



**SOUTH EAST DEVON
HABITAT REGULATIONS
PARTNERSHIP**

Neil Harris
South East Devon
Habitat Regulation Partnership
C/O East Devon District Council,
Blackdown House,
Border Road,
Heathpark Industrial Estate,
Honiton EX14 1EJ

Dear Sir or Madam,

30 July 2019

Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan

I'm writing to you as the Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager, working on behalf of the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership (SEDHRP).

Informing and advising a legally constituted Executive Committee (which is made up of one executive member from each of East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council, with representation from Natural England), we work with a number of partners including the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust (PHCT), RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust and others.

Our work is focused on mitigating the likely effects on wildlife from increasing recreational pressure on internationally important environmental conservation sites, as a result of a growing population. These sites are the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, Exe Estuary and Dawlish Warren.

Together with our partners, we are committed to caring for these highly protected sites and the wildlife which is dependent upon them. With a growing population, visitor numbers to the Pebblebed Heaths are set to increase, which has the potential to cause harm to this highly sensitive area.

As part of this commitment, SEDHRP worked in partnership with PHCT to commission an advisory report to help identify some ways to improve visitor experiences and access to the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, whilst also protecting what makes them so special. We understand the long history of local connection to the heaths, as well as the health and wellbeing benefits for people who enjoy them, too.

SEDHRP with PHCT are now seeking views on proposals in the report which will be hosted on our respective websites (see below) from the start of the consultation period on 23rd September 2019 to the end, on 4th November 2019.

No decisions have been made and all views will be taken into account before any recommendations are put to the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee and PHCT trustees for approval.



The report suggests that if the vulnerable features could be protected, the heaths could potentially support a higher number of visitors without affecting its wildlife. Some proposals for improvements are outlined below and have been designed to provide an enhanced and enjoyable visitor experience:

- Improved access for emergency vehicles to improve response times.
- A programme of education to help people enjoy their experience through new interpretation boards, route markers for suggested routes.
- Improving general accessibility and layout of car parks for more efficient use and helping to protect ancient monuments and wildlife. There will be no overall loss of car park spaces across the heaths.
- Improving surfaces and entrances to car parks, which will improve safety and visibility when entering and leaving car parks.
- No introduction of car parking charges.
- Increasing visibility in car parks to reduce theft, criminal incidents and antisocial behaviour.
- Preventing roadside parking to improve safety, reduce damage to roadsides and improve the look and feel for visitors.
- Changing the use of one car park, reserving it for school visits and military use.
- Closing one or two smaller, more remote car parks to reduce antisocial behaviour. The areas of the Heaths accessed by these car parks would still be accessible from other car parks with some parking spaces reallocated to nearby areas. Public rights of way would not be affected and remain open.
- Provision of extra dog bins in a way which keeps with the landscape.

In order to give people the opportunity to learn more about the suggested improvements and ask questions, SEDHRP and PHCT will hold public drop-in events:

- Four Firs car park: Sat 28th September, 9am-1pm
- Joney's Cross car park: Thurs 17th October, 1-5pm
- Exmouth Town Hall: Thurs 10th October, 2-8pm.

We will advertise the consultation across the heaths, to the media, on social media, local libraries and both SEDHRP and PHCT will host an online consultation survey, accessible via:

<https://www.southeastdevonwildlife.org.uk/pebblebed-heaths/> ; and
<https://www.pebblebedheaths.org.uk/>

The report was commissioned by SEDHRP and any improvement work would initially be funded by SEDHRP. As part of a suite of mitigation measures, £500k has been earmarked for the report, the consultation and the capital work. After any works to establish the agreed improvements, PHCT would be responsible for ongoing maintenance costs.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Harris on behalf of the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership

Kim Strawbridge on behalf of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust