal Delivery Officer, Teignbridge District Council  
*July 2020.*



Exeter  
City Council



Legal comment/advice:

There is no direct legal comment to be made at this time, each and any individual issue will need to be considered as it arises.

Finance comment/advice:

The financial implications are set out within the report, the modest net income will help support the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee budgets.

<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. Delegate authority for Teignbridge District Council to procure a lease for refreshments to be provided at Dawlish Countryside Park in accordance with the parameters set out at Section 3.
2. Recover proceeds from the lease as a contribution towards the Executive Committee's budget. The amount recovered should exclude the reasonable administrative expenses of Teignbridge District Council.
3. Receive a future report on whether to extend the lease for refreshments beyond the first year of operation.

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Low/Medium

Refreshment facilities could diminish the rural attractiveness of the park and reduce car parking space. A short term lease will allow these impacts to be kept under review.

## 1. Background

1.1 Dawlish Countryside Park was opened in 2017 as the first Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) in Greater Exeter. The award winning park has been well received by local people and currently benefits from around 477 daily visits.

1.2 The South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy identified the need for SANGS in providing an alternative destination to the European Sites. The new countryside parks are expected to inhibit rural characteristics whilst also being attractive to visitors and easy to access.

1.3 Teignbridge Council currently operates Dawlish Countryside Park and has been approached by a number of visitors as well as prospective operators who would like to see a refreshments concession at the park. It is anticipated that this would most likely take the form of a trailer or converted vehicle (with no associated seating area) serving limited refreshments such as teas and coffees.

1.4 Ongoing management of the countryside park is ultimately the responsibility of the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee, hence approval to delegate authority for Teignbridge to procure refreshments at the park is sought.

1.5 If another management organisation takes on responsibility for the day to day running of the countryside park they could also assume responsibility for managing the refreshments lease. This matter should be agreed directly by Teignbridge.

## **2. The principle of SANGS refreshment facilities**

2.1 SANGS are focussed on providing a quiet countryside experience that is attractive to walkers, dog walkers and potentially families. It is recognised that these qualities may not sit comfortably with significant urbanising features such as new buildings and commercial attractions.

2.2 The SANGS guidance therefore limits the scope of refreshment facilities that can be provided but does not prevent something modest. Upton Countryside Park in Dorset is amongst examples of SANGS sites where there are refreshment facilities. Please see the following link:

<https://pooleprojects.net/upton/>

2.3 If refreshment facilities are to be provided at the park, they should be very modest and impacts carefully reviewed. It must be recognised that the purpose of the SANGS as habitat mitigation should not be allowed to be compromised by additional uses of the countryside park. The introduction of refreshments is not a precursor to other activities like firework events, running events, mountain biking or horse riding.

## **3. Scope of the facilities to be provided at Dawlish**

3.1 In order to preserve the character of Dawlish Countryside Park and ensure that any refreshment facility is incidental to a visit, the following parameter should be met:

- a) Modest refreshment facility with dimensions of approximately 5m x 2m x 2m
- b) Sited in an agreed position around the countryside park car park
- c) No outside seating or other ancillary features (other than waste and recycling facilities) to be provided
- d) The operator should disseminate South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership material and highlight the importance of the European Sites to customers.
- e) Initial lease of no more than one year.
- f) Teignbridge to review whether to enter into a subsequent lease in consultation with the Executive Committee.

## **4. Financial implications**

4.1 Teignbridge Council will be responsible for securing the refreshment facility lease. They can be expected to market the opportunity and generate a commercial rent.

4.2 Income should be passed from Teignbridge to the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee, less Teignbridge's costs associated with marketing, agreeing and managing the lease.

4.3 The amount of income generated is likely to be modest in the context of overall Habitat Regulations Executive Committee budgets but will assist with ongoing implementation of the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy.

## **5. Monitoring and review**

5.1 An initial lease period of up to one year is proposed. Before any additional term is agreed the impacts of introducing refreshment facilities should be reviewed by the Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager.

5.2 Factors influencing the Delivery Manager's opinion are likely to include trends in the number of visitors to the countryside park, feedback from visitors to the park the European Sites and other nearby attractions. Baseline and subsequent regular counts of the number of cars parked at the SANGS will provide important information. In addition, advice from the Dawlish Countryside Park ranger and other staff that manage the park is also likely to represent an important consideration.

5.3 Having reviewed the evidence available, the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee would be asked to make a future decision on whether to extend any lease beyond year one.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Delegating authority for Teignbridge Council to enter into a lease for refreshments to be provided at Dawlish Countryside Park would respond to requests from users of the park.

6.2 The lease would secure some funding for ongoing implementation of the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy and its renewal would be subject to consultation with the Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager and a future decision of the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee.

**Fergus Pate,  
Principal Delivery Officer,  
Teignbridge Council**

**South East Devon  
Habitat Regulations  
Executive Committee**

**July 2020**

**Natural England comment:**

We concur with the report that “the purpose of the SANGS as habitat mitigation should not be allowed to be compromised by additional uses of the countryside park”. The effect of the proposal on the SANGs needs to be regularly monitored and if introduction of refreshment facilities is found to discourage dog walkers or other recreational visits then the lease should not be renewed.