

SOUTH EAST DEVON JOINT HABITATS MITIGATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 23 October 2017

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact [Hannah Whitfield](#), 01395 517542 (or group number 01395 517546).

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

Membership -

Councillors Clemens, Gottschalk and Twiss

Agenda

Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present

9 Urgent Item: Car parking at Dawlish Warren

The Chairman has agreed to take this urgent item.

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Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Executive will be held on **Wednesday 24 January 2018** at 6.00 pm in the Civic Centre.

A statement of the executive decisions taken at this meeting will be produced and published on the Council website as soon as reasonably practicable.

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SOUTH EAST DEVON
HABITAT REGULATIONS
PARTNERSHIP

South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

Car parking at Dawlish Warren

Neil Harris, Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager
October 2017

Legal comment/advice

There are no direct legal implications arising. It will be for Teignbridge District Council to determine whether it will agree to the recommendations of the HREC, should it be the decision of the HREC to make the recommendations proposed or any recommendations to Teignbridge District Council.

Finance comment/advice:

The recommendations of this report will need to be considered by Teignbridge District Council, including the specific financial implications involved as they only affect this Authority.

Public Document:	Yes
Exemption:	None
Review date for release	None

Recommendations:

It is proposed that the Executive Committee:

- 1. Recommends that Teignbridge District Council (TDC) consider cessation of “high” and “low” season charges and implement a single charging schedule for car parking at the both the “inner” (seaward) and outer (landward) car parks (edged yellow and blue respectively on the plan at Appendix A), Dawlish Warren. These charges would apply throughout the year, including on Sundays, and would be most appropriately based on existing “summer” prices (and any appropriate increases to account for inflation).**
- 2. Recommends that TDC consider closure of the easternmost half of the “inner” car park (edged blue and cross hatched red on the Plan at Appendix A) from 15th October – 1st March. Discussion and agreement from Dawlish Warren Golf Course on access arrangements would be necessary.**

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Medium.

Management of car parking at Dawlish Warren will improve visitor management and reduce visitor pressure on the Special Area of Conservation. The opening of the Dawlish Countryside Park provides an alternative for regular visitors. Effective changes to the management of Dawlish Warren are required in order to mitigate the effects of an increasing residential population.

1. Summary

1.1 As shown in Appendix A, there are two car parks at Dawlish Warren which are owned and managed by Teignbridge District Council. The “inner” or seaward car park (marked in blue in the appendix) is closest to the National Nature Reserve (NNR) and the “outer” or landward car park (marked in yellow in the appendix) is on the other side of the London-Penzance railway line. These car parks currently provide space for 1055 vehicles.

1.2 Parking charges are currently lower in winter than in summer, free on Sundays from November 1st – Maundy Thursday (Easter) and free between 6pm and 9am, year-round. As a result, charges are lower (and/or free) at the time of year when Special Protection Area (SPA) designated bird species are present and many people choose to walk dogs at times when the charges do not apply.

1.3 On sites where a large proportion of people visit by car, modifying the distribution, cost and ease of parking is a means of managing visitor flows. There are examples of sites where the careful review, assessment and management of parking provision has led to a marked change in how people use sites.

1.4 Of all the groups interviewed in the Exe Estuary Visitor Survey (2010), 60% had travelled by car. Around 70% of the people interviewed at Dawlish Warren had travelled by car.

1.5 Teignbridge District Council are currently undergoing a revision of district-wide parking charges as part of the 2018-19 Council budget-setting process. Recommendations will be made to the Executive Committee on 5th December 2017 and will then be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Full Council in early 2018.

2. Proposals and rationale

2.1 Raising the winter parking fee and applying a charge on Sundays is intended to deflect regular dog walkers who currently choose the site for longer weekend dog walks, and may reduce use of the site by daily dog walkers.

2.2 Car parking is free at the recently opened 26 hectare Dawlish Countryside Park. Changes in the management of parking at Dawlish Warren will serve to encourage more people to make use of this site and reduce visitor pressure on the internationally important reserve.

2.3 One long term option explored in the South-east Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy ("the Strategy") is to set back parking entirely from the current inner car-park. This would mean that car parking would only be available in the outer car park and all visitors would have to walk through the tunnel to access the site. This is unlikely to be viewed favourably (e.g. local retailers could be concerned about loss of revenue through lack of convenient parking).

2.4 Significant numbers of overwintering birds start to use the Warren from mid-October, typically staying until early March. As such, an alternative to closing the entire inner car park is to close the existing gates, effectively reducing capacity by half from 15 October – 1st March (shown in red in the appendix). TDC's current "low" parking season is from 1 November – Maundy Thursday (Easter) but this begins after significant numbers of birds are using the Warren and extends later than when they have departed.

2.5 Any changes in the management of access to the easternmost section of the inner car park would need to be discussed and agreed with the Dawlish Warren Golf Club.

2.6 As there is no current car park charging on Sundays, Teignbridge will need appropriate enforcement resources to be put in place in order to support the recommendation for charging throughout the week.

Potential future changes

2.7 In addition to the measures proposed through this report, the Mitigation Strategy would also support the principle of extending the daily car park charging hours at Dawlish Warren beyond the current times of 9am to 6pm. Whether this is appropriate should be reviewed again once the changes proposed here have been made and established.

2.8 At that point, consideration should also be given to whether some of the income from car parking at Dawlish Warren can be directed towards maintenance of new SANGS car parks.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The current car parking fees at Dawlish Warren incentivise visitors to the site during the “low” season between November 1st – Maundy Thursday (Easter) by offering free parking (on Sundays) or discounted charges. This means that visitors are encouraged to the site at the same time as when it is most important for the SPA designated bird species.

3.2 To manage visitor pressure at this very popular attraction and mitigate the effects of an increasing residential population, robust and effective measures are necessary. The recent opening of the – free to park - Dawlish Countryside Park provides alternative green space, specifically designed and funded to relieve pressure on the internationally important wildlife site at Dawlish Warren.

3.3 It is necessary and integral to the Strategy that there are appropriate disincentives in place which are aimed at managing visitor flows and pressures in sensitive areas. The solution put forward in this report is the careful and considered management of car parking charges, as an alternative to longer term and more comprehensive access restrictions.

Neil Harris
Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager

South East Devon
Habitat Regulations
Executive Committee
October 2017

Natural England comment:

Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

Appendix A: Car Parking at Dawlish Warren



Yellow area : Outer car park

Blue area : Inner car park

Red hatched area : Easternmost area of inner car park

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