



SOUTH EAST DEVON  
HABITAT REGULATIONS  
PARTNERSHIP

# South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

*Dawlish Warren Visitor Centre*

Neil Harris, Habitat Regulations Delivery Officer  
June 2016



**Exeter**  
City Council



Legal comment/advice:

The report raises no direct legal implications.

Finance comment/advice

Financial details are contained in the report. The 5yr Delivery Programme allocates £280,000 to the scheme, the report requests that if additional income is received above projections then a further £220,000 is allocated to this project once allocations have been made to specified priorities identified in the report. Confirmation of funds available will need to be provided to Committee before actual expenditure is incurred.

<b>Public Document:</b>	Yes
<b>Exemption:</b>	None
<b>Review date for release</b>	None

## Recommendation

It is proposed that the Joint Committee:

1. Agree the principle of prioritising a further £220,000 of Partnership funds as a contribution towards the replacement Dawlish Warren visitor centre in 2019/20, subject to sufficient monies being available.
2. Consider redirecting these funds to other projects if sufficient match funding to take the project forward is not secured by June 2019.

Equalities impact: Low

Risk: Medium

If a bid for external funding is not made by June 2019 and backed by a local funding commitment, there is a real risk that many prospective funders will not be willing or able to consider awarding monies for the visitor centre in future years.

## 1. Summary

1.1 There is an opportunity to deliver a new visitor centre at Dawlish Warren. The project is identified through the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy (“the Strategy”) and very significant match funding may be available for a limited period.

## 2. Background

2.1 The Strategy proposes a new visitor centre at Dawlish Warren. Replacing and relocating the existing visitor centre would increase footfall through the centre and help to increase enjoyment and understanding of Dawlish Warren and the Exe Estuary including their wildlife interests, potential user conflicts, boundaries, byelaws and codes of conduct. The Strategy attributes a contribution of £500,000 to the visitor centre.

2.2 The 5 Year Delivery Programme commits £280,000 towards the Strategy allocation, subject to sufficient monies being available.

2.3 This report seeks to agree the principle of prioritising the shortfall in capital necessary to deliver the project.

2.4 In terms of mitigating increased visitor pressure on the Warren and Exe, the value of the new Visitor Centre lies in using interpretation to convey key educational messages regarding the international importance of the sites, the effects of disturbance and which behaviours are/are not appropriate whilst visiting the reserve.

2.5 The new location has been chosen for its ability to intercept and attract a much larger proportion of visitors – and therefore enable a greater proportion of visitors to receive those key messages. With anticipated changes to the path network, the Visitor Centre will be situated on one of the main visitor routes to the beach (and reserve) from the car park. This allows essential information to be focused both at key access points and within the centre itself.

2.6 A design for the replacement centre has been prepared and is being finalised. The estimated cost of the project is more than £1,200,000. Teignbridge District Council is working to secure funding from a variety of other sources. There is a September 2016 bidding deadline for the main source of those funds. Having established a figure through the Mitigation Strategy, a commitment to £500,000 of Partnership funds would play a crucial role in securing ‘match’ from others. Partnership funds will not be required until 2018/19 when it is anticipated that the main visitor centre construction works would occur.

### **3. Justification**

3.1 The visitor centre’s proportionate share of on-site habitat mitigation funds collected to date is approximately £30,000. This is calculated by setting monies collected against the total costs of ‘on-site’ mitigation projects.

3.2 However, it is recommended that the Partnership commits its funds to completing projects rather than spreading resources across all projects and saving until they can all be delivered. On that basis, earmarking the full £500,000 for the replacement visitor centre is considered a priority because:

- It is identified as a key project in the Mitigation Strategy;
- It will mark very clear and demonstrable early delivery of planned mitigation;  
and
- There is a strong prospect of securing match funding and boosting value for money

### **4. Funding Implications**

4.1 Sufficient information on Section 106 funding from older planning permissions (as opposed to Community Infrastructure Levy from more recent consents) is already available to confirm that £230,000 should be available and applicable to the visitor centre in 2018/19 and a further £50,000 in 2019/20. This is the origin of the £280,000 committed to the Visitor centre for expenditure in the Five Year Delivery Programme.

4.2 Forecasts for income through the Community Infrastructure Levy are being prepared and will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting in order to provide additional information to augment the Five Year Delivery Programme. It is considered likely that further funds will be available and applicable to the centre. A final decision should be made when this information has been assembled.

4.3 On that basis the Partnership is recommended to prioritise a further £220,000 for the visitor centre by 2019/20 subject to that amount being available after commitments to:

- Projects identified in the 2016 Annual Business Plan
- Future year commitments to ongoing expenditure identified in the 2016 Annual Business Plan
- SANGS
- The first £280,000 identified for the visitor centre (4.1)

4.3.1 Where only a proportion of the £220,000 is available by 2019/20, that proportion should still be dedicated to the centre.

## **5. Visitor Centre Delivery**

5.1 Teignbridge District Council has worked with partners, including Partnership officers, to identify a suitable site for the new centre (indicated at Appendix 1). Design works have been completed to establish feasibility and estimated costs. Teignbridge is also working towards acquiring planning permission for the development and would lead on preparing bids for other funds, drawing on the support of the Delivery Officer and other Partnership officers as appropriate. The District Council would assume overall responsibility for letting contracts for development, completion of the project and ongoing maintenance of the facility thereafter.

## **6. Main Implications**

6.1 Funding of the Dawlish Warren visitor centre project would mark another clear milestone in mitigation delivery. Committing a capped £500,000 to the centre between 2018 and 2020 is proposed because there is a time limited opportunity to secure significant external funding for the majority of the project's costs, subject to local match funding being available. This would boost value for money and mitigate the risk of the Partnership needing to fund the full costs of the centre, which are currently estimated at more than £1.2 million.

6.2 If a bid for external funding is not made by June 2019 and backed by a local funding commitment, there is a real risk that many prospective funders will not be willing or able to consider awarding monies for the centre in future years.

Natural England comments:

Natural England supports the recommendation to allocate significant funding to this project in years 3 and 4 of the 5yr delivery programme for the following reasons: There is a specific, time limited, opportunity to secure significant external funding to deliver the project, in the absence of which it may be unable to proceed. There are sufficient funds allocated to “on-site” measures on Dawlish Warren to meet this initial expenditure. If the external funding bid is not successful expenditure on the project will be reviewed and money reallocated.

We suggest that alternative projects are identified ahead of this time to ensure that alternative mitigation can be delivered should the VC funding not be required at that time.

**Neil Harris**  
**Habitat Regulations Delivery Officer**

**South East Devon**  
**Habitat Regulations**  
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