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Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

Joint Communication Strategy

Appendix 2. Key communications messages

Habitat Regulations: Key messages

1. East Devon District, Teignbridge District and Exeter City Councils are working together to protect some of the most important sites for wildlife in Europe, including the Exe Estuary, Dawlish Warren and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths.
2. Sustainable economic expansion is important, but the level of housing development, and consequential population growth, being planned across the area risks harming the special nature of those sites, largely due to the disturbance-sensitive nature of their wildlife.
3. The Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations (2010) (as amended) (often referred to as the Habitat Regulations) set out a clear decision-making framework to ensure that internationally important wildlife sites are not harmed by development, except in exceptional circumstances. Since housing is unlikely to qualify as exceptional, mitigation measures are needed to prevent harm to the wildlife sites and enable housing aspirations to be met.
4. The three councils have established a Habitat Regulations Executive Committee which is working with partners including Natural England, Clinton Devon Estates, the National Trust, the RSPB, the Exe Estuary Management Partnership and the Devon Wildlife Trust.
5. A report prepared for the Councils (South-East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy, 2014) provides evidence-based recommendations for mitigation projects in these areas and this provides the focus for the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee's initial work for the period 2016-2021.
6. Funding for the mitigation and avoidance measures comes from developer contributions on new residential housing across the three areas, within a 10km "zone of influence" from the protected sites.
7. These mitigation measures include initiatives to ensure there are clear and consistent recreation zones and codes of conduct, new and updated visitor leaflets and signage, a new patrol boat for the Exe Estuary, as well as two new wardens who will educate and engage with the public, whilst ensuring that byelaws are observed.

Regular monitoring of the protected sites will help to establish the effectiveness of these measures, the management of which will be kept under review.

8. To complement these initiatives, a number of strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) are being developed and delivered. These will provide new, accessible (and in some cases, enhanced) countryside areas which will ease the pressure on the protected sites by providing desirable alternatives.

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South East Devon
Habitat Regulations
Executive Committee
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