



## Putting the air ambulance at the heart of Dittisham...night and day.

Toby Russell, Community Landing Sites Development Officer

### Background

As you may be aware Devon Air Ambulance (DAA) has increased operations to midnight every day which means around an extra 8 hours of service each day during the darker winter months. We hope to again extend operations, to 2am, within the next six months. Our vision is to eventually provide a 24hr service and this is a huge step in realising that dream. This will bring a much needed operationally effective service - day and night - to your community.

To support night operations, DAA are working with communities across Devon to create a network of 'community landing sites' - these are surveyed floodlit landing sites which are part-funded and managed by local communities. Using 'known' sites means we can land in communities as quickly and safely as possible 'during the hours of darkness'.

There are currently 68 community sites ready for night landing, with a further approx. 140 sites at various stages of development. We expect to have upwards of 250 sites throughout Devon within the next 3-4 years.

### What makes a good night landing site?

A night landing site could take many different shapes or forms - it could be a green, sports pitch or playing field, a school playground or local field.

A landing site needs to be a flat area of at least 50m x 50m, to provide maximum operational benefit and safety, have pedestrian and vehicle access nearby and could be on grass, tarmac or concrete. A nearby power source for lighting is useful although not essential. Whilst tall trees or power lines within the site might be a hazard, if they are on the periphery they may not cause a problem.

Floodlighting is an essential component of a community landing site for both safety and practical reasons – it will illuminate the site during landing and take-off and will help when loading a patient in the aircraft or during transfer between a land / air ambulance.

Where there are no existing lights in place or infrastructure to support new lighting, we are asking communities to install a 10m high steel column with a set of two 150-watt LED lights. This lighting system could be powered by mains electricity supply (240v) or an off-grid solar / wind power option which includes a set of batteries.

All lighting systems need to incorporate a GSM control switch, operated using a mobile phone SIM card, which will enable the lights to be turned on/off remotely meaning no-one needs to be on hand when the Air Ambulance arrives and takes-off.

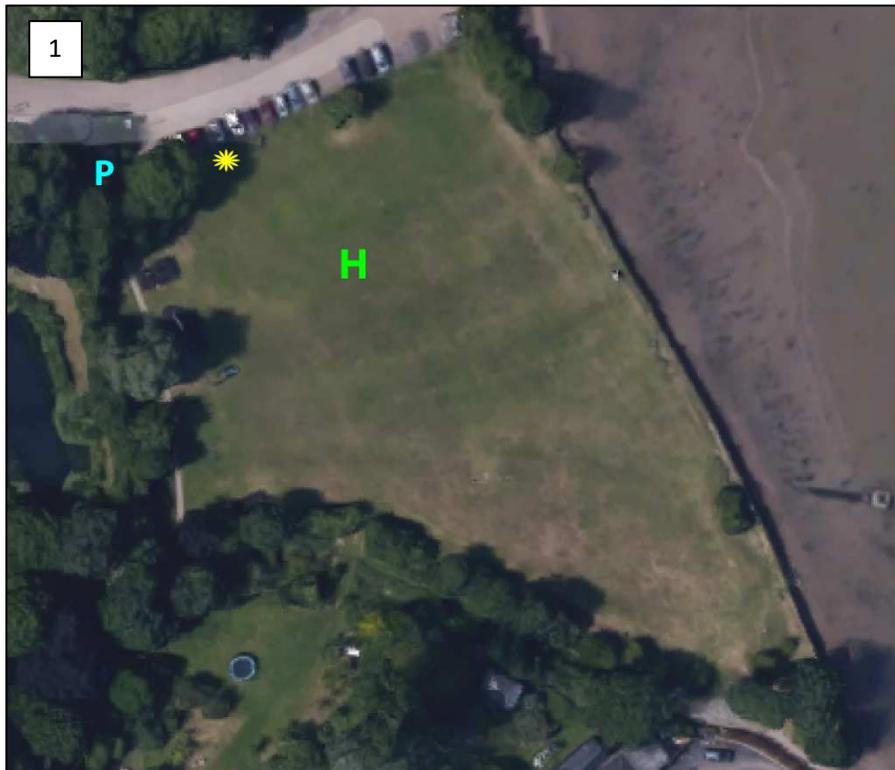
## Proposal to establish a community landing site in Dittisham

Devon Air Ambulance has been working with Dittisham Football Club and Dittisham Parish Council to identify a suitable area for a night landing site and we have concluded that The Ham in Dittisham would make a good location.

The site offers access to the community, an important feature as we want Air Ambulance paramedics to be able to easily leave the site on foot to go to a patient (should they arrive in the community before a land ambulance). There is also access from the nearby car park meaning a patient can quickly be transferred from a land ambulance to the aircraft.

DAA Operations staff have visited the site and completed a survey of the night landing site. During that survey, we collected information on the site and any potential hazards, which will be passed onto the pilots and air crew. Having this info ensures our pilots can quickly assess a landing site well before they arrive there, speeding up the time it takes to get paramedics onto the ground (potentially saving around 15-20mins) and to a patient.

The main requirement for DAA to be able to land at night at The Ham in Dittisham will be the installation of a new 10m steel column and two LED lights. That column would ideally be located along the northern boundary, by the car park (see map below), illuminating a central part of The Ham. Power for the lighting (240v) would be taken from the nearby toilet block, underground to the lighting column. It should be noted that the column can be painted a dark green so that it more easily blends into the background.



*Photo 1: shows the proposed night landing site at The Ham in Dittisham; H indicates landing area, yellow dot indicates location for the 10m lighting column, P indicates power source (route for the power cable is underground from the toilet block).*

### Lighting column & LED lights

As mentioned, a new 10m steel lighting column will need to be installed at the site. That column would have two 150-watt LED lights positioned at the top of the column, directed at a 60° angle to illuminate the landing area. There are no markings or other infrastructure needed to identify the landing area.

The need for a 10m high column is that, during trials, we assessed lighting columns at 6, 8 and 10m high. Only at 10m high were we able to achieve a large enough and yet 'tight' pool of light which would not cause glare for the helicopter pilots and crew as they land / take-off. Please see page overleaf with drawings of the 10m lighting column.

*Photo 2: shows a 10m lighting column with LED's in place at a community landing site in Devon.*



### Managing a landing site:

Each community will need to put in place a system to monitor their landing site and report to DAA on any site changes. This is not arduous but means that the site is looked after properly, for example, by keeping rubbish free from the landing area or notifying DAA of any temporary (e.g. events) or permanent changes.

We expect the costs of running each landing site to be low – the LED lights cost around £0.15p per 4 hours of use and the remote switching unit costs under £10 a year to be kept operational. The main annual cost involved is likely to be insurance. However, the community might expect some limited maintenance costs of the equipment in the future and so we advise all communities to hold a small maintenance budget.

### Next steps:

- Promote the project within the village / engage community
- Establish costs – the community will need to pay for the lighting equipment (lighting, column, remote switching unit etc.) and DAA, through funding from the Bank Labor Fines, will be able to provide a grant to meet the labour costs. Based on other locations, the community will need to raise c£2,900.
- A planning application for the lighting will need to be submitted
- Once funding and permissions are in place, the lighting can be installed and the night landing site become operational for Devon Air Ambulance.

If you would like more information on the development of a night landing site in Dittisham, please contact Toby Russell, Devon Air Ambulance *Community Landing Site Development Officer*, on: [t.russell@daat.org](mailto:t.russell@daat.org). Should anyone wish to contribute to the project or find out more please speak to Annette Thom, Clerk to Dittisham Parish Council on [clerk@dittishamparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@dittishamparishcouncil.gov.uk).

