

**Teignbridge District Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13th January 2026**

Update on Unauthorised Encampments.

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the actions agreed by the Executive on the 29th of July 2025.

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- 1) Note the progress on the actions

Financial Implications

See section 3.1

Gordon Bryant

Head of Financial Services and Audit

Email: gordon.bryant@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

See section 3.2

Marie Downey

Solicitor

Email: marie.downey@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

David Eaton

Head of Neighbourhoods

Email: david.eaton@teignbridge.gov.uk

Executive Members

Cllr Peter Williams - Executive Member for Environmental Services

Cllr David Palethorpe - Executive Member for Assets, Economic Development, Major Projects and Communication

Cllr Richard Buscombe - Executive Member for Housing and Homelessness

Appendices

Appendix 1 Target hardening proposals and progress

EIA attached - No

Background Papers

Executive decision to approve current Policy. 3rd May 2022 [Teignbridge District Council Unauthorised Encampments Policy](#)

Executive decision to approve the future approach and proposed actions regarding unauthorised encampments. [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 29th July, 2025, 9.30 am - Teignbridge District Council](#)

1. Background

At the meeting of the Executive on the 29th July 2025 a report was presented that set out several options for consideration in the management of unauthorised encampments.

The Executive decided the following actions:

- (a) Approves the proposed target hardening measures set out in Section 2.1 of the Report and Appendix 1.
- (b) Supports the proposed re-engagement with other Councils and partner agencies to explore potential solutions for a network of transit sites.
- (c) Approves the new Neighbourhood Approach (Option 2) to managing future unauthorised encampments as detailed in Section 2.3 of the Report.

2. Update on actions

2.1 Target Hardening Measures and Proposals

Appendix 1 details work that has been undertaken at key sites recently and the proposals for further target hardening at the following sites.

- Bakers Park
- Courtenay Park
- Dawlish Countryside Park
- Forde Park
- Osborne Park
- Sandringham Park

The designs and specifications have been finalised and the relating procurement process completed. The works at Dawlish Countryside Park, Sandringham and

Bakers Parks have been completed. Works and are due to commence in January 2026 at the remaining sites, with Osborne Park being prioritised and completion anticipated there by early February.

2.2 Strategic Transit Site Provision

The report to the Executive in July 2025 recognised the current lack of transit provision for Gypsy and Traveller households travelling in Devon. Addressing this would help to reduce the prevalence of unauthorised encampments in unsuitable locations and the issues arising, as well as being of assistance to those travelling. Efforts to address this by individual Councils is unlikely to be effective. What is needed is a number of appropriately located sites across the County to meet the needs of those travelling. This could take two forms:

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Transit sites – These are dedicated sites established for short-term stays. They have permanent facilities (e.g. water and electrical services, toilet block, waste disposal, communal lighting, CCTV, etc.) and associated management and maintenance. In addition to it being challenging to find suitable locations, the capital costs involved in such provision can be considerable and ongoing revenue expenditure will also be required. Income (from licence fees) is likely to be minimal. There may only be demand for this provision on a seasonal basis and it may only be used to a limited extent while needing to be checked and maintained throughout the year.

Stopping Places - The alternative would be to establish 'tolerated' or 'negotiated' stopping places. These are locations identified as being suitable for occasional, short-term use, for a few days or at most a couple of weeks. When a travelling household uses a site there may be a need to provide some basic facilities to meet welfare needs (e.g. portable toilet, refuse bin, etc.). There would therefore be some associated costs, but these are likely to be less than the legal and clear-up costs resulting from unauthorised encampments, and less than the costs of maintaining permanent transit provision. Little or no capital expenditure would be required to make such provision across the County.

The development of such a network of stopping places is the preferred approach. To progress this collaboration is required between Local authorities in Devon. The Council has suggested that the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) could facilitate this joint working. This could be through the existing Housing Advisory Group or the planned Lead Housing Officers Group that is due to be established.

In recent months the Council has had an initial discussion with officers at Devon County Council. As the highway authority and with other land ownership the County Council may have a number of suitable sites in its ownership. A desktop exercise is needed to review these to identify potentially suitable sites before on-site inspection. This assessment could also be undertaken by each District. These exercises will require some staff resource which the Councils will need to individually consider. Alternatively, this study could be externally commissioned if resources can be found. The Council will endeavour to work through the DTCCA and by direct engagement with other Districts and the County Council to progress this work and it is proposed that a progress report is provided to the committee in 6 months.

2.3 Refined approach to managing Unauthorised Encampments

The co-ordination of visits and assessments has been undertaken by the Neighbourhood Services since the Executive meeting. The service now operates between 08:00 – 17:30 Monday – Friday, 09:00 – 17:00 Sat and between 08:30 – 16:30 Sundays during July, August and September.

Since the 29th of July 2025 there have been 6 reports of unauthorised encampments. One site was on Devon County Council land and was referred to them to act. One was reported at Dawlish Warren but following a visit it was determined that it was on private land. Action was taken by the council for the 4 sites on Council land and all were vacated before the hearing at the Court.

Regular liaison with the police takes place with each encampment to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the impacts and actions agreed.

Where impacts have been evidenced action has been taken by the Council with the issuing of Community Protection Warnings to those on unauthorised encampments.

3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

3.1 Financial

The target hardening works are being completed using identified section 106 monies. The new approach to managing unauthorised encampments has had no additional revenue impact.

3.2 Legal

Our approach to managing unauthorised encampments is compliant with the legislation and action taken is proportionate.

3.3 Risks

Action to target harden sites and take enforcement action may risk other council land being targeted which is more accessible. This would still be for the Council to manage and act.

Appendix 1

Location	Measure implements – proposed	Anticipated timescales
Bakers Park	<p>Implemented - Height barrier – steel access Gate – two telescopic bollards to the rear of the gate – wooden bollards adjacent to the passing place on Steppe’s meadow – galvanised steel uprights and wooden rails around exposed car park spaces and to rear of soil bunds Telescopic / collapsable bollards at vehicle entrances on the top access road (both ends)</p> <p>Proposed Either soil bunding or large boulders on the path side of the passing area on Steppes Meadow</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
Decoy countryside park	Implemented - Soil bunding with large rocks incorporated in the overflow car park access point onto the green space	No further measures required
Dawlish Leisure centre open space	Implemented – soil bunding to the Sandy Lane side of the open space – Wooden gate in vehicle access point of leisure centre car park with two collapsable bollards on the car park side. Bollards replaced June 2025 with higher security specification	No further measures required. Consider height barrier if further issues.
Sandringham Park Newton Abbot	<p>Implemented - Steel farm gate – two telescopic bollards to the rear of the gate – soil bunding at the Penn Inn Close end of the park 1.8 m posts near the community centre end of the park</p> <p>Proposed – import large boulders in access points near the outdoor gym</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

	and adjacent the footpath on the car park side of the community centre	
Coach Road Newton Abbot	Implemented - Car park height barrier – telescopic bollards on the maintenance access point of the field- additional medium height barrier	No further measures required
Strand Car Park Starcross	Implemented - Telescopic bollards to rear of cycle path access gate – soil bunding over wooden posts at the end of the car park where it meets the open space	No further measures required
Osborne Park	Proposed – Knee rail with galvanised steel posts to the perimeter of the open space, set at 1.5m centres – tree planting (spring 2026)	Work to commence in January 2026 12-week project Cross working all three sites (excavated materials from one site will be used to form bunding on other sites)
Courtenay Park	Proposed – Lockable recycled plastic bollard at five (5) access points - 32 wooden posts, various locations – Tree planting (spring 2026) - subject funding	Work due February 2026 Work to commence in January 2026 12-week project Cross working all three sites (excavated materials from one site will be used to form bunding on other sites)
Forde Park	Proposed - Lockable recycled plastic bollard at two (2) access points - 12 wooden posts, various locations – Tree planting (spring 2026) subject to funding	Work due February 2026 Work to commence in January 2026 12-week project Cross working all three sites (excavated materials from one site will be used to form bunding on other sites)

Dawlish Countryside Park	Implemented -Height Barrier Proposed – higher spec barrier to be installed - (external funding Land Trust	Completed
Michaels Field	Implemented - Height barrier – galvanised steel gate and posts – Wooden fencing with hedge planting around the car park	No further measures required
Sandygate Mill Kingsteignton	Implemented – install of 50 wooden posts to edges of two grass areas	No further measures required
Hackney Lane open space	Implemented – install of 80 wooden posts to the edge of the grass area	No further measures required