

## Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

### Appendix 1: 2017-18 Annual Business Plan (ABP).

#### Summary.

**1.1** Projects outstanding from the 2016-17 Annual Business Plan (ABP) are reported separately.<sup>1</sup> **Table 1**, below, shows mitigation measures from the 2016-17 recommended for ongoing (or increased) commitment as part of the 2017-18 ABP.

**Table 1.** *Ongoing mitigation recommended as part of the 2017-18 ABP*

Site	Measure	Capital cost	Revenue Cost	Total
Cross Site	Delivery Manager	£0	£40,000	£40,000
Cross Site	Two Habitat Mitigation Officers	£0	£68,000	£68,000
Cross Site	Warden vehicle	£0	£2,000	£2,000
Cross Site	Dog project	£2,000	13,800	£15,800
Exe Estuary	Patrol boat	£0	£7,000	£7,000
Pebblebed Heaths	Maps highlighting sensitive areas	£2450 <sup>2</sup>	£0	£2,450
Pebblebed Heaths	Dog bins	£0	£2,870	£2,870
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 4,450</b>	<b>£ 133,670</b>	<b>£ 138,120</b>

**Proposed spend: Up to £135,670 ongoing commitment towards key projects established in the 2016-17 ABP. An additional £2,450 to be made available towards the cost of mapping promoted routes and highlighting sensitive areas. (Increase in cost from results of competitive tendering process undertaken by Clinton Devon Estates).**

<sup>1</sup> 2016-17 Annual Business Plan – Annual Report, July 2017

<sup>2</sup> Strategy estimate was £1,500. This is the lowest quote out of 3 designers approached - but represents an overspend of £2,450

**Table 2, New mitigation measures recommended as part of the 2017-18 ABP**

Site	Measure	Capital cost	Revenue Cost	Total
Dawlish Warren	Carry out audit of information boards	£11,500	£0	£11,500
Dawlish Warren	BBQ info at local retailers	£2,000	£0	£2,000
Dawlish Warren	Removal of Dog Control Order	£2,000	£0	£2,000
Dawlish Warren	Byelaw preventing fires and barbeques in buffer zone	£2,000	£0	£2,000
Exe Estuary	Update signs at public slipways*	£40,000	£0	£40,000
Exe Estuary	Disturbance monitoring*	£10,000	£0	£10,000
Exe Estuary	New interpretation boards (five boards)*	£12,500	£0	£12,500
Exe Estuary	Procurement, installation and maintenance of buoy markers.*	£5,000	£0	£5,000
Pebblebed Heaths	Codes of conduct	£4,000	£0	£4,000
Pebblebed Heaths	Boardwalks/Path surfacing	£10,000	£0	£10,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£99,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£99,000</b>

\* Project implementation/brief dependent upon outcome of Exe Estuary zonation review proposals.

## 2. Delivery Manager

2.1 It is the role of the Delivery Manager to organise and implement the approved Annual Business Plans, report progress to the Executive Committee, co-ordinate delivery of the Strategy, liaise with the Officer Working Group and undertake ongoing review of the Strategy.

2.2 The 3 year contract for the post is currently scheduled to end in spring 2018. At the June 2016<sup>3</sup> meeting of the Executive it was considered that this should be reviewed to ensure continued delivery of the Programme. The Strategy allocates budget for this post to cover the initial 5 year period (thereafter subject to review).

**Proposed action: Extension of the Delivery Manager contract to cover the full 5 year period, to be reviewed in June 2020.**

<sup>3</sup> <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/1795827/290616-south-east-devon-hrec-minutes.pdf> (Item 6)

### **3. Carry out an audit of information boards (Dawlish Warren)**

3.1 Interpretation boards, signs and leaflets are widely used around the UK at nature reserve sites and are an important means of conveying information to visitors. They help to enhance visitor understanding of a site, its importance and whether any statutory restrictions are in place.

3.2 There are currently a number of different information boards at Dawlish Warren, including those for the reserve, and those for the whole site, which offer visitors rather piecemeal information.

3.3 Ideal locations should be identified, and will depend on how access into the reserve is managed. All key access points should have an information board (including boat access at Warren Point).

3.4 All boards should convey accurate information about the reserve, buffer zone, golf course and clearly show where the resort area ends and the areas important for wildlife start. The boards should indicate where byelaws operate. Information on the special interest of the site and codes of behaviour should be included. The boards could be styled to match the ones for the Exe Estuary (see XX below).

**Proposed spend: Up to £11,500, comprising up to £7,500 for the design of 3 new A0 outdoor panels (£2,500 each). Up to £4000 for the replacement of timber framed boards to hold the panels (£500 each). See also “cost savings” in separate report<sup>4</sup>.**

### **4. Make information available in local retail outlets selling barbeques so that potential buyers know they cannot use them at Dawlish Warren**

4.1 There are various approaches used to communicate widely with people living around important sites and with people planning visits. Websites, leaflets, and direct contact (people answering emails and other inquiries) provide detailed information for sites around the UK.

4.2 It should be possible to approach local retailers to assist with communication with specific user groups. This includes asking outlets in Dawlish Warren village stocking barbeques to display a sign alerting customers that there are byelaws in place preventing the use of barbeques at Dawlish Warren.

**Proposed spend: Up to £2,000 towards the cost of design and print of a small poster.**

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<sup>4</sup> *Rebasing the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy – strategic response July 2017*  
Appendix 1 2017-18 Annual Business Plan

## **5. Remove dog control order (use of leads) in buffer zone outside Dawlish Warren Special Area of Conservation (SAC).**

5.1 The current byelaw which requires dogs on leads in this area is not considered enforceable by wardens. If enforcement was required here it is considered that it would detract from other, more important duties on the SAC itself.

**Proposed spend: Up to £2,000 towards the cost for consultancy support fees, legal advice, administration etc.**

## **6. Adopt byelaw preventing fires and barbeques in buffer zone**

6.1 There is potential to manage the area of land immediately west of Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve, to reduce pressure on the designated site. Part of this area, known as the 'buffer zone' comprises fixed dune grassland and scrub, crossed by two board walks facilitating access to the beach. The other part is a large, surfaced car park.

6.2 Although degraded in parts, due to excess trampling pressure and dog fouling, the buffer zone includes plant species of interest and is designated a County Wildlife Site. There is the potential for the buffer zone and car park to be enhanced. This could make the SAC more robust by enhancing the quality of the adjacent habitat, relieving pressure on the SAC itself, and allowing access onto the SAC to be better managed.

6.3 The adoption of a byelaw to prevent fires and barbeques in this area would help to prevent wildfires which may spread into the SAC.

**Proposed spend: Up to £2,000 towards the cost for consultancy support fees, legal advice, administration etc.**

## **7. Exe Estuary - Update signs at public slipways, new interpretation boards (five boards), and dedicated signs relating to kitesurfing and windsurfing**

7.1 There are existing interpretation and signs setting out information for users, byelaws, etc. around the estuary. These include signs setting out beach safety information and have (in the past) included information relating to codes of conduct for activities such as kitesurfing.

7.2 It is appropriate to establish up-dated signs at strategic points around the estuary, in line with the revised codes of conduct and, if appropriate, revised zones. The signs should clearly set out how users should behave, with maps indicating particular zones, launching points, etc. These signs should match the code of conduct leaflets/web pages in terms of style, branding, etc. Particularly important locations would include:

- Each of the public slipways with general signage relating to speed, zones, etc. These should indicate no-landing zones and show the roost areas at Dawlish Warren as a 'no go' area.
- Dedicated signs relating to kitesurfing and windsurfing at the Imperial Recreation Ground and at the Maer.

7.3 The aim is to decrease disturbance by increasing users' awareness of zoning, codes of conduct and speed limits.

7.4 New interpretation boards would also be useful at the Imperial Recreation Ground, at Lympstone (by the Courtlands slipway), at Exton, Topsham (Goat Walk) and possibly at the Turf. These signs should highlight the importance of the estuary and the wildlife present in an inspiring way, and also provide information on what (in general) people can do to help protect the site, for example through keeping dogs off the mudflats and not driving below the seawall.

**Proposed spend: Up to £2,000 per sign (20 signs) at each of the public slipways. Up to £2,500 per sign (7 signs) for new interpretation boards.**

## **8. Disturbance monitoring on the Exe**

8.1 Monitoring is essential to ensure the successful delivery of the mitigation work. Monitoring is necessary to ensure approaches are working as anticipated and to identify whether further refinements or adjustments are necessary.

8.2 A recommendation concerning revised zoning in the Exe Estuary is scheduled to be presented to the Executive Committee in October 2017. Depending on the decision made at that time, it is recommended that funding for a specific monitoring programme to determine the effectiveness of any zone revision is available, should it be required. The results of monitoring over a one year period should provide an indication as to whether further monitoring is necessary.

**Proposed spend: If required, up to £10,000 for disturbance monitoring on the Exe Estuary.**

## **9. Pebblebed Heaths – Codes of conduct**

9.1 Codes of conduct set out clearly how visitors are expected to behave. Codes of conduct could be developed for horse riding, mountain biking (and other cycling), dog walking and events. The codes would be applicable across the Pebblebeds and should have a consistent theme and branding, matching that used elsewhere around the Pebblebeds (i.e. on signs, wardens' vehicles etc.). This ensures clear links for visitors and a consistency across all measures.

9.2 Ideally the codes of conduct would be designed so that they work on both printed material and the internet and the four codes of conduct should fit together (potentially so they can be given out as a pack or individually).

9.3 Codes of conduct need careful development with local stakeholders and site managers. Dr Sam Bridgewater of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust is drafting new codes for the review of the Officer Working Group. Good graphic design work will be needed to ensure the key messages are clearly communicated. Ideally the reasons why particular behaviours are necessary should be made clear.

9.4 Codes of conduct can be distributed by the wardens while they are out, providing the wardens with something they can physically pass across to visitors that gives clear guidance on how they should behave. The codes of conduct would also be given out at events and posted on the web. Wider circulation (e.g. at vets, suppliers such as cycle shops etc.) would also be relevant.

**Proposed spend: Up to £4,000, assuming design, production and print of 4 codes of conduct suitable for printing and on-line viewing.**

## **10. Pebblebed Heaths – Boardwalks/Path surfacing**

10.1 Bare ground is an important feature of heathland and is used by invertebrates, reptiles & amphibians and some rare plants. Wear from feet, bicycles and horses hooves can create and maintain bare ground features, but if too heavy there is the risk of damaging any interest. Furthermore, once vegetation is lost there is the risk of substrate being washed into mires and damaging wetland habitats and interest features and the paths themselves becoming shallow trenches.

10.2 There is therefore a difficult balancing act in terms of the management of paths and bare ground. Preventing footfall or concentrating footfall to very limited areas results in a loss of bare ground habitat. Path surfacing often damages the habitat and renders it useless for many species. Providing a boardwalk or similar raised walkway in wet areas or where run-off is a particular problem may resolve issues, but needs careful assessment on the ground.

10.3 Such raised walkways reduce erosion risk but may be difficult for certain users such as horse riders (as such the presence of such features might deter horse riders and discourage further damage). With increasing access, bare ground components of the Pebblebed Heaths will need to be monitored and consideration given to creation in areas away from heavy trampling.

10.4 The Visitor Management Plan identifies some areas that are adjacent to mires and where there appears – from aerial photographs – to be issues with paths currently spreading and erosion occurring. These areas are shown in Map 1 (next page) alongside modelled predictions of current access. All the areas highlighted have moderate footfall or are adjacent to areas with moderate footfall. They might therefore be considered vulnerable in the future.

10.5 Careful assessment of these areas by site managers is required and it may be that some areas would not benefit from intervention now or would be best monitored and interventions undertaken as necessary in the future. On-the-ground assessment will need to decide on optimum design and materials to be used. The total length of areas marked in yellow on **Map 1** is 600m.

10.6 It is expected that results from the path width and erosion monitoring approved in the 2016-17 ABP will be used to inform an initial work programme. Areas identified by the monitoring as being at highest risk will be targeted first.

**Proposed spend: Up to £10,000 for installation of boardwalks and/or path surfacing along highly eroded sections of track and path. To be informed by the results of the path width and erosion monitoring and guided by the areas identified in the Visitor Management Plan (shown in Map 1, below).**

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**South East Devon**  
**Habitat Regulations**  
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**July 2017**

**Map 1:** Potential locations for boardwalks on the Pebblebed Heaths and relative density of visitors per day (as per model). Source: Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan, Footprint Ecology, Jan 2017

